**SUPPLEMENT TO “Forms of Group Involvement”**

**Part A. Description of Additional Surveys Measuring Group Involvement**

This supplement adds three additional surveys to the comparison between the 2004 General Social Survey and the 2015-18 UCNets survey. This part describes those other surveys.

1. *Verba and Nie.*

Their 1967 survey entailed a “sample of a cross-section of the adult population of the United States, in a selected number of the communities in which the respondents lived, and from governmental elites within the selected communities” (Verba and Nie, 2000: Codebook, p. I). We used only the national sample,[[1]](#footnote-1) which employed quota sampling within census blocks that had been randomly selected proportional to population (ibid., p. v ff).

The operational question is: Q.48A. “Now we would like to know something about the groups and organizations to which individuals belong -- here is a list of various kinds of organizations. [*… show card 5*] Could you tell me if you belong to any of these kinds? Do you belong to any...”

Fraternal groups?

Service clubs?

Veterans groups?

Political groups?

Labor unions?

Sports group?

Youth group?

School service groups?

Hobby or garden clubs?

School fraternities or sororities?

Nationality groups?

Farm organizations?

Literary, art, discussion or study clubs?

Professional or academic societies?

Church affiliated organizations?

Do you belong to any other organization not listed?

If the respondent answered yes to any, a set of three questions followed, including Q. 48C:

“Have you ever done any active work for [the \_\_\_\_ group to which r belongs]–I mean, been a leader, helped organize meetings, been an officer, given time or money?

1. *2000 Social Capital Benchmark Survey*

This 2000 RDD telephone survey entailed a national sample of about 3,000 respondents and 41 separate local area samples, with a 29% adjusted response rate (Saguro Seminar 2000: Documentation). We examine only the national sample—except when addressing the comparability of the S.F. Bay Area to national data (in this Supplement, Part F). The questions that go into the count of group involvements are:

Q32. In the past 12 months, have you taken part in any sort of activity with people at your church or place of worship other than attending services? This might include teaching Sunday school, serving on a committee, attending choir rehearsal, retreat, or other things.

1 Yes

2 No

8 Don't know

9 Refused

Q33. Now I'd like to ask about other kinds of groups and organizations. I'm going to read a list; just answer YES if you have been involved in the past 12 months with this kind of group. (*Programming: random order a-o, keeping k-m together, keeping n-o together, item r should always be last.*)

33A (*if [respondent says yes to Q.32, having taken part in activity at place of worship besides services]: besides your local place of worship,*) Any organization affiliated with religion, such as the Knights of Columbus or B'nai B'rith, or a bible study group?

1 Yes

2 No

8 Don't know

9 Refused

33B (How about) An adult sports club or league, or an outdoor activity club.

33C (How about) A youth organization like youth sports leagues, the scouts, 4-H clubs, and Boys & Girls Clubs.

33D A parents' association, like the PTA or PTO, or other school support or service groups.

33E A veteran's group.

33F A neighborhood association, like a block association, a homeowner or tenant association, or a crime watch group.

33G Clubs or organizations for senior citizens or older people.

33H A charity or social welfare organization that provides services in such fields as health or service to the needy.

33I A labor union.

33J A professional, trade, farm, or business association.

33K Service clubs or fraternal organizations such as the Lions or Kiwanis or a local women's club or a college fraternity or sorority. (NOTE: Includes Alumni Organizations)

33L Ethnic, nationality, or civil rights organizations, such as the National Organization for Women, the Mexican American Legal Defense or the NAACP?

33M Other public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, or party committees.

33N A literary, art, discussion or study group or a musical, dancing, or singing group.

33O Any other hobby, investment, or garden clubs or societies.

33P A support group or self-help program for people with specific illnesses, disabilities, problems, or addictions, or for their families.

33Q Are you involved in any group that meets only over the Internet?

33R And do you belong to any other kinds of clubs or organizations?

We will see below that this survey yielded far more affirmative answers than the other surveys. Why that is so is unclear and beyond our scope here. It may be because it provides *22* explicit types, because it gives many examples of each, and/or because it is embedded in a survey devoted to civic life.

1. *2017 Pew American Trends Panel, Wave 30.*

“The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists [recruited by telephone in 2017] participate via self-administered web surveys…. The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process [initial recruitment; invitation to the panel]… and the base weights for all active panelists are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks . . . to create a full-panel weight” (<https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/u-s-survey-research/american-trends-panel/>; accessed April 29, 2021). Final response rates are about 2 to 3 percent, but Pew surveys, properly weighted, have turned out to be reliable.

The Pew version of the standard question is:

Are you currently active in any of the following groups or organizations, or not?

