In Defense of Lazy: An Argument for Less Work, More Community

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In recent years, in both Europe and the United States, there has been increasing

interest in the basic income (Lewis, 1998; Van Parijs, 1995; and Widerquist, 1999). This

policy, if implemented, could assume many different forms but the common feature of

them all is that they would stipulate that government grant a universal minimum income

one would not have to sell her labor to receive. The lack of a requirement to supply labor

to receive the grant is a key concern of critics and some of those sympathetic to the basic

income (Phelps, 1997). The concern is that without a work requirement[1] the basic income

would lead to a huge decrease in the supply of labor and, consequently, a decline in our

standard of living. Proponents of a basic income, having been put on the defensive, are

forced to explain why, even with such a policy in place, the vast majority of individuals

would still work.

We address this concern about the impact of the basic income on labor supply in a

different way. We agree that a basic income is likely to reduce labor supply and, thereby,

increase leisure.[2] But we don't think this is necessarily a bad thing. This paper focuses on

the possible benefits of increased leisure. Specifically, we think a basic income might

lead to greater civic participation and, consequently, various positive externalities. Any

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[1]   We use the terms *work* and *labor supply* interchangeably. This is merely for the sake of
convention. That is, we don't mean to suggest that time spent doing something other than working is not
valuable. In fact, as should become clear, the whole point of this paper is to challenge this view.
[2]   We are using the term *leisure* as it is used in mainstream economic theory: time spent not working
for a wage.

analysis of the effects of the basic income that only focuses on the negative consequences of an increase in leisure is incomplete because these effects might be outweighed by the more positive ones we intend to emphasize.

Defining Civic Participation

Social and physical scientists have recently given a lot of attention to the notion of "social networks" (Watts, ; Scott, 2000; Wasserman and Faust, 1997; and Knoke and Kuklinski, 1982). This concept is typically defined using terminology from the branch of mathematics called set theory[3] and we'll do the same (Wasserman and Faust, 1997). As we see it, a social network is set where at least two of its elements are persons. Also, in order for a set to qualify as a social network we must be able to define at least one relation, of interest to social scientists, between at least two elements in the set. For example, let R stand for some relation of interest to social scientists (e.g., has power over, is the sibling of, buys goods from, etc.) and let A be some set with elements a and b where a and b are persons, that is A = {a, b}. Then if aRb (a has power over b, or is the sibling of b, or etc.) set A would be a social network.

In his book, *Bowling Alone* (2000), political scientist Robert Putnam focuses on many different types of social arrangements that fit our definition of social network; he is concerned with participation in bowling leagues, voluntary associations, political clubs, and a host of other networks. Some of the social networks Putnam is concerned with we regard as civic networks. As we see it, social network N is a civic network if and only if

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[3] Actually, it is usually defined using terminology from an area of mathematics called graph theory which, itself, is based on set theory.

at least one of the reasons the persons who constitute N have chosen to take part in N is to change some aspect of some entity they define collectively as a community. Those persons who make up N will be said to be engaged in civic participation or civic involvement. Obviously, to determine if a social network falls into our class of civic networks we would have to somehow gain access to the members' reasons for joining. The survey data set we'll discuss below does not contain such reasons, which is an unfortunate limitation. Thus, we'll rely on what might be called a plausibility argument. That is, in our later quantitative analyses we'll categorize a person's participation in some social network as civic participation if we think it's plausible that at least one of the reasons this person might have chosen to join is to better some collectively defined community. An obvious shortcoming of this approach is that our notions of what's plausible may differ from others. But until we can obtain better data this situation can't be avoided. Having clarified what we mean by civic networks and civic participation, in the next section we discuss why an increase in civic participation might be socially beneficial.

Why Civic Participation Might be Socially Beneficial

In *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam discusses a number of regression models (with states as units of analysis) where he modeled various factors that purportedly measure social benefits on an index he created that purportedly measures the magnitude of participation in various social networks. For example, on page 297 he has a table that contains components of what he calls an index of child welfare. This index is constituted

by percent of low birth-weight babies, the infant mortality rate, the child death rate, percent of children in poverty, and similar measures. On the next page he has a graph showing that his child welfare index varies positively with participation. Putnam also discusses indices of educational performance and states' health status. These too vary positively with participation. Putnam also has data on state murder and age-adjusted mortality rates and these vary negatively with participation. In short, assuming his measures are valid and reliable, Putnam's regression models provide some evidence that participation in social networks result in beneficial outcomes for society.

Since civic participation is a form of social network participation, it may play a role in generating the beneficial social outcomes referred to above. Moreover, civic participation may have an additional benefit. Some civic networks are focused on attaining political objectives and, in the process, educate persons about public affairs. Arguably, this creates a more politically engaged and informed populace, which reinforces our democratic system.

For example, in her recent book – Diminished Democracy (2003), Theda Skocpol traces the decline of national fraternal and other such voluntary associations, especially those structured in a federated hierarchy with active local chapters coordinating their activities with regional and national arms, and argues that the decline of these organizations is largely to blame for a demise in social relationships across socioeconomic classes that once facilitated broad-based political organizing and lobbying. In fact, she blames, in part, the recent polarization of political attitudes and the absence of government policies supportive and protective of disadvantaged populations as results of this decline. Similarly, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady have argued that the

decline in civic participation has hit poor people the hardest, because they no longer have facilitated access to politicians and pathways through which they might become involved in political affairs, campaigns, and elected offices (Schlozman et. al., 1999).

If we are right that civic participation plays a role in generating beneficial social outcomes, then, from a societal point of view, social forces that promote civic participation are to be preferred. Yet recent trends in leisure/labor supply in the United States suggest that civic participation is less than what it might otherwise be.

