

BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL, THE POWER AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESSES: A STORY OF TWO CITY CLUBS

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Bridging Social Capital, the Power and Development of Transformative Processes:  
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This research examines the dynamics and workings of bridging social capital through a comparison of the Cleveland and Portland City Clubs. Bridging social capital differs from most common conceptions of social capital (often referred to as bonding social capital) in that the associational connections seek to cross an important boundary that has marked an association at a particular point in time. Each of these clubs excluded women until the 1970's; both have also sought to build a cohort of young professionals over the last decade. The goal of this research is to understand the processes behind integrating these two populations into their respective clubs to expose the development of bridging social capital. Scholars have increasingly noted that associations which can build viable bridges often experience transformative outcomes – including the broadening or re-visioning of an association's mission and its impact within the community. However, due to certain structuralist methodological and theoretical predispositions, most bridging research can often point to the existence of these outcomes but cannot explain how they transpired. How bridging relations operate and produce transformative outcomes is still poorly understood.

This dissertation uses a historicist approach to address those shortcomings. It reveals that bridging relations are far more dynamic than previously presented. Bridging relations can often mitigate, and be mitigated by, politics. How they do this is crucial to their success and the outcomes they produce. I argue that acts of power articulation and capacity development are important elements in building successful bridges. Institutional variations, the creative agency of actors, and the histories of these clubs within their communities help form the playing field through which these elements unfold. To understand this complex nexus and how it produces transformative outcomes, scholars need to study bridging relations over time and within the context from which they emerge.

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Dedicated to Joan Durant Maye

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation looks at two civic associations, the City Club of Cleveland and the City Club of Portland, from a social capital perspective. The city club movement emerged during the Progressive Era as a response to the economic, social, and political challenges that communities faced during the period. The basic goal of the movement was to bring men together in a social setting with a civic purpose, where discourse and the building of relationships could provide clarity amid the forces of social change. Both clubs excluded women until the early 1970s, and each has pursued young professionals as new members over the past ten years. The purpose of this research is to examine how each of these populations integrated, or “bridged,” into the clubs in order to fully understand the processes and dynamics behind such boundary crossings and their role in social capital development.

The use of social capital as an analytic tool over the past twenty years has quickly spread across the social sciences and garnered interest among the general public. Social capital, commonly presented as the social relations and networks that constitute our lives and the norms that animate those relations, has been linked to individual and communal outcomes large and small. This includes the relationship between the quality of a country’s civic life and the strength and responsiveness of its democratic institutions. One of the most important advances in the subject has come from its leading proponent, Robert Putnam. This is the distinction between “bonding” social capital and “bridging” social capital (Putnam 2000). Bonding is the idea that “birds of a feather flock together,”

where people associate around a common pursuit or interest—the baseball team, the choral society, the Italian American League. Bridging represents a more complex form of association—where people come together across boundaries of difference, real or imaginary, often in an attempt to achieve a goal or address a problem. Putnam has referred to bridging as a sociological “WD40” because it can lead to transformative effects. In making the distinction between these two types, he likens bridging to network analysts’ observations of “weak ties,” networks that transverse boundaries and distance. These types of connections often avail actors of new resources, new cultural and discursive frames, leading to new outcomes. Two very basic questions at the heart of this research are, how do bridges form, and how do they produce transformative effects?

Part of the challenge of this research lies with the direction social capital theory and methodology have taken over the past two decades. Bridging relations are very complex. They are temporal in nature and sensitive to changes in the political and social landscapes. Most social capital research, including most bridging research, is dominated by structural means of explanation. Tools such as cross-national surveys and network analysis, however, cannot unpack the complex workings of bridging relations so much as they are able to take “snapshots” of them at distinct points in time. The result is that much of the social capital research has decontextualized the very relations they look to study, lifting them out of the milieu in which they are embedded. However, a small sampling of the bridging case studies that do exist, when paired with feminist critiques of social capital, suggest a handful of factors that can be tracked to explicate how bridges form and develop. These works suggest that bridging is very much a continual process. It is temporal and can ebb and flow based on a number of factors. Bridges are not simply

made by people crossing boundaries. Actors need to be able to negotiate their “place” in the association, and there often needs to be a rearticulation of power relations. They also have to build the capacity to add to the normative and productive commitments of the association. Often this takes place through participatory venues. Last, bridging needs to culminate in mutually constructed outcomes. This can be the direction the association maps out for itself, leadership decisions, or other work product. It is in here that the “WD40” effect is often found. This research will employ qualitative methods, relying primarily on interviews, observation of the clubs at work, and discourse analysis to examine how these factors inform bridging.

These clubs offer a strong opportunity for comparing how associations create bridging social capital. Of the more than two dozen clubs to come out of the city club movement, these two are the only clubs to survive in their original form, still carrying out the mission that propelled them into existence more than a hundred years ago. Many scholars using traditional measures would likely argue that the long life and continued existence of these institutions indicate their strong reserves of social capital. Indeed, their bucking the trend of associational decline over the past forty years would seem to confirm this. By the 1950s each of these clubs, by their own estimations, had become a collection of (mostly) white male lawyers over the age of fifty. Over most of their histories, both clubs observed the gender barrier that has characterized much of associational life in the United States. This barrier would come under attack in both cities, leading Cleveland to admit women in 1972 and Portland in 1973. In addition, as their membership continued to get older and grayer, the clubs also started pursuing young professionals around 2000. Each would set up a “New Leaders” program, making these

younger members a separate arm of the club. Here we have two apparently strong cases of social capital, with similar overall membership populations and equally similar but discrete bridging populations who would seek to integrate at roughly the same time.

Outside of their shared origins and similar bridging populations, these clubs are very different in their operation. This has helped lead to a very different “culture” in each club. It has also resulted in each club occupying a very different place in the political landscape and in their community’s political discourse. Both of these factors would inform acts of contestation and power articulation as these groups attempted to define their places within the clubs at the outset. They would also shape those bridging relations once they were members. In many ways it is on these differences between the clubs and their positions in the community that this comparison turns.

Each of these clubs focuses on civic affairs and holds regular forums where speakers address current affairs in presentations to club members. However, Portland also has a significant research apparatus that engages in long-term research studies and the examination of ballot measures. This is coupled with an advocacy program that promotes the adoption and implementation of research recommendations. This work is driven and carried out by its membership, giving the Portland club a greater participatory character than its Cleveland sibling. Cleveland has committees too, but they are focused on club administration and are more “inward” focused. Not only is Portland’s “participatory sphere” larger, but these committees also have greater autonomy and their gaze is directed outward toward community issues. Most social capital research treats participation in associations simplistically and does not tease out the importance of such

distinctions, yet these are important areas of potential capacity building. How do such variations in the type and volume of participation shape bridging outcomes?

The act of producing reports and presenting recommendations to the public would give Portland a different relationship to the community than Cleveland. Each club would become an important civic institution in its city, its politics, and its political discourse. However, the forum-versus-research-based difference between these clubs would mean they occupied different places within their communities' important cultural categories and discourses. In Cleveland the club presided *over* its community's important political discussions, by serving as a space for speakers and political debates. Although it played no role in informing the debates, it gained stature in the community that would lead to a reification of its place in the community and of the club leadership. This would result in a more insular "insider" culture. Portland, on the other hand, developed a habit of turning its research lens on itself, examining its effectiveness and mission, leading to a more open club culture. By publishing its research reports, it also placed itself in the *middle* of many community debates. This opened it up to criticism and gave it a constructive role in community debates that Cleveland would never experience. Once the bridges were crossed, this would present two different bridging environments for women and young professionals. How would these institutional differences shape their experiences? It would seem this would enable more chances for mutually constituted outcomes in Portland. Does it? Does it matter?

Last are issues of power. Social capital research does not talk about power. Only when scholars of gender critique social capital is the subject of power raised. Outside of the fact that social capital networks reflect gendered notions of power and gender



inequalities, how power operates in social capital is still poorly understood. But it does appear that when actors bridge, they must in some way address the already existing power relations within those associations. How do they do this? Certainly, we must consider the agency and creativity of the actors (on both sides of potential bridges). What if bridging is contested, as it was with women? Does the way in which they mount a challenge matter? Does the way the clubs responded matter? How do institutional variations impact rearticulations of those power relations once the “crossing” has happened? Does the club’s place in political discourse have an impact on all of this? How important is power to mutually constituted outcomes? To put it more succinctly, how have the differences between these clubs and their histories impacted the power articulation, capacity building, and mutually constituted outcomes important in bridging? These are the research questions this project seeks to answer.

This dissertation will proceed as follows: chapter 2 will provide a critique of social capital theory and research, exposing potential problems and offering a way to more appropriately conceptualize the study of bridging relations; chapter 3 will examine the clubs as institutions and their place within community discourse; chapter 4 will unpack the bridging experiences of these two populations, determining where they were successful and where they were not; and chapter 5 will offer concluding thoughts.

This body of work is built on fieldwork conducted in the summer and fall of 2011 and the winter and spring of 2013, totaling two months in each city over that period. It includes more than forty interviews, twenty committee and forum observations, and a review of hundreds of club documents. Each club’s position in its community’s political discourse was based on a thirty-year survey of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the

*Portland Oregonian*, covering the years from 1960 to 1990. All interview and committee recordings, transcriptions, and notes are available upon request. Members are usually cited with minimal identifying information to preserve anonymity.

## CHAPTER II

### SOCIAL CAPITAL: CRITIQUES AND REFINEMENT

The puzzle of bridging social capital has proved difficult to unpack, in part because these relationships are inherently complex. Relations can switch from bridging to bonding over time. They are temporal. They can also vary, based on perspective or position within institutions—what is seen as a bridge for one actor may not be perceived as such by another. When has a bridge been successfully forged? Should we perceive Putnam’s “WD40” effect if bridging has been successful? What would that look like? Most social capital research has focused on bonding social capital or social capital in a general sense, without distinguishing between bonding and bridging. Only a relatively small body of work has targeted bridging. Outside of network understandings of what constitutes a bridge, there is still much to be learned about bridges. In addition to these challenges, social capital research has received significant criticism regarding the fundamental elements of its project; three of those criticisms are particularly relevant to this dissertation. First, the nexus of norms, associations, and participation, and how it leads to causal outcomes, has been increasingly challenged because the relationship is not as straightforward as scholars have posited. Second, feminist scholars have also illustrated that social capital research has been largely silent on the issue of gender, betraying an indifference to questions of power inherent in social capital theory and research. Power relations—how they are articulated and possibly rearticulated—appear to have significant implications for bridging development. Last, institutions and associations

have unfortunately received very little in-depth treatment regarding their role in social capital development. Neo-Tocquevillians often present institutions in an unproblematic fashion—either associations work their magic or they don't. However, the nature and differences between associations and institutions also appear to have important implications for the evolution of bridging relations and social capital development. Through an examination of these criticisms, questions regarding the complexity of bridging can also be addressed. This is the goal of this chapter. Below I will open by addressing the historical usage of the concept of social capital. By focusing on important elements in the concept's emergence, it then becomes easier to address some of its major criticisms, as well as to clarify the function and development of bridging. From this, I will proceed with a discussion of institutions and gender, closing with a look at bridging.