1A. Church groups or other religious or spiritual organizations

1B. A book club or study group

1C. A performing arts, singing or dance group

1D. A professional association, trade association or union

1E. A parent group or youth organization, such as PTA, scouts or youth sports

2F. A social club, sorority or fraternity

2G. A veterans group such as American Legion or VFW

2H. A hobby group or club

2I. A charitable or volunteer organization

2J. A community group or neighborhood association

2K. Are you currently active in any other group or organization not already listed?

**Part B. Summary Membership Statistics for the Five Surveys.**

Table S-1 displays the same results as those in Table 1 of the main text, but for all five surveys. For each, we compare a young sample–21 to 32 (except for the 2017 Pew, which 18 to 29)–and a middle-age to elderly sample–50 to 72 (except Pew, 50 to 64) .

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table S-1. Membership in Types of Groups and Organizations by Age Cohort in Five Surveys. |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Verba & Nie 1967 |  | Social Capital 2000 (national) |  | GSS 2004 |  | UCNets 2015-18 (SF Bay Area) |  | Pew 2017 |
|  | *belong to [15 named types]* |  | *involved with, past 12 mo. [17]* |  | *belong to [15]* |  | *actively participate in [6]* |  | *currently active in [10]* |
|  | 21-32 | 50-72 |  | 21-32 | 50-72 |  | 21-32 | 50-72 |  | 21-32 | 50-72 |  | 18-29 | 50-64 |
| Pct. Member of Any Type | 57 | 60 |  | 72 | 79 |  | 57 | 64 |  | 52 | 71 |  | 54 | 55 |
| Mn. Number of Types | 1.14 | 1.11 |  | 2.50 | 2.96 |  | 1.39 | 1.78 |  | 0.73 | 1.31 |  | 1.43 | 1.27 |
| Mn. LN (Types + 1) | 0.59 | 0.59 |  | 0.97 | 1.12 |  | 0.64 | 0.79 |  | 0.44 | 0.70 |  | 0.63 | 0.61 |
| Median Number Types | 1 | 1 |  | 2 | 3 |  | 1 | 1 |  | 1 | 1 |  | 1 | 1 |
| Weighted N | 382 | 494 |  | 630 | 833 |  | 329 | 469 |  | 1230 | 1912 |  | 994 | 1259 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Notes: For UCNets, the units of analyses are respondent-waves. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The general conclusion is that the surveys—taken at different times and/or done in varied ways—yield, with one major exception, similar results: about 50-65 percent membership/ involvement/participation, a mean of about 1 to 1.5 types, a mean of logged memberships of about 0.5 to 0.7, and medians of 1, and more involvements by the older than the younger cohorts. The exception is the Social Capital survey, which yielded much higher averages, noted and discussed above.

One of the distinctions among the surveys is the contrast between “belong” in the NORC studies (Verba and Nie and the GSS) versus others that pose variations in stipulating activity. What difference does that make? It is possible to get some sense of that difference in the NORC surveys. Verba and Nie followed up each “yes” answer to a specific membership probe with “Have you ever done any active work for <*the … group to which R belongs*>–I mean, been a leader, helped organize meetings, been an officer, given time or money?” If we replace, for the Verba and Nie survey, the affirmative answers it obtained to the “belong to” question with its affirmative answers to the “active work” question, the numbers are:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  21-32 | 50-72 |
| Pct. Member of Any | 35 | 39 |
| Mn. Number of Types | 0.59 | 0.67 |
| Mn. LN (Types + 1) | 0.33 | 0.36 |
| Median Number  | 0 | 0 |
| Weighted N | 382 | 494 |

These are about 60 percent of the “belong to” numbers in the same survey. Also, in 1987 (only), the GSS followed up the membership questions by asking the same “active work” question Verba and Nie did. In two-thirds of the replies, respondents said that they were active (authors’ analysis of 1987 GSS; not shown). If one replaces the estimates for the NORC studies shown in Table 1 above with two-thirds of their values, they become notably lower than those of UCNets (“actively participate”) and Pew 2017 (“currently active”) as well as Social Capital (“involved with”). Why the NORC studies seem to provide such lower estimates is unclear.

**Part C. Detailed Distribution of Group Types in the Five Surveys**

The following Tables S-2a and S-2b display the specific answers to the five surveys. (UCNets data looks different here than in the main text’s Table 2, because in that table almost all answers to “another kind” were coded and distributed among other types.)