"The Overworked American"[4]

In mainstream economic theory *leisure* is defined as time one spends not working for a wage. Thus, taking care of children, mowing the lawn, watching a soap opera, and attending a meeting of the American Communist Party are all examples of leisure time as long as one does not make a wage while allocating time in these ways. Economists usually discuss leisure and labor supply in terms of the labor-leisure choice model (Ehrenberg and Smith, 1994).

According to this model, leisure is a good just as a car, pen, or ham is. Just as with other goods, people choose how much leisure to buy based on the constraints they face. An important constraint is the price of leisure or what one gives up by choosing a "unit" of leisure. Since most of us work for a living, what we give up by choosing a unit of leisure is a wage or, more accurately the other goods we could purchase with that wage. Another constraint is a person's non-wage income. Assuming leisure is a what economists call a normal good, due to what they call the income effect, other things being

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[4] . Title of Book by Juliet Schor, 1991, to which much of the material is this section refers.

equal, the higher one's non-wage income the more leisure one buys (and the less labor one supplies). A third set of constraints we call sociological constraints. We have in mind the cultural norms regarding work and leisure that affect people's preferences for leisure. If we accept this model as an adequate way of representing people's choices about how much to work, there is evidence that in recent years the composition of these constraints has led to a significant increase in labor and a corresponding decline in leisure.

According to Juliet Schor, compared to two decades earlier, the average increase in the number of hours Americans are working is163 hours, which translates into one entire month of work per year, based on the 40-hour work week. Women account for most of this increase, as they are working an average of 305 hours more, as compared to men who are working an average of 98 hours more. She tells us that the average workweek has increased by one hour; one-fourth of all full-time workers worked 49 or more hours in their jobs, and half of these worked sixty hours or more in those jobs (Schor, 1991).

The increase in work hours is especially striking among women. Schor estimates the average workweek for employed mothers being 67 hours per week. The average workweek for mothers of young children, mothers on professional tracks, and low income mothers holding down two jobs was even higher, ranging from 70-80 hours per week. Married women have exhibited a significant increase in the average number of hours of work over the past few decades. Since 1950, when approximately one-fifth of married women were working for pay in the labor market, their participation rates have been steadily increasing, such that by 1960, this figure had increased to one-third; by 1980, this figure had increased to half, and by 1990, this figure had increased to two-

thirds (Schor, 1991). With respect to civic participation, the growing decline of leisure time for women is significant, because women have traditionally served as one of the most active groups of foot soldiers in local civic life (Putnam, 2000, p. 189)

Men, too, have experienced a drastic increase in their work hours. While the average number of hours men work per week has declined over the past two decades (a decline of 79 hours over a period of two decades), this decline is accounted for primarily because of the increasing number of men who are out of work all together. Of the men who are working, they are working longer hours (Schor, 1991).

Low wage workers[5] are experiencing the time squeeze as well. Minimum wage workers cannot live on the earnings from one full-time job alone and so many of them take on second jobs, both part-time and full-time, to supplement their incomes. Schor interviewed an official of the Service Employees International Union in New England who reported that nearly one-third of their nursing home employees held two full-time jobs. The decline in full-time stable employment in the low wage labor market has also contributed to the increase in work hours among low wage workers, many of whom take on not just two, but often three and four part-time jobs, or string together a series of temporary jobs, to subsist. In fact, moonlighting is one of the main factors contributing to the drastic increase in work hours. According to Schor, in 1989, "more than seven million Americans, or slightly over 6 percent of those employed, *officially* [italics added] reported having two or more jobs" (Schor, 1991, p. 22). We emphasize *officially* because there may be reason to suspect that some workers might have been hiding the fact that they had a second job. The main reason that moonlighters reported taking on a second

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[5] . Commonly defined as workers whose take home pay is ≤ 1.5 times the poverty threshold given the size of their households.

job was financial. Nearly half reported that they needed the second job to meet regular household expenses (Schor, 1991). For moonlighting low wage workers in particular, it is likely that the provision of a basic income guarantee would result in their cutting back on their work hours, especially if it enabled them to meet their subsistence needs.

Whether increasing the leisure time available to this particular group of workers would increase their levels of civic participation remains to be seen, but at the very least, we are not the only ones to suggest that it might. In **Bowling Alone**, Putnam also suggests that one of the principle causes of civic disengagement among the lowest two-thirds of American wage earners has been the increasing job insecurity in the low wage labor market, the incessant economic pressures to do more work for pay, and declining real wages (Putnam, 2000), all creating a concerted incentive to work more in order to prevent destitution.

Though working two full-time jobs is certainly on the rise, especially among low wage workers, a more common experience for individuals at the bottom of the earnings trajectory is unemployment or underemployment. Both Schor and Putnam report that there is a contingency of workers at the very lowest reaches of the labor market who have not experienced an increase in work hours at all, but rather, a drastic increase in their leisure time – albeit of the forced variety. (Putnam, 2000 and Schor, 1991). It is for this reason that, as Putnam very adeptly points out, taken in the aggregate, there appears to be an overall increase in the total amount of leisure time available to Americans, not a decrease. However, this increase is misleading because, in fact, there has been a redistribution of leisure time from well-educated women, who have historically been

more likely to invest their free time in civic networks, to less educated men, who have historically been more likely to invest their free time in private ways. (Putnam, 2000).[6]

One of the consequences of these increasing work hours is the parallel decline in the total number of leisure hours available to individuals. An overall decline in the availability of leisure time, or, more colloquially, "free time," means that there is an accompanying parallel decline in the total number of hours individuals have at their disposal to dedicate to civic pursuits. A 1988 poll found that between 1973 and 1988, respondents were reporting a 40% decrease in the amount of leisure time they had to "relax, watch TV, take part in sports or hobbies, go swimming or skiing, go to the movies, theater, concerts, or other forms of entertainment, get together with friends, and so forth." Another poll asking respondents whether they had more or less leisure time than they had in previous years found the majority reporting having less (Schor, 1991, p. 22). Since the various activities associated with civic participation, like taking part in local political clubs, parents' associations, etc., all take time (and energy, for that matter), the amount of time individuals are willing and/or able to allocate to such endeavors is likely to decline in proportion to the overall amount of leisure time they have.