### *Clarifying Definitions and Meanings of Social Capital*

It has been argued by some that the concept of social capital has become conceptually chaotic, that it has developed a conceptual appetite, used to explain everything from the social prosperity of nations to poor dental health and mental psychosis within communities (Fine 2010). Some have argued that social capital can work only on an intimate level, such as between family and friends, and should be more narrowly focused (Portes 2000; Robteutscher 2002). In opening this chapter I wish to briefly look at definitions. Some of the strongest critiques below involve issues of context, power, and purpose. By engaging Putnam's definitions with earlier conceptions of the Progressive Era, I look to preempt some of those issues by proposing a more specific and tighter definition of social capital.

Putnam defines social capital as “features of social organizations, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action” (1993, 167); he later defines it more simply as “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (2000, 19). In a short period his definition of social capital went from having a collective action and political focus to a more general sociological one. To this new definition he would add the distinction of bonding and bridging. He views social capital as being a private good that can improve the lives of individuals and a collective good that produces positive spillover benefits for society, including civic engagement, political participation, and greater capacity for collective action. His research has progressively sought to place culture more squarely at the center of analysis of these public goods. In this endeavor he not only looks at participation in associations such as choral societies and sports teams, but also broadens his scope to include time spent watching television, the decline of dinner parties, and the rise of two-parent working households to gain a fuller understanding of this relationship. At the heart of Putnam’s work is an attempt to draw a causal line from individual associational involvement to the development of more public norms and ultimately to increased civic engagement. Although his focus may often be on everyday life, his end gaze has always been on political performance from the bottom up.

Putnam cites as some of his main influences James Coleman, whose own views on social capital were informed by the rational-choice perspective; Jane Jacobs and her community-centered approach to neighborhood development; and Pierre Bourdieu and his belief that social capital springs from the resources often bound up in social networks.

Putnam's formulation of social capital is often seen as an attempt to strike a middle ground among these theorists, one that addresses the "dilemmas" of rational-choice theory, often through community-based associational action that utilizes the resources bound up in networks (2000, 19-20, 415-16). Although this view of social capital generally became the accepted norm of most social capital research, it would soon come under criticism for claiming too much while leaving out important explanatory factors (discussed below). There may be plenty of correlation in social capital arguments, but there is often little causation on display, as well as much disagreement about what causal claims are made.

This late-twentieth-century iteration of social capital shares much in common with its earlier progenitor from the Progressive Era, yet there are important differences. James Farr (2004) traces the genealogy of social capital to the social center movement of that period. The latter was a "focalization of many movements," including the settlement house movement, civic club movement, community music, reading circles, library extensions, and university extensions, according to its principal organizer, Edward Ward. The movement was reflective of the larger Progressive Era tradition of seeking to strengthen democracy through education and broadening avenues for civic participation in order to develop a more deliberative and capable citizenry. A key element in this confluence was the Social Center Program, established in 1907 in Rochester, New York, and overseen by Ward. The Social Center Program was financed by the city and opened high schools in the evenings, making them available to residents to socialize, engage in recreational activities together, and discuss civic affairs. These centers were sites of social mixing that transcended boundaries of economics, class, and gender through

interaction and discourse (something that rarely happened in traditional associational and club settings of the period). It would not be uncommon to see a working-class immigrant, a female factory worker perhaps, debating a college professor on how to solve neighborhood problems (Farr 2004; Mattson 1998).

Social centers grew out of popular demand as opposed to the paternalism of settlement houses such as Hull House, representing desires among community members to enhance their deliberative skill and respond to normative concerns. They were characterized by local control and a clear political focus. Soon after the program started, centers in individual schools began forming their own civic clubs. The City Club of Rochester, for example, grew out of the popularity and civic fervor inspired by this movement and was founded two years later (McKelvey 1947). The residents of these communities would decide who to invite as speakers as well as what topics they would debate in the evening at their civic club. Working to build the public's deliberative skills was a conscious goal of many of these clubs and stated clearly in their charters (Mattson 1998, chap. 3). With their inception, civic clubs quickly began establishing the membership networks associated with contemporary notions of social capital. Civic club events were well attended. In 1910 nineteen separate clubs held 350 meetings, where attendance of between one and three hundred people per event was not uncommon. In those early years membership grew on average 25 percent a year. The events were advertised and reviewed in the local papers, and the clubs quickly wove themselves into the civic and public life of Rochester (Mattson 1996, 55-56).

The language describing the clubs would also be familiar to any scholar of social capital. When touting the benefits to members of the community, head of the National

Education Administration Kate Upson Clark noted rhetorically “what the public may expect in dividends: material, civic, and social” (quoted in Farr 2004, 13). This very real and practical understanding also had a normative component, reflective of the same commitments at the center of Putnam’s study of associational life. Social centers and their civic clubs were seen as reflective of “the old town sentiment and social sympathy and power of cooperation among good people” (Mattson 1996, 49, quoting “Schools as Social Centers,” in the *Independent*, July 14, 1904, 111, from Eleanor Touroff Gluek, *The Community Use of Schools* [Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1927]).

The actual phrase “social capital” does not appear until 1916 (Farr 2004; Putnam 2000). State supervisor of rural schools for West Virginia L. J. Hanifan, influenced by the social center movement and the way it placed schools at the center of public life, wished to replicate it in rural areas of his state. He opened his argument for turning rural schools into community centers in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science and Social Sciences* thus:

In the use of the phrase *social capital* I make no reference to the usual acception of the term *capital*, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tend to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit, the rural community, whose logical center is the school. In community building as in business organization and expansion there must be an accumulation of capital before constructive work can begin. (1916, 130, quoted in Farr 2004, 11 [emphasis in the original])



In Hanifan's use of "social capital," as well as the language above regarding civic clubs, we see the norms and relations that are fundamental to social capital—which is why Putnam and Farr credit him with originating the phrase. However, Hanifan's use in this context refers to what is clearly a political project. This presentation to the *Annals* was part of a political endeavor meant to mobilize activists to turn rural schools into social centers, like Rochester, and build the rural communities' civic capacity. Compare this to Putnam's quote of Hanifan's same presentation. Notice that he leaves out any mention of schools or that the "there must be an accumulation of capital before work can begin."

Those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people, namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among individuals and families who make up a social unit. . . . The individual is helpless, if left to himself. . . . If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions of the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantage of the help, sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors. (2000, 19)

The removal of the sentence and a half from the original quote changes the tone, if slightly. The change has muted the importance of civic capacity and engagement that activists were consciously trying to develop in the social center movement and Hanifan was trying to replicate in West Virginia. I don't mean to put too much of a fine point on the editorial considerations of one quote in Putnam's highly regarded work. Yet these

editorial choices reveal how Putnam is moving social capital away from what was consciously a political development project, while trying to keep it tethered to political outcomes at the same time. Social capital for Progressive Era activists was not something that existed at an ambient level, but happened to produce unintended spillovers and positive outcomes—as Putnam increasingly argues. It was a conscious, direct effort at building civic capacity within the community. It was focused, purposeful, and directly political in a way that later iterations were not. Social capital for early activists was “developmental” in the modern political science use of the term. It was about building capacity within communities to facilitate long-term durable shifts in power. Social capital was a conscious effort to build the “riverbanks” that constituted Dewey’s “publics.”

Consider Putnam’s historical chapter in *Bowling Alone* (chapter 23). It is a great treatment of Progressive Era movements and how they contributed to the developmental nature of social capital. Compare it with his long list of various apolitical associations that form the empirical basis of his two major works on the subject (1993, 2000). In his historical analysis he perceives the same dynamics and causal implications as Farr and Mattson, and his gaze is on the same politically charged movements and their goals. However, when he engages in contemporary analysis, there is a distinct shift away from politics and context. The aggregate of associations at the center of his empirical analysis bears none of the clear political purpose or direct efforts to build civic capacity that Progressive Era associations connected with the term had. In this shift Putnam has made the term generic where it once had a particular focus, while still trying to link it to politics. This is both a source of attractiveness in his research and the basis for some of his strongest criticism. Yes, the concept is still normatively informed and still based on

the benefits *and* affections of associations. On the other hand, it was previously seen as also highly discursive and characterized by participatory settings, whose aim was to build capacity and power within communities in response to a changing social context. This more nuanced meaning, with its embeddedness in context and implicit understanding of power relations, would be glossed over in Putnam's more muted new formulation and much of the research that followed.

For Putnam the concept is an apolitical one, which then also has indirect political implications. For early activists, on the other hand, the concept was political from the start, and its linkage to political outcomes was the reason for its development. This decoupling of social capital from its direct relationship with politics is a source of major criticism. Citing Putnam's failure to include actions by the state and the role of social movements—and how both of these forces have historically shaped mobilization, civic engagement, and the development of social capital—critics have shown that an apolitical understanding of social capital obscures important facets in its evolution (Skocpol 1997; Tarrow 1996). State institutions (such as the US Postal Service), access to the franchise, and the ebb and flow of related social movements have all had a direct impact on important social capital indicators. Indeed, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the movement around it, appears to have played an important role in women pushing for and gaining access to both Portland's and Cleveland's city clubs.

Do the strength and quality of our relational lives—both personal and associational—have a direct impact on the quality of our public lives and institutions? Yes, and this is part of the wonderful insight of Putnam's work. But when the apolitical understanding of social capital (with its unintended “spin-offs”) eclipses its political and

developmental origins, it can obfuscate its directly political character and developmental nature, while opening it up for criticism. Through a more politically informed notion of social capital—one that considers context, power, and building civic capacity as fundamental to its development—I seek to address the major criticism directed at its research project, while also clarifying bridging processes and development.