Table S-2a. Distributions of Group or Organization Types, by Survey – Respondents 18 to 32.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **YOUNG (age 21-32; Pew: 18-29)** |  | Verba-Nie 1967 | Soc Capital (nat'l) 2000 | GSS 2004 | UCNets 2015-18 (SF Bay) | Pew 2017 |
|   | … *belong to* | Pct. | *… involved with, past 12 mo's.* | Pct. | *… belong to* | Pct. | *… actively participate in* | Pct. | *… currently active in* | Pct. |
| Fraternal |   | Fraternal | 8 | *[See Service]* |   | Fraternal groups | 2 |   |   | *[See below, "Social"]* |   |
| Service |   | Service | 6 | Service, fraternal | 11 | Service clubs | 8 | Service, with 3 examples | 8 | *[See below, "Charitable"]* |   |
| Veterans |   | Veterans | 4 | Veterans | 6 | Veterans’ groups | 1 |   |   | Veterans, with two examples | 5 |
| Political |   | Political groups | 5 | Public interest | 8 | Political clubs | 4 |   |   |   |   |
| Union |   | Labor union | 18 | Labor union | 11 | Labor union | 8 |   |   | *[See Profess.]* |   |
| Sports |   | Sports | 15 | Adult sports | 25 | Sports groups | 18 | Organized sports team | 7 |   |   |
| Youth |   | Youth group | 10 | Youth org's, with examples | 20 | Youth groups | 11 |   |   | *[See Parent group]* |   |
| School service |   | School service | 20 | Parents' assoc., with examples | 16 | School service groups | 12 |   |   | Parent group, youth org. | 9 |
| Hobby |   | Hobby, garden | 3 | Other hobby, garden | 24 | Hobby, garden clubs | 8 |   |   | Hobby group or club | 27 |
| School Fraternity |   | School Fraternity | 6 | *[See Service]* |   | School Fraternity | 4 |   |   |   |   |
| Nationality |   | Nationality | 2 | Ethnic, civil rights | 6 | Nationality groups | 3 |   |   |   |   |
| Farm |   | Farm | 2 | *[See professional]* |   | Farm organizations | 2 |   |   |   |   |
| Literary, Arts |   | Literary, arts clubs | 4 | Literary, art, music | 18 | Literary, arts groups | 12 | Cultural, like choir, theater | 6 | Book club or study group | 15 |
| Profess./Aca-demic |   | Profess./Academic societies | 8 | Profess., business, farm | 22 | Profess./Academic societies | 14 | Profess. Assoc., business group  | 16 | Profess., trade, union | 15 |
| Church-Affiliated |   | Church-Affiliated | 4 | Religion-affiliated, with examples | 13 | Church-Affiliated (incl. congregations) | 26 | Relig. org, like church, synag. | 19 | Church groups | 16 |
| Neighborhood |   |   |   | Neighbor. assoc., with examples | 15 |   |   | Neighb./block association | 5 | Community or neighb. assoc. | 12 |
| Seniors |   |   |   | Club for seniors | 6 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Charity, welfare |   |   |   | charity, social welfare org. | 26 |   |   | *[See Service]* |   | Charitable or volunteer org. | 14 |
| Support, self-help |   |   |   | Support, self-help | 13 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Internet discuss |   |   |   | Internet discussion | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Performing arts |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Performing arts (cf book club) | 11 |
| Social |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Social, frat./sorority | 11 |
| OTHER |   | Any other not listed | 3 | Any other kinds | 11 | Any other groups | 6 | Another kind of organization | 12 | Any other group or organization | 8 |
| NONE |   |   | 43 |   | 28 |   | 43 |   | 44 |   | 46 |

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| NOTES: UCNets units of analysis are respondent-waves. Ages for Pew are 18-29 and 50-64. |