It is also important to point out that the nature of the leisure time that does exist is such that it does not facilitate sustained commitment to civic affairs. First, much of the

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[6]. It should also be noted that, when it comes to low wage workers, the principle reasons for their civic disengagement may stem from financial pressures as opposed to time pressures. Though financial anxiety has been known to plague groups other than the working poor, certainly it is likely to be most acute among those who are living closest to the brink of destitution. One likely explanation for why the unemployed and underemployed do not exhibit high rates of civic participation may be that their financial worries and very real economic troubles pose both actual and psychological barriers to getting involved. Financial anxiety, which, by definition, involuntary underemployment and unemployment bring about, is more likely to render people socially withdrawn and cautious, perhaps even passive, rather than socially active, since insecurity causes people to focus more on personal and family survival than the more lofty, optimistic, and abstract goal of general community betterment. Thus, people with lower incomes and people who are financially strapped are the least likely to be active in community life. In fact, Putnam finds that financial anxiety is associated with "less time spent with friends, less card playing, less home entertaining, less frequent attendance at church, less volunteering, and less interest in politics" (Putnam, 2000, p. 193).

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disposable time available to individuals today does not come in solid blocks that could facilitate getting to and attending a substantive meeting, organizing and staffing an event, or even spending some concerted time on the phone organizing a project. Rather, they come in a vast series of small moments just long enough to catch one's breath or run a quick errand. Secondly, civic involvement is a collective endeavor that cannot be carried out by individuals acting alone, and thus, requires not just that individuals have available to them leisure time within which to get involved, but shared leisure time – meaning on similarly coordinated schedules. With more and more Americans working non-traditional hours, with more and more jobs structured outside of the traditional Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm workweek, leisure time that coincides with other people's leisure time has also become a less frequently occurring phenomenon (Putnam, 2000).

The notion that increased leisure time might lead to greater civic participation is neither new nor unique. It was the labor movement itself that, in the years preceding the Great Depression, argued for a shorter work week on the basis of three positive benefits to which reduced work hours would give rise. They were more family time, *more civic time*, and more leisure time (Schor, 1991).

There were some among the business classes who also understood, or rather, in their case, feared, that reduced work hours might lead to more civic participation as well, as Schor reports in the following passage:

> As Saturday work was contested, business "equated increased leisure …
> with crime, vice, the waste of man's natural capacity, corruption,
> *radicalism* [italics added], debt, decay, degeneration, and decline."
> Business warned that idleness breeds mischief – even worse – radicalism.
> The common people had to be kept at their desks and machines, lest they
> rise up against their betters (Schor, 1991, p. 74).[7]

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[7] . Schor is here citing David R. Roediger & Philip S. Foner, 1989, *Our Own Time, A History of American Labor and the Working Class. London: Verso).*

It is clear from this passage that, at least among some businessmen, the fear of increased leisure time was precisely that workers would use that time to become more politically involved, to become more informed and active around the issues that affected them, and that that might, ultimately, lead to their participation in activities that would run counter to the interests of the business class.

In this paper, we seek to present evidence regarding the question of whether increased leisure time would, in fact, lead to greater civic involvement. We do so both by reviewing the research that has already been conducted on this question, as well as by analyzing recent survey data now available on civic participation.

Past Findings

There is very little already existing research on the question of the extent to which persons would allocate any additional leisure time they obtain to civic participation. Nevertheless, a preliminary review of this research provides some evidence, albeit suggestive, pointing to a correlation between leisure time and civic involvement. Most of the examples are pulled from Putnam's analytical work in ***Bowling Alone*** (2000, ch. 11).

In his book, Putnam reports that the most common reason people give for dropping out of community affairs is that they are too busy and they simply do not have enough time, and the main reason why they feel so busy is because they are "working hard most of the time," often staying late at work. According to Putnam, Americans report feeling busier now than they did a generation ago, with 50% more individuals

reporting that they always feel rushed in the 1990s as compared to the 1960s. The groups that feel this time pressure most acutely are full-time workers, especially full-time workers with advanced degrees, women, people between the ages of 25 and 54, parents of younger children, and single parents. (Putnam, 2000, p. 189). Dual earner families, for example, are working on average 14 hours more per week between the two of them in 1998 as compared to 1969. Putnam also adds that some of these subgroups – especially the well-educated wives of middle class professional males, and among them, especially those who are also mothers, are precisely the groups that, in the past, have been the most active in civic affairs (Putnam, 2000, p. 191). For this population in particular, the advent of increased paid work has pulled them away from their community activism, regardless of the reasons that led them to enter the formal labor market.

According to Putnam, the movement of women into the workforce in large numbers is one of the major contributors to the decline in civic participation. Most women, especially women who were full-time homemakers and mothers, invested heavily in what Putnam calls "social capital formation" – meaning, organizing church-based events and gatherings, organizing or attending PTA meetings, and leading or participating in neighborhood improvement initiatives. Not only did women constitute the core of many locally active civic networks and community improvement initiatives during the 1950s and 1960s, but the women who were most active in these local community-based efforts and groups were also the women most likely to join the paid workforce en masse when the opportunity to do so expanded in subsequent decades. The fraction of women who worked outside the home doubled from 1 in 3 in the 1950s to 2 in 3 in the 1990s, thus adding a valuable and productive corps of workers to the American

labor force, but draining these civic organizations of their most valued volunteer leaders (Putnam, 2000, p. 194).