### *Institutions, Associations, and Participation*

Associational membership has become the indicator of choice when determining the destruction or formation of social capital (Stolle and Rochon 2001). However, the role of associations in social capital development is still contested. Not all associations are equal in opportunities and types of participation, nor do all associations produce the same levels of civic engagement and capacity associated with social capital's "spillovers" (de Souza Briggs 2008; Edwards, Foley, and Diani 2001; Stolle and Rochon 2001). Differences in associations' purposes have also been shown to produce variations in normative commitments, challenging the notion that associational involvement, in itself, produces "generalizable trust" (Tonkiss and Passey 1999). The role of associations in social capital development is far from settled. Putnam makes the distinction between vertical institutions (the Catholic Church, the Mafia) and horizontal ones (choral societies and sports club). He argues that the development of social capital is hindered in vertical organizations because they enable the restriction of access to information and resources, while also encouraging the pursuit of narrower interests that are contrary to the common good of the community. Conversely, horizontal associations are much more open, enabling collaboration, mutual assistance, and a greater sense of civic obligation (Putnam

1993, 130). Most researchers have loosely stayed within this horizontal-vertical rubric when studying membership associations (including, but not limited to, recreational, community, civic, and professional organizations).

Generally, researchers seeking to measure the stock of social capital in a community focus on two variables—associational membership and levels of trust. Membership in associations (sometimes identified as participation, attending a public meeting) is simply measured (i.e., number of associations, frequency of attendance), often as part of a larger cross-national survey.<sup>1</sup> These measurements, though, do not flush out what work goes on at these associations or what action and context constitute participation. Researchers have found that survey respondents often have more confidence in their leadership and public-speaking skills (Green and Brock 2005). Yet the majority of this work treats associations and participation as essentially flat and one-dimensional—you are a member of an organization, ergo you participate. The development of civic capacity (confidence in public speaking aside) and the dynamic discursive environments that often produce that capacity is either not present or measured by proxy (e.g., reading a newspaper, voting).

Community development and participatory democracy research has revealed that participation in associations is far more multifaceted and complex than most of the social capital literature suggests. Variations in institutional design can have a direct impact on individual capacities. Moreover, the work persons engage in often taps into and expands

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<sup>1</sup> For a sample of how researchers treat associations as institutions in much of the social capital literature, see Burt 2002; Cicognani et al. 2008; Claibourn and Martin 2007; de Souza Briggs 2008; Green and Brock 2005; Halpern 2005; La Due Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; Norris and Inglehart 2006; O’Neill 2006; Putnam 1993, 2000; Robteutscher 2002; Tonkiss and Passey 1999; and Walker 2008.

deep normative commitments and builds members' communication, organizing, and negotiating skills, while strengthening their roots in the community (Fung 2004; Fung and Wright 2003; Orr 2007). This literature, though, does not help unpack the relationship between institutions and bridging. What is the nature of participation within associations? What type of impact do the different types of participation within associations have on bridging social capital development? What types of civic capacity are being developed, and how? What is being missed in the cross-sectional large-“n” studies and surveys is that all institutions are not the same, and, presumably, not all associations are enabling and building bridging social capital to the same degree.

The role of associations in norm development (trust, valuing the common good, and so on) has also been challenged. Some have argued that associations do not contribute to development of vital norms that drive social capital, but rather reflect those already present in society (Robteutscher 2002). The link between trust at the individual level and the role of associations in its development, which many researchers presume to exist due to correlation, has been found to be mitigated and dependent upon what these associations do and their role and place in public discourse (Anheier and Kendall 2002; Fine 2010; Tonkiss and Passey 1999; Clemens 2001). Membership, participation, and attendant norms represent something different across the scope of these groups and often vary with associational purpose and local context. It does not simply translate into trust that is transposable to other situations. To put another way, different types of associations have different effects on levels of civic engagement. Whereas Putnam draws correlations between membership in entertainment-based associations and civic and community groups, recent research has found that participation in nonpolitical associations (sports

teams, for example) has no significant impact on political participation. Participation in nonpolitical associations does, however, increase the chance people will take part in more politically oriented civic engagement—attend a public meeting, volunteer at a community-oriented nonprofit, and so on. But how this linkage operates is unclear, and scholars admit this is a correlation whose causality needs to be substantiated (Green and Brock 2005). So this leads us back to a new version of the original question: what sort of associations produce politically oriented civic engagement? The cross-sectional approach and its inability to properly unpack the role of institutions in social capital development may be part of the reason that researchers report varying findings on the important building blocks of social capital.

A minority of researchers, though, have engaged in case studies to try to answer how institutions foster participation and the development of social capital and civic capacity. In studying Bolivian nongovernmental organizations, for example, Abom (2004) argues that top-down structured-aid organizations generally do not properly engage the community, fostering community dependency on those NGOs and limiting community development. On the other hand, according to Abom, organizations that seek to embed themselves in the community, helping to develop community leadership that can then play a role in the NGOs' local operations, have better communication with those communities, are better at mobilizing those communities, and are much more successful at developing civic capacity. Eastis (2001), in her comparative study of choral societies, draws similar conclusions. She argues that social capital means different things within different institutions. Each choral society was based on members who were volunteers. One was funded by a university and overseen by a professional director, so the

membership focused on developing their musical abilities while also building bonds among the members. The second group, on the other hand, was fully volunteer based. It was organized by the community, and its members were responsible for administrative functions as well as fund-raising. Eastis found that the second group developed a stronger and more diverse skill set, resulting in a fuller realization of social capital. Institutional structures may provide people with the norms and networks associated with social capital, but different institutional designs can provide members with different resources and capacities.

Last, some researchers have noted that institutions that seek to build social capital need to be flexible in their design, able to adapt both to shifts in membership and environment and to the new experiences and skills that these members bring to the group. Part of this more responsive institutional environment involves members developing a “shared code book,” representing shared language and common points of reference to facilitate action.

Organizations that are responsive to the changing concerns of their membership, while providing a discursive environment where those concerns can be addressed, are often most successful in developing the attributes associated with social capital (Lowndes and Wilson 2001; Lorenzen 2007). This brief collection of case studies illustrates that institutional variation does matter. By using institutions as a lens through which to observe capacity development, researchers have a more fine-tuned understanding of the social capital possessed collectively and individually. In this deeper look at associations as institutions, they no longer do their work or do not—a type of neo-Tocquevillian light switch; instead, variation becomes clearer.



The majority of research on associations as institutions and how those institutions shape social capital development is relatively shallow. One outcome of this body of work, however, is that norm development does not follow the simplistic path of membership leading to generalized trust. The connection between membership and important norms appears to be more particular and related to a given association's purpose than originally proposed. Part of the goal of this research will be to tease out this relationship. What role does institutional variation play in norm development? Is there a difference between the more active Portland club and the more passive membership in Cleveland? Second, the case-study research seems to confirm research in participatory democracy. Participation may very well be norm driven, at least initially, but variations in associations appear to lead to differences in capacity. What does this mean for bridging social capital development?

### *Gender and Power*

Feminist scholars argue that the idea of social capital as an expression of norms and networks is drastically insufficient. Social capital has been basically silent on gender, conceptualizing the world as an aggregation of genderless individuals in associational spaces. At best, it masks and obscures gendered power relations present in those associations; at worst, it perpetuates discourses of dominance. Nor does its civic spillover theory hold up to reality when gender is addressed. "The mere existence of significant gender gaps in political interest and political knowledge suggests that the connection between social capital and political engagement is anything but automatic" (Gidengil and O'Neill 2006, 6). Indeed, research exploring the differences between men's and women's

social capital confirms that differences between the two are tied to gender inequalities and gendered role expectations that work in tandem with the different networks to which each has access. Viewpoints vary on how this should be addressed. Some critics suggest that women's social capital needs to be included on its own terms, while others see this as a mistake; still others believe that social capital needs to be reconceived in a way that promotes inclusion over exclusion. One point is clear from these critiques: social capital does not address issues of power; in fact, it decontextualizes power and its role in relationships.

Victoria Lowndes (2004a, 2004b) posits that men and women have different types of social capital that operate along different circuits. Women use social capital to “get by.” This “getting by” social capital is usually focused on child care and community-based responsibilities and grounded in neighborhood networks. The networks are often more homogeneous than the men's and less diverse (with less connections outside those networks). Men, on the other hand, use social capital to “get ahead”—based on the division of labor created by the gendered public-private divide that allows men to go out and work and use the associated social networks to advance their professional and economic status. Putnam's research, she notes, is composed mostly of male-dominated associational activities. Although women may use social capital to advance their professional careers, family and social concerns often force them to scale back. The result is that women's social capital has been ignored. When women are mentioned in Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, they are implied in the decline of the traditional family due to their joining the workforce. This perpetuates the traditional public-private divide that has relegated women's roles to private life, while ensuring public roles for males. By

acknowledging and exposing this different-circuits approach, Lowndes believes that the implied public-private divide that seems to be built in social capital models can be challenged, leading to a more equitable approach.

Scholars interested in gender issues have increasingly sought to challenge the positive outcomes associated with social capital models. Suzanne Hodgkin (2009), in her study of associations in rural Australia, challenges the link between membership and participation when women work with men in associations. Like Lowndes, she finds that women do not have access to the same network resources of men at work. When women do participate in associations with men, they are often confined to traditional “women’s work.” Often, if they are in a position to advance to a leadership position, they are passed over for men, and if not passed over they may find themselves forgoing the position under the pressure of gendered expectation that those positions are not appropriate for women. Associational membership does not easily transcribe to meaningful participation when gender is considered. Another of the key positive “spin-off’s” of social capital is the link between associational involvement and political knowledge. This is also due to a lack of focus on gender inequalities. Like other network resources, such as broader employment opportunities, men’s civic networks are also better positioned to gain access to diverse information sources. Given the more homogeneous and less expansive nature of their networks, and the constraints that can keep women’s social capital confined to such networks, they are less likely to come in contact with discussions of politics. Researchers have found that in terms of political knowledge, men gain a better return on network relations than women. Knowledge spin-offs cannot be assumed. Scholars have argued that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the contingencies and context of these

environments to fully understand when women are making similar gains (Gidengil et al. 2006; Molyneux 2002).

Some see this solution of just “plugging” women into social capital theory as inherently problematic because it runs the risk of reproducing the naturalized public-private divide. Lisa Adkins (2005) posits that feminist scholars should not engage social capital theory. Any attempt to do so will only continue to bracket women within categories of “affective labor” and effectively confine them to “industrial era gender roles.”