Table S-2b. Distributions of Group or Organization Types, by Survey – Respondents 50 to 72.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **OLDER (age 50-72; Pew: 50-64)** |  | Verba-Nie 1967 | Soc Capital (nat'l) 2000 | GSS 2004 | UCNets 2015-18 (SF Bay) | Pew 2017 |
|   | … *belong to* | Pct. | *… involved with, past 12 mo's.* | Pct. | *… belong to* | Pct. | *… actively participate in* | Pct. | *… currently active in* | Pct. |
| Fraternal |   | Fraternal | 21 | *[See Service]* |   | Fraternal groups | 9 |   |   | *[See below, "Social"]* |   |
| Service |   | Service | 7 | Service, fraternal | 16 | Service clubs | 12 | Service, with 3 examples | 19 | *[See below, "Charitable"]* |   |
| Veterans |   | Veterans | 8 | Veterans | 6 | Veterans’ groups | 8 |   |   | Veterans, with two examples | 5 |
| Political |   | Political groups | 11 | Public interest | 10 | Political clubs | 4 |   |   |   |   |
| Union |   | Labor union | 16 | Labor union | 12 | Labor union | 11 |   |   | *[See Profess.]* |   |
| Sports |   | Sports | 8 | Adult sports | 18 | Sports groups | 14 | Organized sports team | 8 |   |   |
| Youth |   | Youth group | 3 | Youth org's, with examples | 16 | Youth groups | 10 |   |   | *[See Parent group]* |   |
| School service |   | School service | 6 | Parents' assoc., with examples | 15 | School service groups | 12 |   |   | Parent group, youth org. | 6 |
| Hobby |   | Hobby, garden | 7 | Other hobby, garden | 28 | Hobby, garden clubs | 15 |   |   | Hobby group or club | 15 |
| School Fraternity |   | School Fraternity | 2 | *[See Service]* |   | School Fraternity | 4 |   |   |   |   |
| Nationality |   | Nationality | 3 | Ethnic, civil rights | 7 | Nationality groups | 4 |   |   |   |   |
| Farm |   | Farm | 6 | *[See professional]* |   | Farm organizations | 4 |   |   |   |   |
| Literary, Arts |   | Literary, arts clubs | 3 | Literary, art, music | 17 | Literary, arts groups | 12 | Cultural, like choir, theater | 11 | book club or study group | 8 |
| Profess./Academic |   | Profess./Academic societies | 5 | Profess., business, farm | 25 | Profess./Academic societies | 17 | Profess. Assoc., business group  | 20 | Profess., trade, union | 16 |
| Church-Affiliated |   | Church-Affiliated | 7 | Religion-affiliated, with examples | 17 | Church-Affiliated (incl. congregations) | 35 | Relig. org, like church, synag. | 29 | Church groups | 20 |
| Neighborhood |   |   |   | Neighbor. assoc., with examples | 28 |   |   | Neighb./block association | 17 | Community or neighb. assoc. | 14 |
| Seniors |   |   |   | Club for seniors | 21 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Charity, welfare |   |   |   | charity, social welfare org. | 33 |   |   | *[See Service]* |   | Charitable or volunteer org. | 20 |
| Support, self-help |   |   |   | Support, self-help | 21 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Internet discuss |   |   |   | Internet discussion | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Performing arts |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Performing arts (cf book club) | 6 |
| Social |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Social, frat./sorority | 5 |
| OTHER |   | Any other not listed | 7 | Any other kinds | 18 | Any other groups | 8 | Another kind of organization | 27 | Any other group or organization | 12 |
| NONE |   |   | 40 |   | 21 |   | 36 |   | 29 |   | 45 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| NOTES: UCNets units of analysis are respondent-waves. Ages for Pew are 18-29 and 50-64. |

 Among the noteworthy comparisons in Table S-2 are the large percentage of respondents in the Social Capital and Pew surveys who reported neighborhood or community group memberships (see also the recoded “another kind” answers to UCNets shown in main text Table 2). Also, when offered options dealing with volunteer or charity work (instead of or in addition to “service”), many in the same two surveys picked those types (among older respondents, one-third and one-fifth respectively). This suggests that the “service” designation in the GSS does not elicit the same range of organizations. Self-help groups were common in the Social Capital survey. So were references to senior centers. UCNets had 20 cases of respondents volunteering senior centers as another type (coded into the “identity” category of UCNets). Commonly, membership rates in these “new” types well-exceeded those in many of the GSS standard categories like farm, youth, school Greek, and political clubs.

**Part D. Missed Memberships in the Social Capital Survey’s Standard Question.**

A later section of the Social Capital survey asks respondents how often in the last year they had engaged in various activities. Four of those match up at least roughly with types listed in its version of the standard question–and seem to show missing memberships in the standard question.

Of 148 young (and of 63 older) respondents who said that they had “played a team sport” at least seven times in the previous 12 months (Q.56J), *38 (36) percent* had said *“no*” to the earlier question of whether they had “been involved in the past 12 months with… an adult sports club or league, or an outdoor activity club” (Q. 33B).

Of 165 young (229 older) respondents who said that they had “volunteered” at least seven times in the previous 12 months (Q.58), *54 (33) percent* had said *“no”* to whether they had “been involved in the past 12 months with… a charity or social welfare organization.” (Q.33H).

Of 151 young (102 older) respondents who said that they had “taken part in artistic activities with others such as singing, dancing, or acting with a group” (Q.56B) at least seven times in the previous 12 months, *58 (43) percent* had said *“no”* to whether they had “been involved in the last 12 months with… a literary, art, discussion or study group or a musical, dancing, or singing group.” (Q.33N).

Of 80 young (27 older) respondents who said that they had “participated in an on-line discussion over the Internet”(Q.56K) at least seven times in the previous 12 months, *82 (67) percent* had said *“no”* to whether they had “been involved in the last 12 months with… any group that meets only over the Internet” (Q.33Q). Among the younger respondents, 4 percent checked “group that meets only over the Internet,” while 13 percent said they had participated in discussion seven or more times.