It would be misleading to represent women as being members of fewer public and civic networks as they have moved into the labor force. On the contrary, getting a job outside the home created the opportunity for women to get more involved in public affairs. Women, especially professional women, are now more likely to be members of various organizations, especially professional organizations, than ever before. However, the nature of their membership in these organizations has changed. While they may be present on the membership rolls, and while they may pay their dues and receive the organizational newsletters, women working full-time are not giving much of their actual time and energy to the activities and initiatives of these organizations; they are not carrying out the day-to-day tasks of staffing or leading these organizations' efforts or mandates. Professional women are not as involved in these membership and professional organizations as their counterparts of a generation earlier were in their respective churches, little league clubs, parent associations, and block associations. In fact, over the past three decades, the gap between working women and men has narrowed vis a vis their membership in voluntary organizations, and the intensity of their participation. Men have historically belonged to more organizations but have been less active in them. Women have historically belonged to fewer organizations but have been much more active in maintaining them. Over the past three decades, this difference has virtually disappeared between working women and men (Putnam, 2000, p.195).

Putnam does present some analysis that, though by no means conclusive, provides some very suggestive evidence for the relationship between leisure and civic

participation. Using responses to the DDB Needham Life Style Surveys, he categorizes

women into groups based on whether they reported that they were working full- or part-

time or not at all, and whether they reported they were doing so by choice or by necessity

(Putnam, 2000).[8] He then compares their respective levels of civic participation, using

attendance at club meetings as his measure of intensity, and finds that women who both

prefer to stay at home and do stay at home attend 2.7 more club meetings per year than

the average man, whereas women who prefer to stay at home but have to work full-time

by necessity attend 0.7 more club meetings per year than the average man attends. Thus,

women who both prefer to stay at home and do stay at home attend 2 more club meetings

per year more than their counterparts who must work full-time. To articulate the story

that is being suggested through these data, women who prefer to stay at home are more

likely to become actively involved in local civic affairs than women who prefer to work,

but this is also the group from which the greatest number have been forced to enter the

workforce on a full-time basis by necessity, thereby probably representing one of the

greatest sources of civic disengagement (Putnam, 2000, p. 199-200).

Women working full-time by choice have higher levels of civic involvement than

women who are working full-time by necessity. Women who must work full-time by

necessity are the least likely to be involved in civic pursuits (attending a mere 0.7 more

club meetings per year than the average man). The smallest decline in civic engagement

is among women who would prefer to work. Women who would prefer to work but are

forced to stay at home (usually because of child care responsibilities) attend 1.6 more

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[8] . The graphs he presents in his book, ***Bowling Alone***, taken from pages 197 and 200 respectively, are reproduced in the appendix. Also, we realize that from the perspective of mainstream economic theory the choice necessity distinction is problematic. Unless people are physically or otherwise (e.g., chemically) coerced they always make choices subject to various constraints. We use the choice/necessity language simply because this is the way the women described their predicaments.

club meetings per year, and women who prefer to work and do work attend 1.4 more club meetings per year, both than the average man. As a side note, all the subgroups of women attend more club meetings per year than the average man (Putnam, 2000, 199-201).

Finally, what Putnam finds is that the greatest rates of civic involvement (again measured as attendance at club meetings per year) is among women who work part-time. Women who work part-time by choice go to 3.2 more club meetings, and women who work part-time by necessity go to 2.1 more club meetings, per year, than the average man. Women who work part-time by choice have the highest levels of civic involvement of all these subgroups of women. These are women who not only feel compelled to get involved, but have enough flexibility in their schedule to accommodate the time commitments that accompany such involvement (Putnam, 2000, p. 200). Figure 1 illustrates these results, reproduced from *Bowling Alone*.

Figure 1. Club Meetings Per Year (compared with all Men)		
	Satisfaction	Necessity
Homemaker	2.7	1.8
Part-time Job	3.2	2.1
Full-time Job	1.4	0.7

(reproduced from Putnam, 2000, p. 200)

It should be noted that, while Putnam is using attendance at club meetings as a proxy for civic engagement, he does report elsewhere in his book a very high correlation between club attendance and other types of activities that are commonly associated with civic involvement, such as church attendance, entertaining at home, visiting with friends, and volunteering. Other things being equal, women employed full-time attend church

four times fewer a year, entertain at home one or two fewer times a year, spend about one-third less time visiting with friends, and volunteer four fewer times per year than other women (Putnam, 2000).

In light of our theory that one of the positive benefits of providing a Basic Income Guarantee might be increased civic participation by way of increased leisure time, the following passage found at the conclusion of Putnam's analysis summarized above is particularly compelling:

> This striking fact [that women who work part-time by choice have the highest levels of civic involvement] suggests that one practical way to increase community engagement in America would be to make it easier for women (and men too) to work part-time if they wished (Putnam, 2000, p. 201).

A "side effect" of the decline in women's intensive involvement in community affairs is that there has been a parallel decline in the involvement of their husbands. Whereas before the decline, while men whose wives were involved in the community were not as involved as their wives, they were more involved than men who were unattached to these intensely involved women. These husbands showed up at important annual meetings, or state fairs, to help out, or attended the championship game of little league, or even went to church to partake in the celebration of special holidays or to participate in special events. Now, with their wives no longer dragging them to these functions, they are no longer showing up (Putnam, 2000).

At this point, we want to anticipate a possible misunderstanding. Our points above about wives and husbands should not be taken to mean that we think women's time should be freed up so they can add civic obligations, as well as getting their husbands involved, to their already overburdened schedules. We want both men and women to

have more free time for civic participation. Our points above about wives and husbands is that given, we suspect, gender norms the patterns we referred to have been evident. We're not making the normative point that they should be so.