Others have suggested alternative ways of envisioning social capital that revive its political and developmental character. Ruth Lister, for example, advocates for rethinking of social capital as a political entity when she suggests we view social capital as a form of active citizenship:

From what I have read there seems to be a tendency in the social capital literature to lump together a variety of activities as conducive to building social capital. Thus, for example, membership of a sports club is treated the same as political action. While not wanting to propose hierarchies of action, from a citizenship perspective there is a particular quality associated with action, rooted in the republican tradition’s construction of the citizen as political actor and political activity as the key to citizenship. (2005, 20)

For Lister, a broader, more just sense of social capital is one driven by an active, fuller sense of citizenship, one that works to hold intact the multiple identities of individuals with disparate traditions, rather than one driven by a fixation on cohesion through a homogenization of norms.

Irene Bruegel sees the danger of perpetuating the public-private divide, but argues it would be more helpful to reconceptualize social capital as social relations of inclusion and exclusion in which the boundaries are constantly in flux. She argues that feminist scholars should focus on its transformative qualities, and for this she turns to bridging: “Only by treating exclusion as the exception rather than the rule and ignoring social capital as a response to, and resistance from, such exclusion . . . [is] . . . bridging . . . able to be characterized as a mechanism for building solidarity across a hugely unequal terrain” (2005, 14). Lister’s and Bruegel’s alternative conceptions of social capital are brief and not entirely filled in. Yet they share important elements that Ward and other Progressive Era social capitalists might quickly recognize. Each hinges on development. Both republican citizenship and the challenging of exclusion call for capacity building and an understanding of and willingness to address the power inherent in important social relations. These work to move past the way in which social capital reproduces traditional gender roles and exclusions.

The feminist response to the depoliticizing and decontextualizing of social capital has been to bring discussions of power and context back in. Obviously, women’s forcing their way into the city clubs confronts traditional gendered power relations directly, providing an opportunity to do just that. This represents an interesting study in power, the clashing of male-objector bonding social capital and the women and their male allies in bridging. Through my interviews I sought to gain some understanding of what happens in this clash of capitals.

### Bridging

The distinction between bonding and bridging social capital is considered by some scholars to be one of the most important recent advances in the development of the concept (Halpern 2005; Szreter 2002). Putnam has argued that it has vital democratic transformative qualities and works as sociological “WD40.” His theoretical distinction builds off Granovetter’s original work regarding “weak ties” (bridging relationships) (Granovetter 1973; Putnam 2000). Bridging relationships, by diversifying the exposure of individuals and networks to new ideas and resources, place them in a better position to succeed in collective endeavors. Students of social movements have also echoed this finding, noting that some movements have made significant strategic advances when they bridge (Clemens 2001; Ganz 2004; McAdams 1986). Bridging research, though, represents only a small part of the larger body of work on social capital. This may be due in part to the fact that bridging relations are hard to nail down. Critics have argued that relationships can be both bridging and bonding at the same time (Fine 2010). The family, for instance, can represent a bonding relationship, yet it can also be a potential bridging one when gender roles are negotiated between a husband and a wife. It has also been shown that bridging relations are highly temporal. As interests, identities, and goals are mutually constituted through bridges, these relations can often turn into bonds—displacing the elements of difference that characterized the boundaries of the initial bridges (Putnam 2003; Szreter 2002). They can also be difficult to maintain due to the often entrenched nature of the boundaries involved (Burt 2002). Furthermore, bonding and bridging can also be a matter of perspective (Lister 2005). One person’s transgression of a boundary could be another person’s new bond. Take, as an example, a male member

of the city club who objects to women joining, believing that their membership will reduce the club to a recipe-trading circle—but he does not see himself as a misogynist. Women members may see their associational relationship with this male objector as a bridge, but does he? Does this matter? Are mutual understandings necessary for bridges to have their understood effect? Bridging relationships are replete with complications that make them challenging to study.

In attempts to quantify and delineate bridging characteristics in networks and associations, researchers have often focused on the structural elements of bridging—demographic, socioeconomic, and nodal—through survey and network analysis. These structural approaches have confirmed the claims made by Granovetter and Putnam. Individuals who bridge across individual networks and associations fare better than those who do not. Economically, professionally, and on a social and personal level, individuals and communities characterized by bridging are often more prosperous and healthier and have more responsive public institutions (Burt 2002; de Souza Briggs 2008; Geys and Murdoch 2010; Knudsen, Florida, and Rousseau 2008). Students of social change and networks have argued that the structural characteristics and attendant benefits of these social ties are now clearly understood. Furthermore, continued work unpacking these basics of bridging only continues to confirm what we already know. Through decades of network analysis and the introduction of the concept of bridging social capital, how patterns of relationships inform the allocation of resources within larger social systems is now well understood. What this research does not explicate is how these relationships produce the transformative and beneficial outcomes with which they are associated. What is needed now, critics argue, is a more systemic understanding of the dynamics that

constitute these relationships (Mische 2003; Passey 2003). How do discursive and negotiational processes inform these relationships? Important shifts in identity have been noted in bridging and network analysis. What role does identity play? What role does the variation in institutions play in this? How these elements inform the bridging process is unknown. How bridges serve as sociological WD40 is still poorly understood. Indeed, structural researchers have acknowledged that while studying the benefits of bridging relations, what they have found is correlation, not causation, and more work is needed to determine the role of deeply entrenched crosscutting ties such as gender and the role of institutions in these processes (de Souza Briggs 2008; Knudsen, Florida, and Rousseau 2008).

The use of mixed-method approaches and case studies has revealed that the ability of bridges to form and function appears to be dependent on a number of contextual factors. Whereas bonding associations have the camaraderie of shared norms, backgrounds, and pursuits, making them presumably easier to form (Putnam 2000), bridging associations, on the other hand, must work within more dynamic processes and appropriately respond to strategic opportunities. Bridging relations are embedded in and a creation of the communities they emerge from, a fact that is often lost in most social capital research, which can treat them in isolation. In her study of bridging associations in Northern Ireland, Leonard (2004), for instance, posits that when associations based on bonding attempt to bridge, the normative commitments that undergird those initial relationships need to be broken. As government-sponsored economic development began to succeed in West Belfast, middle-class residents began moving into what had traditionally been poor working-class neighborhoods. These communities had historically



used bonding social capital as a system for “getting by.” This economic development challenged and strained the bonding social capital of these communities as new residents attempted what was essentially class bridging in seeking to join local associations. Leonard found that establishing bridges can require that the conditions and norms that led to bonding need to be undone—presenting a challenging contradiction in the relationship between bonding and bridging. Even when the conditions and norms that foster bonding are removed, it does not mean bridging is automatic; rather, the beginnings of a transition into these new relationships. Cultural categories and identities and the discourses they are a part of often must be challenged and rearticulated for bridging to be successful. In Clemens’s (2001) study of bridging between suffragette and temperance movements, she suggest that networks and associations are embedded in cultural categories and discourses about civic life. Where these institutions fitted in these categories and discourses, and how they themselves sought to shape them, significantly informed the opportunities and futures before them. These categories and discourses, in relation to the associations’ position within them, often generated pulses of new cohorts, which had a “founding effect,” altering the course of those movements. The context of bridging relations needs to be unpacked to understand how they function and their impact on associations.

In each of these cases, new groups of leaders and political parties were the main protagonists, and the impact of institutional arrangements was not discerned. These works, though, do provide important new understandings to how bridges operate. “Bridgers” must often be strategic actors when working in the milieu of cultural schema. Moreover, bridging has the potential to be a contentious act in a way that bonding does

not. Bridgers may not be welcomed as members in the way members of bonding associations are. This also raises important questions about the relationship among institutions, social capital development, and power. Are there some institutional arrangements that enable actors to be more flexible or creative in this milieu? Are there some institutional arrangements that enable challengers better than others? Do some institutional patterns help the thwarting of new aggressive, unwanted (or even wanted) partners?

In Putnam and Feldman's *Better Together* (2003), the authors focus on community building and organizing as well as the bonding and bridging in those processes. *Better Together* is a collection of collaborative contemporary case studies, in contrast to *Bowling Alone*, which is based on cross-national studies of various demographic and associational data. As such, *Better Together* more closely reflects the historical chapter in *Bowling Alone* (2000, chap. 23), in which Putnam makes the case for social capital's strong political character through the role it played in the social movements and reform efforts of the Progressive Era. *Better Together* examines how actors make bridges to address problems and enhance the quality of life in their communities. The authors make clear that they do not see bridging as a "kumbaya" affair and that actors must be sensitive to context within their community and creatively respond to it. A major mechanism in building these collective endeavors is often storytelling and the idea that individuals need to share stories to form some common linkage that facilitates the bridge. Moreover, this is also important at a collective and community level—and that the discourse and collective products of bridging associations are a form of collective-self storytelling—in the formation of collective narratives that

support broader communal identities. This idea of constructed communal identities is not new, but *Better Together* begins to make a claim about the importance of discursive processes that had been absent in much of the recent social capital research. For Putnam, however, both bridging and bonding are still structural endeavors that require time, persistence, and continued regular face-to-face contact to be successful. Although discursive processes are important, they are given no weight in bridging developments' causal explanation (Putnam 2000; Putnam and Feldman 2003, conclusion).

Institutions are present in these case studies, but they are not given an explanatory role in the development of bridging social capital, either. What impact did institutional patterns have on recruitment, participation, and the process of exclusion? These are primarily “winning” stories, focusing on successful social capitalists who brought people together. The only case that was not a “win” dealt with the Portland Office of Neighborhood Coordination and City Planning Office and its failed attempts to engaged East Portlanders in a meaningful way during that area’s annexation. The ONC and Planning Office looked down on East Portlanders as backward and self-interested, and, for their part, East Side residents never felt welcome in the process. This appears to represent a failure of community institutions and lack of ability to negotiate with residents, but the causes are never engaged. Negotiations over contested visions of community for winning cases are on the periphery, but they too are explanatorily silent. With stories being part of the lesson of *Better Together*, discursive processes get much-needed attention, but a more rounded-out explanation of the development of bridging is beyond its reach.