These two kinds of probes are not identical across the four pairings above. For example, in the last case, respondents could have participated often in online discussions but not been in an internet-*only* group. But the specific activity probes certainly overlap a lot with the checklist types and yet many affirmations of more than bimonthly engagement do not appear as affirmations in the standard typology question.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Part E. Informal Groups in the Social Capital Survey**

The Social Capital survey did not ask directly about informal groups. But it did ask a couple of questions about frequency of certain informal group activities: playing games with friends and hanging out with friends

Of 274 young (and of 248 older) respondents who said that they had “played cards or board games with others”(Q.56C) at least *seven times* in the previous 12 months, *24 (11) percent* had said they belonged to *no* clubs or organizations in Social Capital’s version of the standard question.

Of 421 young (279 older) respondents who said that they had “hung out with friends at a park, shopping mall, or other public place?”(Q.56I) at least *seven times* in the previous 12 months, *23 (9) percent* had said they belonged to *no* clubs or organizations in the standard question.

These percentages of respondents who reported frequent informal group activities but no clubs or organizations in the standard are surely an underestimate of how much the standard question misses, since those who *did* answer affirmatively to at least one of the 18 types of groups may have mentioned one(s) that had nothing to do with the informal activity they later reported.

Based on the standard question, 72 percent of the young and 79 percent of the older respondents in the Social Capital Survey belonged to a group or organization. But if we consider seven or more times a year of just these two activities as additional measures of group involvement and combine them with the checklist, those estimates change considerably, to 89 and 85 percent.

**Part F. Comparability of the UCNets Bay Area Sample to National Samples**

The question we address here is whether the UCNets’ 21-to-32 and 50-to-72 year-olds living in the six-county core of the San Francisco Bay Area are too different from comparable cohorts in the 2004 GSS and other national samples we use to allow a valid comparison of method. We allude here to commonplace perceptions of the Bay Area as especially educated, high-tech, politically progressive, and culturally avant-garde.

It is not possible to extract Bay Area cases from the 2004 GSS to use instead of the national GSS. (The GSS does not identify cases below region or state, and does not randomly sample below region so as to yield representative samples of lower levels such as states or counties. The numbers would be too few in any case.) Fortuitously, the Social Capital survey provides us one partial look at the distinctiveness of the Bay Area. In addition to drawing a national sample, the Social Capital project sampled dozens of specific communities (depending on local sponsorships of the survey). One of those localities was the city/county of San Francisco (total n = 320); the second locality is described as “Peninsula and Silicon Valley” [[3]](#footnote-3) (total n = 1079). Although these two samples miss much of the region that UCNets drew from,[[4]](#footnote-4) they permit us to explore how different a Bay Area sample may be on matters of concern here.

Social Capital’s two Bay Area samples notably differed from its national sample by having a greater percentage of Hispanic, much greater percentage of Asian respondents, and a much lower percentage of respondents who had not gotten education beyond high school (all consistent with mid-2010s census data). And the San Francisco-Silicon Valley (SF-SV) respondents *were*, on average, more internet-engaged than the project’s national sample. (See Table S-3 below.) About 73% of Social Capital’s younger SF-SV samples had internet access at home (variable “wwwacc”) and about 68% of its older SF-SV samples had such access, compared to 56% of the young and 48% of the older respondents in Social Capital’s national sample. Moreover, the percentages of respondents who said that they were “involved in any group that meets only over the Internet” were: (a) among the young respondents: 10% (SF) and 6% (SV) versus 4% in the national sample; and (b) among the older: 4% and 3% versus 2%.

The entries in Table S-3 below show how many hours in a “typical week,” on average, respondents “spent using the internet (“wwwtime,” with a range of 0 to 25) and how many times in the past twelve months, on average, they had participated in an “on-line discussion over the internet” (“wwwchat2,” 0 to 60). The table shows notable differences: *young* respondents in the *San Francisco* sample claimed 60 percent more hours, on average, using the internet than did the young national sample; they also claimed 85 percent more online discussions. However, the young *Silicon Valley* sample was much less distinct from the young national sample. Among older respondents, the three locations did not differ significantly on these measures. Most important, on the key measure–the total number of group involvements (which includes online discussions)–the young San Francisco sample provided an average of only 16 percent more affirmative answers than the young national sample.