One pattern that seems, at first, to counterbalance the notion that overwork and a corresponding decline in leisure results in civic disengagement is the tendency of people who are really busy to be precisely the ones most involved in civic pursuits. In the workforce, longer hours seem to be linked to more civic engagement. But Putnam attributes this correlation not to causation – it's not that overwork gives rise to more civic involvement – it's that people who tend to make themselves busy tend to do so in all areas of their lives – the people who become most busy at work are also the ones who will push themselves to get involved in their communities. Nevertheless, civic participation has declined by approximately the same degree in all subgroups of people. While the workers with the most work hours tend to be more civically involved than their counterparts who work less per week, both groups have exhibited a decline in their civic involvement vis a vis where they were a generation ago. (Putnam, 2000).

Disposable Time and Civic Participation: Some New Evidence

Using a dataset very focused on the question of civic engagement in America, created by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University – The Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (2000) – we looked more closely at the relationship between working either part-time or full-time and civic participation. This survey covered a total of 29,700 individuals, consisting of a national random sample of

3,000 and an additional 26,700 individuals drawn from 41 different communities

spanning 29 different U.S. states.

For our dependent variable, we focused on two specific ones that seemed to

capture the measure of interest – that of civic participation. The first is a variable by the

same name, "civic participation," that represents an index of civic involvement with

scores ranging from 0 to 6 based on an individual's involvement in a number of different

activities in the 12 months preceding the survey date.[9] The second is a variable

representing the frequency of volunteering, measured as a count of the number of times

an individual volunteered during the 12 months preceding the survey date. The data for

this variable ranges from 0-60. Figures 2 and 3 provide a quick summary of these two

variables.

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[9] . The civic participation variable is an index ranging from 0-6 based on the number and intensity of
participation in a wide range of civically oriented groups such as organizations affiliated with religion
(other than attending services), adult sports clubs, leagues, and outdoor activity clubs, youth organizations,
parents' associations whose purpose is to provide support to schools, veteran's groups, neighborhood
associations, senior groups, charities or social welfare organizations, labor unions, professional, trade, farm,
or business associations, service or fraternal organizations, ethnic, nationality, or civil rights organizations,
political groups, musical, literary, or arts groups, hobby or investment clubs, self-help programs, and other
clubs or organizations.

Figure 2. Civic Participation (Index)

Y-axis: # Respondents (Frequency), 10,000 / 9,000 / 8,000 / 7,000 / 6,000 / 5,000 / 4,000 / 3,000 / 2,000 / 1,000 / -

Data points: 4,979 (0), 8,798 (1), 7,674 (2), 5,013 (3), 2,129 (4), 640 (5)

X-axis: Civic Participation (Index), 0 1 2 3 4 5

Figure 3. All Respondents

Y-axis: # Respondents, 2500 / 1500 / 500 / -500

Legend: All Respondents

X-axis: # Times Volunteered (Count), 0 8 16 25 33 42 52
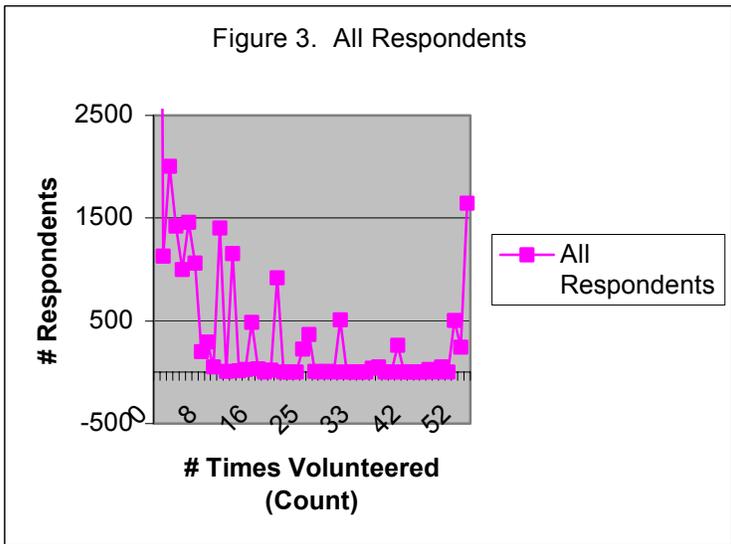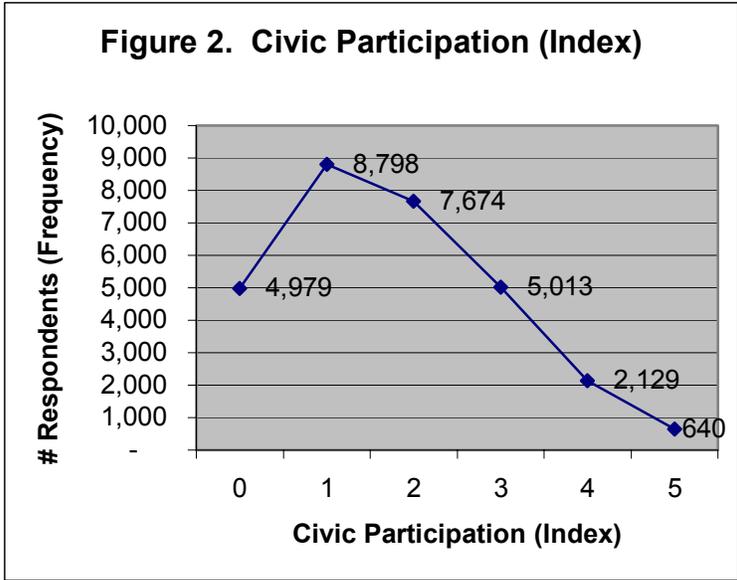
The independent variable that served as the focus of our analysis was an individual's labor force status. We compared working individuals to individuals who were retired, who were full-time homemakers, who were students, who were laid off or unemployed, and who were permanently disabled, and we also compared individuals who were working full-time to individuals who were working part-time. Our main interest was to see whether there was any indication that individuals who were working part-time might be more likely to become civically involved and to volunteer more often than their

full-time working counterparts, and whether those outside of the labor force were more

likely to volunteer than those active within it. Figure 4 represents the employment status

of all the individuals who responded to the survey. Part-time work was defined as work

that averaged up to 32 hours per week, and full-time work was defined as work that

averaged more than 32 hours per week, as reported by the respondents. Combining

workers and those who self-reported as unemployed or laid off, nearly three-quarters of

this representative sample was in the labor force the year prior to this survey. This

distribution highlights the importance of understanding the factors that impact on the

level of civic involvement among working people in order to understand the overall level

of civic participation.