Recent analysis examining the historical context through which networks develop has revealed important insights regarding bridging's transformative qualities. Safford, in *Why the Garden Club Couldn't Save Youngstown* (2009), examines the historical development patterns in Youngstown, Ohio, and Allentown, Pennsylvania. He posits that due to settlement patterns, elites accepting or shirking leadership roles, and differentiations in economic development, each community developed different network configurations. Allentown's network evolved with more bridging ties, whereas Youngstown's networks became more self-overlapping and locally entrenched. In Allentown this more diverse configuration would lead to a shift in identity that itself led to greater creativity and an ability to perceive new partnerships and options toward economic growth that were inconceivable in Youngstown. "A dialogue emerged in that critical period of the early 1980s, which over time has allowed organizations in the region to redefine themselves and their place within the community. This process of organizational identity redefinition is, more than anything else, responsible for the pulling together of actors and the deep engagement of key individuals within the Lehigh Valley over the last twenty five years" (131). This difference in configuration led to many of the benefits long suggested by network analysis. Yet in his deeper contextual analysis, Safford adds a new insight to the functioning of bridging relationships. Bridging relationships have a qualitatively different impact on dialogue and identity that allowed citizens of Allentown to perceive and construct their place in the community in new and creative ways, enabling them to move past the lack of vision and energy that characterized Youngstown's network relationships. Most scholars of community development, though, would say this is only part of the story. Actors need to creatively

and strategically respond to their environment; network configuration is important, but that alone will not lead to success (Ganz 2004; Orr 2007). Not all community and civic organizations were part of the Allentown success story. Not all were able to engage in this redefinition.

### Conclusion

Social capital research and some of its major theoretical tenets have come under increasing criticism in recent years. Traditional measures of social capital have been shown to be dependent on a number of social and economic factors, exposing that it is much more informed by context than previously presented. Over the latter part of the twentieth century, as scholars disembedded social capital from context, they also depoliticized it as they moved away from its developmental Progressive Era ideational origins. This robbed the concept of its inherent political power and purpose, making it now a stand-in as a measure of the “relational life” of individuals, associations, and communities. Although this has proved insightful, and has renewed interest in the importance of the relationship between “relational life” and the quality of the polity, it has also opened a breach between correlation and causality that has been the source of much of the recent criticism. A major advancement coming out of this latest iteration of social capital is the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bridging social capital appears to be qualitatively different from bonding. Its positive and transformative impacts are not simply unintended consequences of associative relations; rather, they appear to be indicators of successful bridging relations—that is, they are part of the bridging process. Unfortunately, the study of bridging represents just a small

fraction of the expanding field of social capital studies, leaving many questions about the development and evolution of bridging relations unanswered.

The benefits of bridging (often evidenced in network analysis) are well established. In contrast, how bridges form, operate, and produce transformative outcomes is not clearly understood. What environmental elements and institutional arrangements engender these processes? To establish bridges, it is often necessary to challenge established norms, ideas, and networks of power. Yet social capital theory has been largely silent in this area. The small sampling of case studies and bridging research that do exist seems to suggest that successful bridging is dependent on “development.” Development in the political science sense refers to durable shifts in authority and power, often within institutions, or in this case civic associations. From these studies, a handful of dynamic processes appear to be taking place that characterize successful “bridgers.” Unfortunately, the study of these dynamic processes has received only limited attention from social capital scholars. These associations often help enable capacity building, particularly in areas of the articulation of goals and normative commitments, and the ability to work toward them. Not all associations are necessarily designed or able to meet this task. Often, there must be some negotiation involved in establishing these goals and commitments; moreover, associations must be flexible in the face of those discussions to align with member desires. Acts of negotiation and attendant flexibility appear to be crucial. Actors looking to bridge often must carve out some authority in relation to the association, or at the very least be invested with some authority through the association. Power relations often need to be hammered out and rearticulated. This may be something as simple as legitimization of bridgers’ values and views (evident in associational

flexibility), or it may be authority directly invested in members by the association, acting at its behest.

Vital to this confluence of negotiation, capacity building, and flexibility is the act of mutual construction. Successful bridges almost always seem to produce new elements out of their constituent relations, a new direction for the association, a coproduced work product, a new identity, or a new vision. What emerges from the small sample of bridging research and the processes that appear to be at work in bridging relationships is that the line separating social capital and associational membership from its unintended “spin-offs” may not be as clear as originally proposed by late-twentieth-century scholars. Early social capitalists of the Progressive Era did not see the impact of social capital as indirect or unintended; it was clearly a political project meant to produce developmental results. Rather than conceptualizing bridging social capital as an overlapping intersection of associational membership and attenuated networks in order to understand how they evolve, it may be more useful to think of bridging social capital as “developmental social capital.” In proposing this conception, I argue that scholars need to look for developmental measures to assess the success and impact of bridging: capacity building, associational flexibility, and negotiations over articulating values, goals, and purposes—resulting in acts of mutual constitution, including the nature of the association itself and its work product.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **CITY CLUBS AND SPACES FOR BRIDGING**

Development was clearly a motivation for early social capitalists. They sought to form associations not only through which people would deliberate on important issues, but where they could foster the skills and abilities to make meaningful contributions in shaping important political and economic contours within their communities. Bridging social capital represents the latest expression of these efforts, further highlighting the importance of development's role in building social capital. Bridging, that is, crossing boundaries and integrating into an association, involves processes that the basic measures of associational membership and network configuration cannot unpack. Capacity building—the ability to articulate, reason, and negotiate important values in the productions of such associations—is an integral element of this process. This usually takes place during the work associations engaged in. In this case, that often means working on committees and can include the honing of certain skill sets used in creating the work product of those committees. This capacity building enables “bridgers” to put their imprint on associations. Bridging efforts tend not to be successful, and are in fact not bridges, if actors cannot develop this capacity; they are, rather, a hierarchical or functionary relationship. Bridging denotes an ability of actors to be creative players within associational production. This is what it means to engage in the mutual construction, the co-creating, that identifies a working bridging relationship.



Given this centrality of capacity building, what can the city club movement, and the history of the Cleveland and Portland clubs and how they operate in particular, tell us about how bridging works and the processes through which it unfolds? The purpose of this chapter will be to examine the history of the movement and of each club, while also explaining their current structures and how they operate. The paths carved out by each club's leadership and members, as well as the history of each club's place in their community's political discourse, directly impact their ability to build capacity as an institution.

This chapter will also include a media survey. The goal of this survey was to understand the positions these clubs occupy in political discourse and the amount and type of discourse these clubs generate in the community. Part of unpacking the differences between these clubs and their impact on developmental social capital means understanding how they shaped political discourse in their communities and how they fitted into it. The goal was to see how much discourse each club generated and to see if there was any difference in the type of discussion and language people used. As Clemens (2001) observes, an association's place in a community's political discourse not only informs how others perceive it, but is a milieu that associations must navigate and are also shaped by—potentially impacting each club's ability to build capacity among its members and serve as a bridging association. This survey represented a thirty-year study of the *Portland Oregonian* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, covering the years from 1960 to 1990. I chose this period for two reasons. First, it includes the integration of one of my bridging populations, women, while also preceding the second, young professionals (referred to as New Leaders), providing a significant window for understanding how this

relationship has informed bridging processes. Second, this period also captures each club in the twilight of its golden era, when it was considered a major political and social force in its community. I did not simply peruse all articles regarding each club in the paper. Given the very public and newsworthy nature of the work of both clubs, this was more than 100,000 citations. Rather, I pulled from this population all the editorials, opinion columns, and letters to the editor—481 for both clubs.

The city club movement echoes many of the same themes found in the social center movement. The city club movement, though, had a stronger professional and upper-class representation alongside reform impulses. This resulted in a national movement that strove to be nonpartisan in character. Bringing men together from across ideological lines would not only build brotherhood and working spirit, but also bring clarity to issues. How individual clubs would do this, though, was a matter of some disagreement between clubs. Cleveland and Portland represent two different approaches to civic engagement. Cleveland pursued the safer and less controversial “nonmilitant” route of being a social club with a speaker’s forum—the path of the majority of clubs. It would quickly develop a national reputation and come to be known as the “Citadel of Free Speech.” Yet it would offer little opportunity for member participation in the workings and product of the club and the reputation it would build. The club’s character, and its footprint, in the community and nationally, was essentially created by a small group of people. Portland took the potentially more problematic “semimilitant” route of being a study group. It too would hold forums, but it is much more a regional force than a national one. Where the club would leave its mark is through its research. With more than nine hundred research studies conducted in its history, the club would seemingly earn its

self-proclaimed title as the “Conscience of the City.” This requires a significant amount of membership participation, exposing the different levels of opportunities for capacity building and the formation of developmental social capital between the two clubs. Yet this story is not simply one about numbers or varieties of participation.

Each club is very similar in its organizational structure. Portland, in fact, loosely copied Cleveland’s organizational model as it was forming its own club. They are both membership-driven organizations. Members govern their organizations through boards and oversee their major functions in committees. The staff of each club is meant largely to carry out the day-to-day needs of the club’s operation and facilitate the work of the boards and committees. Each club also has a parallel Forum Foundation, a fully separate institution that serves as a fund-raising tool that covers speakers’ expenses. But two different cultures have emerged from these shared beginnings. The differences between the “speaker” versus “study” formats would position these clubs differently within public discourse. This would lead to two very different types of relationships between each club and its respective community. Cleveland, over the decades, would attain a revered position in the community—looked upon as a wise elder of sorts, a community asset of singular status, and above the fray. In Portland the relationship was much more complex. Portland’s club was certainly respected and appreciated. However, by publishing reports with recommendations, it put itself into the political mix in a way that invited criticism and assessment of the club that are absent in Cleveland. Within each of the clubs, over this history, leadership and the board relationship with the larger membership would reflect some of these same dynamics. In Cleveland a small group of leaders from its past have been given almost iconic status; meanwhile, a current group of insiders (often

referred to as “old-timers”) holds significant status and influence over the direction of the club, even though they have not held an official position in some time. To say they too are revered is not an overstatement. This stands in contrast to the general membership, who have little to do but attend forums and whose attempts to increase opportunities for meaningful participation often seemed to wither without getting established or embraced by club leadership. Cleveland, in practice, is a top-down structured organization. Such groups are generally characterized by tighter controls on information and power. These types of “vertical” institutions are generally poor bridgers and builders of social capital. Portland, on the other hand, is much more horizontal in nature, enabling a much more negotiated stance between the leadership and the membership. Part of this is due to the large number of people who participate in various committees—which are seen as a path to board positions. However, it also mirrors the club’s positioning in public discourse, in that not only is the general membership more critical of Portland’s board, but the club leadership is often more willing to respond to those concerns. Portland is more flexible and responsive to its members’ concerns than Cleveland. These clubs’ current states reflect the history of the movement, which sought to increase civic engagement, but offered differing interpretations on how best to achieve it.