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| Table S-3. Social Capital Survey: Online and Overall Group Involvement, Bay Area Samples versus National Sample. |
|  |  |  | Age 21-32 |  | Age 50-72 |  |
|   |   |   | San Fran. | Sil. Val. | Nat'l. |   | San Fran. | Sil. Val. | Nat'l. |   |
| *Hours on Internet* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Without controls | Mn  | 5.54 | 4.36 | 3.46 | \*\*\* | 2.34 | 2.51 | 2.30 | ns |
|  |  | SD | 7.31 | 5.96 | 5.79 |  | 3.66 | 4.18 | 4.66 |  |
|   | With controls | Mean  | 5.98 | 4.18 | 2.79 | \*\*\* | 1.80 | 1.96 | 2.11 | ns |
| *Frequency of Internet Discussion* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Without controls | Mn  | 8.36 | 5.99 | 4.51 | \*\* | 2.23 | 2.15 | 1.26 | ns |
|  |  | SD | 18.78 | 14.93 | 13.15 |  | 9.45 | 9.74 | 7.15 |  |
|   | With controls | Mean  | 7.69 | 5.16 | 4.32 | \* | 1.21 | 1.51 | 0.96 | ns |
| *Number of Group Involvements* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Without controls | Mn  | 2.93 | 2.26 | 2.53 | \* | 3.57 | 3.30 | 3.16 | ns |
|  |  | SD | 2.85 | 2.24 | 2.53 |  | 3.30 | 2.70 | 2.83 |  |
|   | With controls | Mean  | 2.86 | 2.52 | 2.31 | \* | 3.20 | 3.10 | 2.90 | ns |
|  | N without |  | 175 | 309 | 631 |  | 79 | 391 | 835 |  |
|   | N with controls |   | 156 | 284 | 612 |   | 75 | 375 | 870 |   |
| Notes: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Controls are: specific age, Asian, Hispanic, some college, college graduate. (Other tested demographics are not associated with memberships.) |  |  |  |

A closer look at the specific kinds of group memberships (not shown), reveals that SF sample overall differed substantially from the national sample in more often belonging to ethnic, public interest, and literary or art groups (the young also stood out in internet and “other kinds of groups,” the older SF as well in union memberships), while the SF sample tended *not* to be in veterans, “service clubs or fraternal organizations such as the Lions or Kiwanis,” parent-teacher associations, and religious affiliation groups. The SV sample was not especially distinctive, except in *not* belonging to veteran and service-fraternal groups. Given these data and that *San Franciscans compose only 10 and 12 percent (weighted) of the young and of the older respondents respectively of the UCNets samples*, we would conclude that the UCNets may

slightly over-represent internet, political, ethnic, art and “other” memberships and slightly under-represent “traditional” memberships such as service-fraternal, veterans, and religious associations compared to a national sample. However, for our purposes, which are to explore the variety of groups to which 21st century Americans belonged, this is a modest distortion, at most.

The 2017 Pew Survey does not provide the geographical specificity of the Social Capital study. We can compare respondents from the West to the rest (East, Midwest, and South) and they tend to report fewer—but not statistically significantly so—total memberships: a difference of 0.26 (0.12 SD) for the young and of 0.13 (.08 SD) for the older respondents. The only detail that shows a notable regional difference is, for the young, membership in “a social club, sorority or fraternity”—6% for those in the West and 13% for the rest.

In sum, this exercise suggests that the Bay Area respondents were moderately more involved in non-traditional (including online) groups than were national respondents, but that would not substantially change our conclusions about the *existence*—and likely further growth—of such nontraditional groups, as well as their under-representation in the standard question.

**Part G. Trends in Specific GSS Group Types, 1974-2004.**

On the question of whether Americans’ group memberships have changed historically, the most consistent data we have are the GSS membership questions from 1974 to 2004. But, as we noted in the Methods section, the 2004 version is somewhat special. Besides including the standard checklist question, it asked for the names of specific groups within each type, including detailed follow-up questions for each such group. (These follow-ups *may* have depressed the number of types claimed in 2004 through respondent and/or interviewer foot-dragging, but we have no evidence for that.[[5]](#footnote-5))

We used a simple logit model to regress respondents’ membership vs. non-membership on year of the survey minus 1974, extracting the exponentiated coefficient for year. The overall probability that a GSS respondent reported belonging to any of the listed 15 types (or of “other”) declined by 1.2 percent per year (p=.001) among 21-to-32 year-olds and by 1.5 percent per year (p<.001) among 50-to-72 year-olds. The 2004 GSS data, an outlier on years as well as membership, contributes greatly to these estimates. (Regressing, in an OLS model, the *number* of memberships–variable “memnum”–for respondents on year yields no significant results, but the distribution of that variable is quite skewed.) To fully understand the trends, it is important to decompose the data by specific type of association. The table below shows the results of regressing (logit models again) affirmative answers to each type of group on number of years after 1974.