Figure 4. Employment Status (All Respondents)		
	Frequency	**%**
working full-time	16648	57.7
working part-time	3177	10.9
laid off or unemployed	1284	4.4
Retired	4656	16.0
Disabled	991	3.4
Homemaker	1716	5.7
Student	676	1.9
Total	29148	100.0

Civic Participation

Taken alone, we found that an individual's employment status is a significant

predictor of civic participation. As can be seen in Figure 5, the results from a bivariate

OLS regression indicate that, vis a vis working full-time, individuals who are working

part-time are, on average, more civically involved. However, we did not find similar

results for retired people and full-time homemakers, which was somewhat of a surprise as

we predicted that they, too, would be more likely to exhibit high levels of civic

participation.

Figure 5. OLS Regression of Civic Participation on Employment Status
N=29,148

Variables	B	SE	Sig.
Working part-time ($\leq$ 32 hrs/week = 1; > 32hrs/week = 0)	0.09	0.02	0.00 **
Retired (retired =1; not-retired = 0)	-0.08	0.02	0.00 **
Homemaker (homemaker = 1; not homemaker = 0)	-0.30	0.03	0.00 **
Student (student = 1; not student = 0)	-0.35	0.04	0.00 **
Unemployed or Laid Off (unemployed or laid off = 1; not = 0)	-0.48	0.04	0.00 **
Disabled (disabled = 1; not = 0)	-0.46	0.04	0.00 **

** denotes significant at the .01 alpha level. Adj. R^2 = .014.

We then conducted the same analysis, but took into account other factors that

might affect these results, such as gender, whether the individual had children under the

age of 5, their reported overall state of health, their income, and their education. We

looked at gender because, historically, women were more likely to be civically involved,

especially at the local level, than men, (Putnam, 2000, Skocpol, 2003, Crawford and

Levitt, 1999), though to some extent this pattern, too, has been attributed to the fact that

they have had more time available to do so than men. We looked at whether individuals

had children under the age of 5 because we hypothesized that parents of young children

had less disposable time, even if they were not working in the wage labor market, given

the amount of close and constant supervision that such children require [citations?!?!].

We looked at overall health status because we hypothesized that individuals who reported

very poor health would be less likely to allocate a lot of time and energy to civic affairs.

And finally, we looked at income and education because these two factors have been well

established as being important to civic involvement, with both higher levels of income

and higher levels of education predicting higher levels of engagement.

Figure 6. OLS Regression of Civic Participation on Employment Status

N=29,148			
Variables	B	SE	Sig.
Working part-time	.162	.036	0.00**
Retired	.294	.092	0.01**
Homemaker	-.117	.040	0.03**
Student	--0.07584	.066	0.251
Unemployed or Laid Off	-0.2i2	.056	.000**
Disabled	0.137	.080	.085
1999 Total household income	0.135	.009	.000**
Gender	0.05305	.026	.039*
Kids 5 and Under (kids 5 and under = 1; not = 0)	-0.101	.013	.000**
Education	0.209	.008	.000**
Overall Health	0.05464	.013	.000**

** sig. at .01; * sig. at .05. Adj. R^2 = .175.

Figure 6 presents the results of an OLS regression of civic participation with employment status controlled for annual household income[10], gender, number of children under the age of 5, level of education[11], and overall health[12]. The model, even after controlling for these variables, was, for the most part, unchanged. Working part-time was not only still positively correlated to civic participation when compared to individuals working full-time, but the coefficients were greater, meaning that, once controlling for factors such as gender, number of children, and health, those who were working part-time had an even greater average civic participation index than those working full-time. There are a number of reasons why this might be so. First, one reason individuals work part-time rather than full-time is because they are caring for young children, which then means that, despite the fact that they are working fewer hours in the waged labor force, the number of hours they have available as real disposable time may

[10] . Let "x" denote 1999 total household income and "f(x)" a function of x that specifies how x is coded. Then f(x) = 0 if x < 20K; 1 if 20K < x < 30K; 2 if 30K ≤ x < 50K; 3 if 50K ≤ x < 75K; 4 if 75K ≤ x ≤ 100K; 5 if x > 100K.
[11] . Education values are less than high school (1), high school/GED (2), some college (3), associate's degree/technical college (4), bachelor's degree (5), some graduate training (6), graduate degree (7).
[12] . Health values are poor (0), fair (1), good (2), very good (3), and excellent (4).

not be much different than those who are working full-time. Once the impact of having to care for young children is held constant, the contrast between those who are working full-time and those who are working part-time increases.

Another interesting change was among retired persons. Once their overall health was held constant, it became clear that they, too, are more civically involved than individuals who work full-time. Also of note is that, as predicted, having children under the age of 5 has a negative impact on an individual's propensity to become civically involved. Income and education had a positive impact on civic participation, as did overall health and gender.

A surprising finding is that full-time homemakers, on average, have a significantly lower civic participation index than non-homemakers. One might argue that this is due to the fact that full-time homemakers typically have substantial childrearing duties. This should be captured, in part, by controlling for children under five. Obviously children at least five years old need care as well and, perhaps, the homemaker estimated effect is downwardly biased because it's captured the effect of having older children on civic participation. We intend to investigate this in later work.