### *A National Movement*

Many of the early club founders fitted squarely into the reform tradition of the Progressive Era. American cities were notoriously poorly administered by governments with limited constitutional authority and were often corrupt and caught in the middle of large historical forces. The challenges city leaders and administrations were responding

to—rising urbanization, growing immigrant populations, and rapidly advancing industrialization—were compounded by self-serving political machines and political arrangements that vested most important powers in state governments.<sup>1</sup> Over two decades, in cities across the country, city clubs would be formed in response to this environment, many growing out of other municipal reform efforts. In Cincinnati, for example, the Citizens Reform Party would provide the impetus. In Rochester, as the social center movement was coming under increasing political attack and censure in the press, activists moved to start a city club. In Milwaukee Socialist Party members took a central role in pushing the club to pursue reform. In New York members of the Citizens Reform Club, which faded into atrophy, would later reemerge as the leaders of the city club. New York's club would be the first, established in 1892. New clubs would spread out from the Northeast, making their way to the Midwest (Kansas City), the South (Memphis), and eventually the West Coast (Los Angeles and Portland). By 1922 there would be approximately thirty-three city clubs in the United States. In many instances, but not always, cities would have a men's city club and a women's city club (which was distinguished by being called the *Women's City Club of . . .*).<sup>2</sup> Men's city clubs would delve into politics, whereas the women's city clubs often dealt with issues of the arts and humanities—reflecting both the associational gender barrier that would remain in place until the 1970s and the accepted gendered roles of the time (City Club of Chicago 1922; McKelvey 1947; Muccigrosso 1968; Ryan 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of the political context and challenges of this period, see Hofstadter 1955, chaps. 5-6; Ethington and Levitus 2009; Miller and Wheeler 1990, chaps. 7-8; Rae 2003, chap. 2.

<sup>2</sup> The treatment of history here deals only with men's city clubs.

Beyond common originating impulses, the clubs also shared a general belief in the importance of bringing together people of divergent political views within a social setting where they could focus on civic issues. The idea was that building familiarity amid discussion of common problems and their associated politics would help club members, and the larger community, develop the capacity to address those problems. In 1922 the City Club of Chicago published a collection of pamphlets from fifteen of the men's clubs entitled *City Clubs in America* (1922). In *City Clubs* individual club officers made their case for what was essentially a developmental social capital approach.

In Philadelphia, “the purpose of the Club, as expressed in the constitution, is ‘the maintenance of a club for social enjoyment in the discussion of and the improvement of its members in subjects relating to municipal government and progress’” (Tracy 1922, 22). In Los Angeles, this social environment with a civic purpose was hoped to produce a “better city, a better state, a better nation—brought about by an active, intelligent, well-informed citizenship. We produce this type of citizen through our regular Wednesday noon and Saturday noon speaking programs, the Monday Evening Forum and the Weekly Bulletin, which contain a synopsis of important addresses and other items of civic interest” (Malcolm 1922, 17). The movement founders hoped their clubs could be unique venues in the politically charged era, bringing people together whom they might otherwise not meet in other clubs, fostering discussion that should but may not be taking place elsewhere.

To facilitate this “coming together,” clubs believed they had to maintain a nonpartisan stance. The negative influence of partisanship in city politics was viewed by many as a major part of the problem within city politics and an obstacle to progress.

Partisanship was seen as enabling political machines and self-interested officials, while also keeping citizens of disparate camps from working together on issues that required the clarity and broader support those partisan officials could not engender. By remaining nonbiased, club leaders believed they could attract a wider array of participants from across the political spectrum, who could discuss a broader variety of issues without creating offense or defection. These venues, as in St. Louis, for instance, could serve as “a social safety valve; no one being seriously injured by the escaping steam . . . a place where might be heard that which would not be heard elsewhere” (Tuckerman 1922, 27). This can also be seen in a description of the new Boston City Club in anticipation of its first forum:

The Boston City Club is associating in the broadest way representative men interested in the city of Boston and the problems of its growth. It is an effort to bring together men active in the community who in many ways feel themselves to be on opposite sides of many important questions, and who, when brought together in a friendly and informal way, find that their differences are not so great nor so serious as they supposed them to be, and that they can work together and that they have many things in common. (*Boston Evening Transcript*, May 27, 1905)

Indeed, the prospect of such venues did attract disparate collections of members, marking one of the more diverse moments in the movement’s history. Many of the clubs represented a unique mixing of members of the business community, economic and political elites, with progressives, perceived “radicals,” socialist and populist. In Rochester, the former social center activists would clash with leading members of the

city's Ad Club (a business group) in attempts to make the club more inclusive, Cleveland saw "single-taxers" mingle with former members of President Wilson's cabinet, and in Milwaukee the socialist often wrestled with members of the chamber of commerce over local policies (Campbell 1963; Keeran 1969; McKelvey 1947). These clubs, however, were generally not representative of the community, but the nonpartisan stance did produce some political diversity.

Club membership usually drew from the middle and upper classes, as well as the growing professional class. The Los Angeles club, with the city's growing port, proudly noted that it had members of the US Shipping Board as members. New York's club had a number of members of the city's leading families. Cleveland would benefit from the membership of Newton Baker, Wilson's secretary of war, as well as members of the city's leading industrial families. Boston counted among its founders Louis Brandeis and Edward Filene (of the retail chain). The cornerstone, for the Boston Club, was laid by President Taft. Washington, DC's cornerstone was laid by Vice President Coolidge. Political and economic elites had a strong presence in the movement (City Club of Chicago 1922). Given this elite presence amid the strong sentiments for reform, the push for nonpartisanship is understandable. Elisabeth Clemens (2010) argues that a significant motivation behind associations such as city clubs was that elites were seeking to solidify their position and power in the face of reform efforts and growing power within state governments. They did this through the parallel play of closing their ranks and tightening their networks through the clubs, while also creating loyalty among the lower classes by identifying themselves with the common good. There was certainly some of this evident



in the history of the movement, and many clubs chose to be “safety valves,” rather than reformers. But true reform efforts did exist in certain cities.

There were generally three tracks that clubs took. Clubs self-identified as either “militant” or “nonmilitant,” while a third group tried to strike a middle balance between the two. Nonmilitant clubs did not take positions on issues; militant clubs, conversely, did take stances; while the third group studied social problems (City Club of Chicago 1922; Cleveland Board of Director meeting minutes, April 5, 1917). The majority of clubs chose to be nonmilitant. They argued that taking a stand was a disruptive form of partisanship and believed it would threaten the clubs’ broader appeal. Most clubs viewed their forums as a clearinghouse for ideas. Dinner and lunch forums with invited speakers were the primary venue, occasionally augmented by other social events. The Boston club, considered the most established of the nonmilitant clubs, owned a thirteen-story building in the heart of the city, across from the courthouse and within blocks of the statehouse. It had a twelve-hundred-seat auditorium, multiple dining rooms and halls, bowling alleys and game rooms, libraries, and barbershops. In addition, it had sixty-four “sleeping rooms” (comparable to hotel rooms), from which the club drew a profit of \$20,402.80 in 1916. The club was considered by many to be the civic center of the city, the meeting place for a host of other associations of varying stripes. On the other hand, the Rochester club took a more low-key approach. Sensitive to the censure imposed on the social centers by the press and the ire they attracted from the mayor for their “intemperate views,” they also chose to be nonmilitant. For the first year the group met informally: all speakers and meetings were off the record, no names or minutes recorded, and no constitution drawn. It would not be until more than a year later that the leadership felt

secure enough to properly establish a club—first as the City Lunch Club, meeting at various locations, and later as the Rochester City Club. The breadth of difference between the Boston and Rochester clubs captures the differences between nonmilitant clubs—both in disposition and in stature. Boston soon had nine hundred members after its founding; Rochester had ninety. Some clubs had grand spaces, others leased out multiple floors of downtown office buildings, some bought houses in quiet neighborhoods, and others met in back rooms of local restaurants. The imprint they left on local politics is not always entirely clear. Many clubs were characterized by energetic debate between members and speakers in their early years, only to succumb to a speaker-audience format as they became more established (McKelvey 1947).

Militant clubs and study clubs, to varying degrees, took a different approach, and only a handful of clubs represented these two types. Clubs in New York and Chicago owned their own buildings and developed facilities and social amenities comparable to those maintained by many of the nonmilitant clubs. For the most part, though, these clubs, while also having forums, sought to engage the local political arena, rather than just serving as speaking venues and lunch clubs. For the most aggressive, activist oriented of these clubs, reform was the direct goal. In Cincinnati and Kansas City, for instance, members advocated for municipal reform, public health regulations, and community use of public schools. The Milwaukee club was one of the more aggressive in its reform efforts. Reflecting the city's political character of the period, its small but vocal socialist representation often clashed with its with more traditional business and professional membership. They generally agreed on the need to pursue reform, but rarely saw eye to eye on the direction it should take. Civil service and municipal reform were

approached with vigor—including lobbying lawmakers and submitting their own bills to the legislature, with some notable success. However, a push for greater progressive social reform divided the membership, and disagreement over support for World War I led to significant resignations and greatly weakened the club. Reflecting Milwaukee’s experience, militant clubs often found that their actions, while successful, drew criticism from the press and divided their membership and increased defections. By the early twenties most militant clubs had shifted to a nonmilitant stance in order to maintain the club and sustain membership levels (Finney 1922; Keeran 1969; Stoa 1922).

Study groups were seen as semimilitant and represent the smallest segment of the three. The two known study clubs were Chicago and Portland. From the beginning the Portland club sought to focus on research and not facilities or elements of the social experience. In Chicago and Portland club leaders saw studies as a way to more actively engage the membership and the community. The goals of nonmilitant and study clubs were similar and shared the idea of generating a focus toward the common good of the community, but the approach was more participatory and pointed. Members were not passive consumers in this process. In Portland research was not only seen as a way to educate members and the public with the hope of moving issues forward, but also viewed as a way to attract members through engagement. “We find that interest in the club is stimulated by drawing into committee work as many members as possible” (Bosley 1922). Studies covered a wide range of issues, from emerging questions to more long-term problems.