Table S-4. Estimated the Per-Year Change in the Probability of Affirming Membership in Types of Groups, GSS, 1974-2004. (Entries show only results significant at p<.05.)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| GSS label | Question wording | 21-to-32 yrs-old | 50-to-72 yrs-old |
| memfrat | Fraternal groups | -.02\* | -.02\*\*\* |
| memserv | Service clubs | +.01\* |  |
| memvet | Veterans’ groups | -.05\*\*\* |  |
| mempolit | Political clubs |  |  |
| memunion | Labor unions | -.04\*\*\* | -.02\*\*\* |
| memsport | Sports groups |  |  |
| memyouth | Youth groups |  | +.02\*\* |
| memschl | School service groups |  |  |
| memhobby | Hobby or garden clubs |  | +.02\*\*\* |
| memgreek | School fraternities or sororities |  |  |
| memnat | Nationality groups |  |  |
| memfarm | Farm organizations |  |  |
| memlit | Literary, art, discussion, or study groups |  | +.01\* |
| memprof | Professional or academic societies |  | +.02\*\*\* |
| memchurh | Church-affiliated groups |  | -.02\*\*\* |
| memother | Any other groups |  |  |
| Min. N =  |  | 5,450 | 5,857 |

Notes: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, p<.001.

For most types of groups there was *no net change* in the probability of membership over the 30 years assessed here. (We introduce no controls here, because the purpose is not to explain trends or non-trends, but to generate a summary description of the historical pattern.) For some types, particularly among older respondents, there was a net *increase* in membership (youth, hobby, literary, professional, and, for the 21-to-32 year-olds, service). Declines in membership were concentrated in four particular types: fraternal groups (both age categories), veterans (young only), labor unions (both ages), and church-affiliated groups (the older respondents). The decline of unions is a familiar and special story. Veterans group membership is a function of conscription, which ended in 1973.[[6]](#footnote-6) Bracketing the two distinct cases of unions and veterans leaves the decline of 19th-century fraternal orders and decline in church-affiliated groups among the older respondents as the only indicators of lessening social life, as against several positive trends and many non-trends (or, at least non-linear trends).

*Further GSS data*. The 2004 and 2014 GSS surveys present a battery of questions from the International Social Survey Programme that include this one: “People sometimes belong to different kinds of groups or associations. For each type of group, please indicate whether you belong and actively participate, belong but don’t actively participate, used to belong but do not any more, or have never belonged to it.” Five types followed: “a political party,” “a trade union, business, or professional association,” “a church or religious organization,” “a sports, leisure, or cultural group,” and “another voluntary association.” Comparing the two years for the cohorts under study here yields this table:

Table S-5. The Proportion of Respondents Who Reported Belonging *and* Actively Participating in Various Kinds of Associations (ISSP items in 2004 and 2014 GSS).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 21-to-32 years-old |  |
|  | 2004 | 2014 | *Change* |
| Political Party | 0.087 | 0.036 | *-0.051* |
| Union, Business, Prof. | 0.067 | 0.057 | *-0.010* |
| Church, Oth. Religious | 0.322 | 0.236 | *-0.086* |
| Sports, Leisure, Culture | 0.203 | 0.233 | *0.030* |
| Another Volunt. Assoc. | 0.144 | 0.129 | *-0.015* |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | 50-to-72 years old |  |
|  | 2004 | 2014 | *Change* |
| Political Party | 0.159 | 0.099 | *-0.060* |
| Union, Business, Prof. | 0.135 | 0.108 | *-0.027* |
| Church, Oth. Religious | 0.443 | 0.362 | *-0.081* |
| Sports, Leisure, Culture | 0.259 | 0.218 | *-0.041* |
| Another Volunt. Assoc. | 0.242 | 0.263 | *0.021* |

Two types show consistent declines of over 5 percentage points from 2004 to 2014: religious groups and political parties. The latter change may simply reflect the difference between an off-year and a presidential election year. The other three show negligible and contradictory changes.

**Part H. More Detail about the 2010 Pew “Social Side” Survey**

The 2010 Pew survey, the Social Side of the Internet (Pew Research Center, 2010), has been used for several papers on internet use and social networks but not for the question about associational life.[[7]](#footnote-7) The survey interviewed by phone (including cell phone) about 2,300 adults 18 and older nationally in November and December of 2010. It asked the GSS-style question *twice*, with a different list of group types in each one. These are the results for the *entire* sample, as reported in the documentation.