Frequency of Volunteering

Civic participation measures the number of different associations in which individuals participate, rather than the total amount of time they allocate to such civically-oriented activities. In order to explore the impact of wage work time on the allocation of time to volunteer activities, we also conducted analysis of a volunteer

frequency variable – specifically, the number of times an individual volunteered in the prior 12 months. This measure is taken directly from respondents' self-reported counts, in answer to the question – "how many times in the past twelve months have you volunteered?" – it represents a variety of volunteer activities. Figure 7 provides an overview of the kinds of organized volunteer efforts in which survey respondents took part, and the percentage of individuals who affiliated themselves to these voluntary associations.

Figure 7.
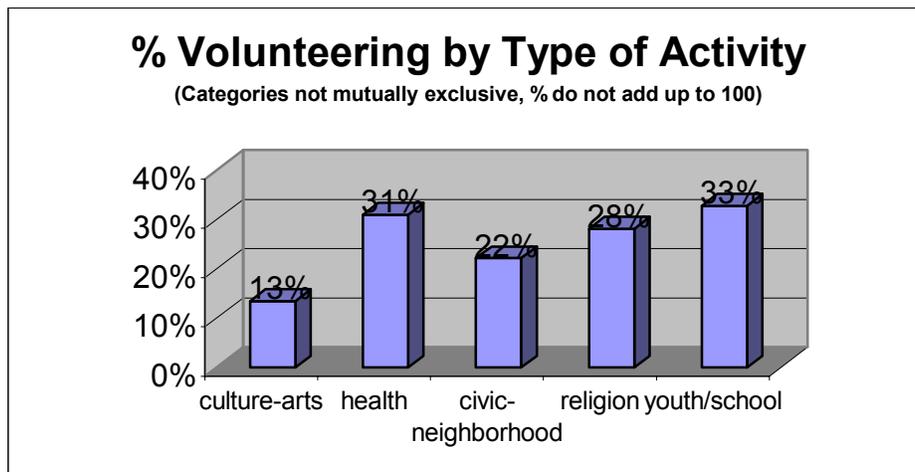
We tested the same models already mentioned, but this time using the frequency of volunteering as the dependent variable. Figure 8 presents the results that these models generated – both using OLS regression. The first model consists only of the employment status categories, and the second includes the control variables.

Figure 8. OLS Regression of the Number of Time Volunteered by Employment Status						
N=All Respondents						
	Model 1			**Model 2**		
Indpdt Vbls	B	SE	Sig.	B	SE	Sig.
Working part-time (up to 32 hrs)	2.82	0.32	0.00	2.614	0.482	0.000

Retired	1.81	0.27	0.00	1.752	1.241	0.158
Homemaker	3.77	0.39	0.00	4.518	0.541	0.000
Student	0.20	0.54	0.71	0.849	0.897	0.344
Unemployed or Laid Off	-1.75	0.47	0.00	0.244	0.755	0.746
Disabled	-1.49	0.53	0.01	1.639	1.078	0.128
1999 Total household income				0.968	0.123	0.000
Gender				2.719	0.348	0.000
Kids 5 and Under				-1.446	0.175	0.000
Education				1.070	0.103	0.000
Overall Health				0.465	0.172	0.007

highlighted cells significant at the .01 level Adj. R^2 = .008.   Adj. R^2 = .058.

According to the models presented in Figure 8, individuals working part-time volunteer more often than those working full-time. Once controlling for factors such as health status, education, income, gender, and having children under the age of five, the strength of this association wanes slightly, but the predictive power of part-time work still holds strong and significant at 2.614. Retired persons and homemakers also seem to volunteer more frequently than full-time workers, though in the model containing the control variables, while the effect of being a homemaker increases, the effect of retirement ceases to be significant.

It is suspected that there may be an interaction between gender and retirement such that female retired persons are much more likely to volunteer than male retired persons. This may be creating downward bias in the estimate retirement effect. The question of the impact of retirement on the level of civic participation is of particular interest, because the provision of a basic income would, in many ways, mimic the impact of pensions and other retirement funds on the options for choosing leisure over waged labor available to older persons. Thus, it is a question to which we will return.

The homemaker variable becomes more of a mystery. Recall that in the full civic participation model (see Figure 6) it was significant in the direction opposite that we

predicted. But in both of the models in Figure 8 it's significant in the predicted direction. Thus, we are led to believe that when a number of activities are considered to construct an index of civic participation homemakers participate less than non-homemakers. But when a simple count of the number of times one has participated is considered, the opposite is the case. We're truly puzzled by this finding and intend to explore it in future work.

Because the particular focus of interest in this paper is the impact that a basic income would potentially have for working persons, we also looked specifically at the contrast in civic participation and the frequency of volunteering amongst workers alone, comparing part-time workers to full-time workers. In addition, we incorporate one more control variable – that of commuting time – on the hypothesis that workers who need to commute over far distances will have fewer disposable hours to dedicate to civic pursuits, even when compared to their counterparts who work longer official hours.