World War I and the Great Depression were devastating challenges to the movement that many clubs could not overcome. The ardent war support that gripped

much of the country had a severe dampening effect on free speech, from which many clubs could not escape. Some clubs, including Cleveland's, embraced the war effort, seeing no conflict between their prowar stance and their nonpartisan position. Other clubs saw membership dwindle to the point that they had to close. The Great Depression naturally made it difficult for clubs to maintain membership dues—the source of their operating capital. Many of the clubs that owned their own buildings suffered irreparable damage from the drop in property values. Most did not survive this period. Even those that did, such as Rochester's club, suffered from the decline in associational life and were gone by the 1970s. Of the original group, only Chicago, Cleveland, and Portland still exist. Chicago is no longer the club it once was. It stopped conducting research by the early 1930s and barely survived the Daley machine. It has gone dormant and been revived on different occasions. It currently serves as a speakers' form. Only Cleveland and Portland have remained in form and mission as they did from their beginnings (Campbell 1963; Lucia 1966, McKelvey 1947).

### *The Cleveland and Portland Clubs*

#### *Cleveland*

The Cleveland club decided at its formation to be a nonmilitant club. For most of its history, it has adhered to the nonpartisan stance. As with other nonmilitant clubs, forums were the main event, and for much of its early history it was an active lunch and social club where its members gathered on a regular basis. However, unlike Portland, it had much less to offer regarding member involvement and participation. A relatively small number of the members serve on the Programming Committee or as board

members, making Cleveland a much more top-down type of civic association. The club has also evolved a practice of revering long-serving members and making leadership space for them, when they hold no office. This has led to a small cadre of individuals having significant influence in the club's direction, enhancing its already vertical character. Cleveland quickly developed a reputation for attracting speakers of national prominence, and over the years it would be increasingly regarded as a venue that celebrated and protected free speech. This has made the club a highly protected "brand" by its insider leadership. The combination of a highly esteemed position in the community, its top-down structure, and limited participation has resulted in an institution with no real space for members to engage in the articulation and negotiation over norms important in building developmental social capital; consequently, there are limited opportunities for constructing the mutually constituted outcomes important in bridging. The club's position in the community can make it attractive for folks looking to bridge, but after joining there is little chance for development.

In the summer of 1912 a small group of men met at the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce to hear a presentation from officials of the Chicago, Boston, and St. Louis City Clubs. The collection of mostly lawyers, one civil servant, and the director of public safety for the city was interested in starting their own city club. After some further discussion they settled on a nonmilitant format. The founders were uncomfortable with either the militant or the study format. Deciding to serve as a clearinghouse for information, they viewed themselves as a potential free-speech venue through their forums. They also adopted the standard organizational model of club officers (president, secretary, and treasurer) and a board of directors, to be selected annually by the members.

The first board would also be largely made up of lawyers, but also included members of Cleveland's leading industrial families, clergymen, a social worker, and an academic. The board was representative of the early membership, which drew from the middle and upper classes, with significant numbers of professionals often educated at Ivy League schools.<sup>3</sup> A few years after forming, the board dispatched their secretary to the Boston City Club for some reconnaissance. Boston's club was seen by many in Cleveland and other cities as a model worthy of emulation.

With thirty-three hundred members, and its impressive home, the Boston club dwarfed other clubs, including those of New York and Chicago. Upon returning from his investigation, Francis Hayes implored the board to begin making immediate investments and improvements in club facilities, arguing that facilities and enjoyable surroundings needed to be the "hook." Minutes of the Board of Directors, though, reveal that the club never bought its own building. Rather, it leased facilities with sufficient space for dining, game rooms, and a library. Significant attention by the board was given to all levels of the facility—from the dining experience to the drapes and pipe stands in the game room—to maintain that level of experience. Invest in facilities, create a club that is comfortable and inviting, and the membership will follow, went the thinking. Getting folks in the door and enjoying themselves was the first priority. After that, relationships would build, barriers could come down, and the thoughts and ideas presented at the

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<sup>3</sup> Samplings of each club's membership and their full boards for this period were drawn from club records and compared against blue-book social registries for this period. From this comparison a composite of membership occupations, educations, and associations was drawn. Unfortunately, by the late 1930s the printing of social registries became less frequent in Portland, and by the 1940s they were no longer printed at all, making a more systematic comparison difficult. Descriptions of membership for later periods are based on interviews and histories written by the clubs themselves. Each club prohibited sampling by this researcher to draw a contemporary composite.

forum would begin to have their effect. This commitment would continue up to the present.

The club currently leases the second floor of an office building in downtown Cleveland that bears its name and seal prominently on the exterior—the City Club Building. It holds multiple forums during the week, with the headliner usually appearing on Friday. It operates a catering service and has multiple dining rooms and a library. In the main dining room a Works Progress Administration (WPA) painting by Elmer Brown of the Karamu House depicting the work and spirit of the club occupies the far wall. Within the past decade the club underwent an extensive remodeling in an attempt to replace the old-fashioned men’s club look with a brighter, more contemporary feel.

Over the decades the Cleveland club has developed a reputation for attracting speakers of national prominence and has come to be seen as a viable venue for speakers desiring credibility and a broad audience. Members at the forums are allowed to ask speakers unscreened questions. This is a right highly regarded by the membership and is often touted as evidence of the club’s free-speech tradition. Five US presidents, three sitting, have spoken at the club. This includes George W. Bush, who in 2006, in the midst of criticism over the Iraq war, was accused of speaking only before sympathetic audiences (*Washington Post*, March 20, 2006). The Office of the President initiated discussions with the city club in order to secure an appearance, knowing of its reputation. Unfortunately, how this early reputation was built is difficult to discern. According to club officials, all meeting minutes from the Programming Committee over the decades have been lost. Board minutes contain no discussions of speaker selection. Interviews with long-term members (some whose membership goes back to the 1940s), who are

regarded as unofficial club historians, suggest that it was early founding members' political connections that enabled the club to secure leading political and social figures. This fits with the club's history, as one member served as Wilson's secretary of war (he also brought the club secretary with him to DC). Other early board members were high officials in Ohio's Bull Moose Party—all of which provides a plausible line to both Theodore Roosevelt and other political figures and the beginnings of the club's reputation as a leading speaking venue. The list of speakers in those early years is a snapshot of leading figures of the age: Clarence Darrow, Babe Ruth, Jane Addams, and Will Rogers are just a sample. The chronology of speakers often mirrors the evolution of issues and sentiments over the course of the twentieth century.

#### Club Culture, Leadership, and Participation

Participation at the club largely consists of attending forums. Upon entering the club lobby for an event, club members are immediately aware of the club's stature and history. Facing one at the entrance is a large photo of President Reagan, the "Great Communicator," standing at the podium fixed with the club seal, in midsentence. On opposite walls, portraits of Supreme Court justices, ambassadors, and social figures of the highest celebrity status remind one that this is no ordinary civic organization. To the right is a well-appointed large dining room, with large glass walls and sliding glass doors. On these walls and doors are inscribed the names of all the speakers who have attended the club in its more than one-hundred-year history. During my time in Cleveland this dining room was often used by other associations and groups for their meetings. To the left, on the other side of the lobby, is the main dining room used for forums. To the right of its



entrance is the “City Club Hall of Fame”—a collection of plaques bearing pictures and brief statements honoring outstanding members who have served the club and the community. Finally, upon entering the dining room, members are greeted by the WPA painting taking up the entire back wall, celebrating the club’s members and its mission. This imagery and symbolism pronounce and reinforce the importance of the club, its stature as a speaking forum, and the importance of club leadership in that process.

Friday Forums are usually dedicated to a speaker of national prominence, either a headliner or an entertaining speaker. These forums usually draw a full attendance of around 200 people. There are also forums during the week (usually one per week), which often focus on more local matters, and the speakers are less prominent. Attendance for these events is often between 50 and 150 people. Tables at these events seat 8. For some, Friday Forums are an opportunity to sit with old friends, catch up, and listen to an interesting speaker. One such table I sat at had been meeting at the club for more than twenty years (two of them had even gotten married). Often, however, members look for somewhere, or with someone, new to sit. This would customarily lead to a round of introductions, followed by discussions that ranging from career and family to life and politics of the moment, in the half hour prior the presentation.

Speakers are given a half hour, after which members can ask questions. In this respect the City Club of Cleveland does help foster the norms of solidarity and camaraderie in an atmosphere dedicated to civic issues that were important to movement founders and early social capitalists. On the other hand, social capital case studies have shown that these passive approaches are not always effective in social capital

development. There is no real meaningful give-and-take at these tables. More active participation in the club is limited to committees.

The main standing committees are the Programming Committee, Membership and Marketing Committee, New Leaders Committee, and Board of Directors. Other ad hoc committees are formed on an as-needed basis. The Programming Committee is charged with developing forum programming, the Membership Committee with building membership numbers, and the Board of Directors with governing the club. Participation in these committees, though, represents only around 1.5 percent of the club's membership (or approximately fifteen to twenty people). Participation in the work of the club is not something that makes its way into the larger population of members. (New Leaders will be dealt with in the next chapter.) The Membership and Marketing Committee never met in the two months I was in Cleveland, nor were any meeting minutes provided after multiple requests. I had the opportunity to attend two programming meetings and a board meeting while in Cleveland. The Programming Committee meetings were attended by six members, including the chair, as well as the executive director (ED) and the programming director. In these meetings members discussed potential speakers, their relevance in light of current social issues, and whether they believed they would draw member attendance. Also discussed was the status of efforts to procure already agreed-upon speakers for future events. There was some interesting give-and-take between members as they defended or critiqued certain suggestions. Some members also came prepared with one-page memos detailing their arguments. However, members often looked to the programming director for input and deferred to the executive director when things became muddled and the direction the committee should take unclear. Just at the

point when these members were about to engage in some of the heavy lifting that produces developmental social capital, they often turned to club staff. Member articulation of values and normative commitments embodied in speaker choices never reached beyond a mild defense. Members would acquiesce to the executive director, who would then present choices to the Board of Directors, which has the ultimate authority. The board maintains tight control over speaker selection, as it is seen as the “public face” of the club.