*Q4 I’m going to read you different types of groups and organizations in which some people are active. Please tell me if you are currently active in any of these types of groups or organizations, or not. (First/Next,) are you currently active in any...[INSERT RANDOMIZE]?. [Percent answering “yes ”in the 2010 Pew and in 2004 GSS.]*

 2010 Pew 2004 GSS

a. Community groups or neighborhood associations 19% ---

b. Church groups or other religious or spiritual organizations 40 32%

c. Sports or recreation leagues, whether for yourself or

 for your child 24 ---

d. Hobby groups or clubs 17 10

e. Performance or arts groups, such as a choir, dance group or

 craft guild 10 ---

f. Professional or trade associations for people in your occupation 20 16

g. Parent groups or organizations, such as the PTA or local parent

 support group 13 15

h. Youth groups, such as the Scouts, YMCA or 4-H 9 11

i. Social or fraternal clubs, sororities or fraternities 8 7

j. Veterans groups or organizations such as the American Legion

 or VFW 7 5

k. Literary, discussion or study groups, such as a book club or

 reading group 11 11

l. Charitable or volunteer organizations, such as Habitat for

 Humanity or the Humane Society 22 ---

m. Consumer groups, such as AAA or coupon sharing groups 24 ---

n. Farm organizations 4 3

*Q7. I’m going to read you another list of groups and organizations in which you might or might not be active. Are you currently active in any...[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE; ALWAYS ASK n LAST]?*

a. Travel clubs 5% ---

b. Sports fantasy leagues 7 ---

c. Gaming communities 6 ---

d. National or local organizations for older adults, such as AARP 15 ---

e. Political parties or organizations 15 4

f. Ethnic or cultural groups 5 ---

g. Labor unions 8 10

h. Support groups for people with a particular illness or personal

 situation 18 ---

i. Alumni associations 14 ---

j. Fan groups for a particular TV show, movie, celebrity, or

 musical performer 6 ---

k. Fan groups for a particular sports team or athlete 9 ---

l. Fan groups for a particular brand, company or product 3 ---

m. Environmental groups 7 ---

n. Other type of social, civic, professional, religious or spiritual

group I haven’t already mentioned (SPECIFY)[[8]](#footnote-8) 3 6

Although the first question is more similar to the GSS question, albeit adding examples in some cases, a few of the standard GSS types appear in the second question along with the novel types. Some of the new kinds of groups got large percentages of yes answers: 24% (!!) of respondents claimed to be active in “consumer groups, such as AAA or coupon sharing groups,” 18% in support groups, 15% in seniors’ organizations, and a sum of 18% in fan groups of some kind. For most of the types that match the 2004 GSS, this Pew survey gets a higher affirmative rate–sometimes by a good deal (e.g., political)–even though the Pew questions ask for *active* involvement.

We analyzed some of the 2010 Pew data for the same two age cohorts as in the UCNets survey. In answer to q. 4, 62% of the young and 73% of the older Pew respondents claimed at least one active membership. In answer to q. 7, the active membership percentages are 48% and 61%. Combining the two questions, 71% of the young and 78% of the older Pew respondents reported at least one active membership. These numbers compare to 57% and 64% who “belong to” at least one group in the 2004 GSS. Clearly, the 2010 Pew sample claimed a greater and a more involving associational life than did the GSS sample.

We also looked at which q. 7 group types were claimed by respondents who claimed no groups in q. 4. For the young, sports fantasy leagues and gaming were notable; for the older respondents, it was the “older adults” and support groups that were noteworthy.

1. Our best estimate of how to reconstruct the underlying national sample was to exclude cases coded “2” on var004 and to not weight. Exploration suggests that this exclusion does not make much difference in the overall numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is not so with all questions: 99 (93) percent of the young (and of the older) respondents who said that they had “served as an officer or on a committee” claimed at least one group membership in the standard question. And 87 (98) percent of those who said they had attended “club meetings” at least seven times a year claimed at least one group membership in the standard question. Yet, when it came to specifics, there was weak reliability between the two types of questions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Table 1 of the Social Capital documentation (“USMISC2006-SOCCAP,” available from the Roper Center), lists the second sample as “Counties: San Mateo, Santa Clara. Part of Alameda County: Fremont, Newark, Union City.” Notes suggest that a special sample of Oakland was also drawn, but that those data were not available in time for the compilation and are not in the downloadable data. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Missing most of Alameda County and all of Marin and Contra Costa counties. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The questionnaire instructs the interviewer to collect all the types that the respondent said yes to first and then go back to each chosen type and ask the follow-up questions (Questionnaire, ballots 4-6, pp. 79-81; personal communication, Jaesok Son [NORC], 8 June, 2021). Thus, the total count of types *should not* have been affected. It is possible, speculatively, that the count of types was depressed if interviewers previewed the follow-up questions or respondents backed out of earlier answers when they realized the work that affirming each type would entail. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. All the male respondents to the 1974 GSS would have been exposed to the draft when they were 18 and many would have served in World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. Only the 50-to-72 year-old men in the 2004 GSS would have been exposed to the draft when they were 18 and may have served only in Korea or Vietnam, far smaller mobilizations than WWII. Veterans increasingly come from the relative few who joined the volunteer military after 1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This conclusion is based on searching Google Scholar and JSTOR. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Pew dataset does not contain the actual specified groups provided by the three percent of respondents. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)