Figure 9. OLS Regression of Civic Participation and Volunteer Frequency by Work Status N=19,858 (Wage/Salaried Workers Only)						
Dependent Variable:	Adj. R^2 =.161 Model 1: Civic Participation			Adj. R^2=.043 Model 2: # Times Volunteered		
	B	SE	Sig.	B	SE	Sig.
Working part-time (up to 32 hrs)	0.135	0.040	0.001	2.733	0.514	0.000
1999 Total household income	0.131	0.011	0.000	0.593	0.141	0.000
Gender	0.06320	0.029	0.029	2.435	0.376	0.000
Kids 5 and Under	-0.123	0.016	0.000	-1.248	0.204	0.000
Education	0.207	0.009	0.000	1.036	0.115	0.000
Overall Health	0.06476	0.015	0.000	0.256	0.201	0.204
Commute Hours	-.01139	0.031	0.712	-1.660	0.402	0.000

Highlighted coefficients are significant at the 0.01 level

When we compare part-time workers to full-time workers (Figure 9) we still find that part-time workers volunteer more, on average, and this is the case for both dependent variables. The difference in the impact of comparing these two groups vis a vis civic participation and the frequency of volunteering is most probably due to the fact that civic participation is more a measure of the state of being involved in various civic groups whereas the frequency of volunteering is more a measure of the actual amount of time dedicated to these pursuits, and thus is more directly and immediately impacted upon by factors that compete for the same limited amount of time available to all individuals. In other words, an individual who is a member of a number of different clubs might first decrease the number of club meetings he attends in response to increased work hours, rather than drop out of the club altogether, though obviously, eventually there would be an impact of the competing demands on his time on his civic group memberships as well.

The Impact of Television

Last but not least, we would like to address the potential, and well deserved, challenge that most people who gain free time – real free time – will allocate those precious hours toward more television viewing than toward becoming involved in their community by joining a local voluntary association. It is to television that many civic engagement scholars as of late have been pointing their reprimanding fingers in blame for the decline of Toqueville's idyllic community of joiners (Putnam, 2000, Ray 1999, Skocpol, 2003, Tocqueville, ????). While we do not purport, within the confines of this limited project, to address conclusively this question, given the importance of this factor,

both substantively and statistically, to our models, we present our models once again incorporating television viewing time.

Figure 10. Civic Participation and Volunteer Frequency by Work Status						
N=19,858 (Wage/Salaried Workers Only)[13]						
	Adj. R^2 =.169			Adj. R^2 = .045		
Dependent Variable:	Model 1: Civic Participation			Model 2: # Times Volunteered		
	B	SE	Sig.	B	SE	Sig.
Working part-time (up to 32 hrs)	0.131	0.039	0.001	2.742	0.515	0.000
1999 Total household income	0.118	0.01	0.00	0.523	0.141	0.000
Gender	0.05413	0.03	0.06	2.394	0.377	0.000
Kids 5 and Under	-0.118	0.02	0.00	-1.235	0.205	0.000
Education	0.198	0.01	0.00	0.985	0.116	0.000
Overall Health	0.05710	0.02	0.00	0.195	0.202	0.335
Commute Hours	-.01393	0.03	0.52	-0.286	0.074	0.000
TV Hours	-.04747	0.01	0.00	-1.641	0.402	0.000

Highlighted coefficients are significant at the 0.01 level

Figure 10 represents the two models of civic participation and the frequency of volunteering with work status – whether an individual worked full-time or part-time, with a number of control variables already discussed, and television viewing hours. As can be seen when comparing the resulting coefficients with previous models, the impact of adding television viewing hours on the relationship of the other factors on both civic participation and the frequency of volunteering is negligible, suggesting that the potential positive impact of additional leisure time on increased civic participation hold even after controlling for the fact that many will watch more television. In other words, those who would use spare time to watch more television will do so, but even after taking these additional television viewing hours into account, the potential for an increase in civic involvement still holds.

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[13] We intend to conduct analyses that include non-wage workers at a later time.

Concluding our analyses, we present, in the words of "lazy" himself, a window into what he would intend to do with additional free time. When they survey respondents were asked whether there were any barriers that prevented them for being as civically engaged as they would like, almost half (48%) replied that there were. Among those who replied that they would be more civically involved in the absence of these barriers, over half (56%) reported that the most important barrier to civic engagement was their work schedule or inadequate child care. This barrier surpassed all other barriers by more than 50%, with the second foremost barrier reported lagging behind at 34%. Figure 11 lists all of the barriers included in this question, and the corresponding percentage of individuals who indicated the barrier is very important.

Figure 11. Importance of Barriers to Increased Civic Engagement			
N=Respondents who would be more civically involved in the absence of these barriers			
	% Not Important	% Somewhat Important	% Very Important
Work Schedule or Inadequate Childcare	20%	24%	56%
Inadequate Transporation	60%	15%	25%
Feeling Unwelcome	55%	26%	19%
Safety Concerns	47%	19%	34%
Lack of Information, Not Knowing How	34%	36%	30%
Feeling Cannot Make Difference	48%	31%	20%

Basic Income as a Subsidy for Leisure

If civic participation helps promote the beneficial effects on child welfare, health, etc. discussed earlier in the paper, and if leisure varies positively with civic participation, an economic argument can be made for providing an incentive for people to "buy" more leisure. In mainstream economic theory the concept of "positive externality" is discussed.

It refers to "spillover" benefits that result from a given individual's choice that she does not take into effect when making the choice. Also, these spillover effects are not reflected in market prices (Mas-Collel, Whinston, and Green, 1995). For example, suppose Henry has tuberculosis and decides to purchase treatment. Although Henry doesn't consider it when deciding to buy treatment not only will it benefit him but also others in the form of reduced likelihood of contracting the illness. Economists frequently argue that when faced with positive externalities we can make some better off without making anyone else worse off (a so called Pareto improvement) by subsidizing the cost of the good that generates the externality (Mas-Collel, Whinston, and Green, 1995).

At the beginning of this paper, we mentioned that increasing attention has been paid to the basic income and that a frequent criticism of this policy is that it would lead to too much of a decrease in labor supply. Considering our findings, discussed above, and our comments in the previous paragraph, it may be time to reconsider this criticism. Perhaps the decrease in labor supply will lead to an increase in civic involvement and a host of positive externalities having to do with crime, health, etc. That is, perhaps a basic income, by "subsidizing" leisure, would lead to a net gain in efficiency instead of a net decrease as is so often argued.

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