There is potential in these committees, but the lack of authority and the presence of the directors stymie the opportunity for development. As a result, the Programming Committee becomes a sort of glorified “suggestion box.” The Portland Board of Governors has oversight of Friday Forum programming as well, but Portland’s Programming Committee represents a small fraction of the club’s participatory offerings (and Portland’s hold of the programming reins is nowhere near as tight, on which more below). Cleveland’s Programming and New Leaders Committees represent the only real regular outlet for membership to participate in the work of the club (the New Leaders Committee is restricted to members in their twenties and thirties, leaving out the vast majority of members). Programming Committees are one of the few opportunities where members can actively articulate what it means to be a city club member—engaging in the negotiation of values that leads to mutual construction. The oversight of the staff and tight control by the board mute the advancement of developmental social capital. In any event, participation is far too small and willing participants hard to find. Committee participation has little to no impact on the broader membership.

In the past participation opportunities may have been a bit more open. In the late 1970s a board member requested that the Programming Committee continue to be “open” to all members. It is unclear when the committee meetings became “closed,” as they currently are, but the issue would return in 1995, when board members were worried that “outside influences” were having a negative effect on programming meetings and sought greater clarification on the policy. In 1975 the board voted to make its meetings open. This sense of “open,” though, was different from that on the Programming Committee. The board opened its meetings to members of the club foundation and to past presidents—allowing them to sit in on meetings as informal participants.<sup>4</sup> Meetings of the Board of Directors were not and are not open to club members. Prior to this period, with limited exception, only board members were listed as those in attendance. The door had been opened for the old-timers to attend board meetings.

Two decades later the board president also sought to revive an old tradition of annual member meetings. These meetings are held to update the membership on the work of the club and its leadership over the past year and are supposed to also be an opportunity for members to inform the board of any concerns. In the early decades of the club these occurred with some regularity, but they grew to be a celebration of the past year’s events rather than a chance for the membership to interact with the board. However, after the 1930s they disappear from the record. These meetings are established in the club’s constitution and supposed to take place at the end of the year. The annual meeting in 1997 did restart the tradition, which continues. But again, they are mostly

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<sup>4</sup> The City Club Foundation is a separate institution that raises funds to support speaker travel and defray the cost of accommodations. Their boards often consist of past club presidents and other senior members.

nostalgia, with no give-and-take between the board and members. The club appears to have wrestled, in a limited way, with member participation from time to time. There are also strategic studies and polling in the record that show the board was at least thinking about ways to expand member participation. Yet these never seemed to come to fruition. Plans ultimately always land on the side of narrowing the scope of participation and inclusion for members in the work and governance of the club, but not for foundation members or past presidents.

Outside of the club's main governing body, the Board of Directors, this small group of insiders seems to have a disproportionate impact on the club; they are often referred to as the "old-timers." In almost every interview in Cleveland with club members, especially those who have served on committees at one time, as well as staff, the impact and presence of the "old-timers" are mentioned. "Old-timers" refers to a handful of people who have been members for a number of decades (all more than forty years, some much longer) and been club and foundation board members in the past. At best, when they are referenced it is as a source of stability and historical memory. At worst, and this was more often the case, they were cited as evidence that the club has changed little over the decades, as a source of intransigence, a reactionary force standing in the way of change. "It never changes, . . ." noted one member about the Friday Forums. "It's all the same people that were asking questions twenty years ago. . . . That's why they are having trouble recruiting." This impact goes deeper than simply some familiar faces taking the mike during the question period—but also shapes club governance and direction. When a former staff member was asked directly if the old-timers had a hold on the club when she was there, she replied, "Oh yes, oh yes. It was

real. I think they still grasp at ownership. . . . I don't mean to sound petty, but they are old. This is their life: 'we made the city club.'"

A review of board minutes reveals that old-timers regularly attend board meetings. Evident in these minutes is that this cadre does not interfere with board officials as they fulfill their constitutional requirements; rather, they often act as a source of advice and input, a type of "kitchen cabinet." This can cover a broad range of subjects, from finances and contract negotiations to programming and the public face of the club, to which they seem especially sensitive. One former club officer noted that there was significant fear among this group of major change in the club, especially in the area of format, an area where other civic groups are filling the gap. "The stalwarts [old-timers] have a vice grip on our ability to make change."

From a developmental social capital perspective, these factors create a difficult environment for bridging: a top-down organizational structure accentuated by the increased role for old-timers, limited opportunities for participation, limited abilities to shape the values and work product of the association, lack of flexibility, with venues for hearing member input and concerns closed off. Members in this type of vertical association have greater barriers to developing the capacity to engage in the negotiations that can lead to more equitable power relations important to bridging. Without the ability to carve out their own legitimate space as members, the ability to define the association on their own terms is often beyond their reach. Case studies have shown that the presence of institutional flexibility can lead to an opening up of such opportunities, yet flexibility appears to be in short supply in Cleveland. The club's limited participatory opportunities make this an uphill battle from the start—as increased participation often brings in new

perspectives and ideas. Compounding this, the expanding impact of old-timers over the decades appears to be dampening any efforts for change and flexibility that do exist.

The description of the old-timers as stalwarts is revealing, for while they can be seen as holding the club back, they are also greatly respected for the time and effort they have put into the club and are also viewed affectionately. Their unofficial position on the board and their influence in the club are a reflection of that feeling. The place they hold in the club also fits within a larger pattern of reification of club leadership and uncritical exaltation of club purpose—which is not present in Portland. *Freedom's Forum: The City Club, 1912-1962*, by Thomas Campbell (1963), presents a sense of how the club, especially its leadership, views itself (Campbell was also the club's first hall of fame member and a former president). The book is a celebratory history of the club's first fifty years, the environment it grew out of, and how its forum speakers reflected some of the major political debates that occupied the nation during the early twentieth century, revealing how a community institution can become so revered. The book's foreword and appendix, though, also illuminate how a collection of longtime members of seniority can hold on to their "ownership." In the foreword, Campbell ponders why the Cleveland club survived when most of the other city clubs had succumbed and faded. He speculates, "Perhaps the City Club has survived because its founding members and their successors have been the spiritual descendents of the Greeks eulogized by Pericles over two thousand years ago" (13). Closing the foreword, he quotes from the Greek leader's Funeral Oration, where he cites an important source of Athenian exceptionalism and the strength of its democracy—that its citizens are sound judges of policy because they "fear not discussion." This is significant because the author presents an appendix at the end of

the book of club members who represent this ideal. In introducing these members, Campbell notes, “In many respects City Club members are unique. . . . They are citizens in the classic sense of the word” (76). This is no mere laundry list but an extensive detailing of these men’s lives and their contributions to the club and community. It is half as long as the very text outlining the club’s history (which is substantial, even by academic standards). This appendix is the precursor to the “hall of fame” that greets members as they enter the dining room. The current cohort of old-timers represents the latest iteration of revered long-term members.

### The Club in the Media

The media review helps illustrate how this type of associational iconography can emerge. Portland’s club generated more discussion and a larger number of editorials and letters, as would be expected, given the volume of research reports along with their weekly forums. However, there is also a significant and strong qualitative difference between the types of debated generated by the two clubs. Portland, due to the nature of its work, received much more criticism than Cleveland ever did, while it was also embedded in policy debates in a way Cleveland could not be (more on this regarding Portland, below). Cleveland’s position in the community discourse became increasingly exalted. The club would come to be seen as a protector of free speech—above the debates, a guardian. The club position in political discourse became reified. There is little acknowledgment of the actual role the club plays in “protecting” free speech. The selection of speakers is in itself a political act. Yet in thirty years, only one letter and one column challenged the club as the “Citadel of Free Speech.”



Can an actor bridge an association that is placed on such a high perch, or can they just aspire to assimilation and be brought into its embrace? Without a critical dialogue that places an association on an even keel with those in the community, will its new members, its potential bridgers, feel they can engage in the negotiation and rearticulation of power relations needed for the mutual constitution on which bridges rest?

Many letters to the editor were often critical or supportive of forum speakers or candidates in debates, but rarely equivocal, not an unexpected finding. The club's significant radio and television presence meant that events were often heard by many outside of the club, as well as covered the next day in the papers. But two things did jump out about these letters. The first was the degree of reverential and deferential language authors used regarding the club. Authors often noted how lucky the city was to have such an institution as the city club: "We are fortunate to have a place like the city club . . ." was one turn of the refrain. In many instances, though, authors would precede any mention of the club with a note of respect: "the revered City Club . . .," "the hallowed," "the well-respected," "at the historic City Club last Friday . . ." Leaving aside letters regarding the admission of women for the following chapter, the tone of these letters strikes the reader for what it does not include. In thirty years of letters to the editor, there was only one letter critical of the club. A small group of the club leadership had butted heads with the new mayor, Dennis Kucinich, and members of his administration. Feeling the mayor unfairly characterized the political situation in Cleveland, they used their pressure to get the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to give airtime to a club member to present a counterview. One letter took offense and criticized the club for it.

The other issue of significance is how often letter writers used club events, specifically speakers, sometimes months or years later, to substantiate broader arguments about some policy or issue. In one letter from the early 1960s, for instance, an author references a recent fund-raising campaign by the club, where it presented itself as the place where people have the “right to be heard.” The author commends this, but argues what is equally important is the “right to know,” maintaining that most Americans do not know about the “Bricker Amendment” (a piece of human rights legislation before Congress). “What we also need,” he closes, “is someone to protect the right to know.” On top of being respected in a most uncritical way, then, city club forums also serve as an encyclopedic reference point for Cleveland residents.<sup>5</sup>

This impression has been fed no doubt by the club’s broadcast on television and radio, but by its newspaper editorials and opinion columns as well. Editorials, for the most part, cite political debates at the club between candidates. Assessing who performed well or who may have dodged a question, editorials usually culminate with an endorsement, where the club is referenced again. Only once in this period was there a negative editorial criticizing the club—in the early 1960s, for failing to live up to its progressive past—and then it was more lament than critique. Not even in the fight over women’s admittance did the editorial board offer a critique of the club, instead remaining conspicuously silent. There appears to be no real engagement between the editorial board and the club as a major civic institution.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted letters to the editor in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*: January 8, 1962; January 13, 1972; November 19, 1975; March 17, 1979; March 31, 1980; August 23, 1982; July 1, 1989.

More prominent were editorials that celebrate the club—four of which stand out in this survey. Each seems to cherish the role of the club and the place it has carved out in the community and the attention it has brought to Cleveland. Stating its purpose, while overstating its singularity, one notes, “Cleveland’s City Club is the last survivor of its species . . . where all are given a platform, and are then subject to caustic cross examination.” One, providing a brief list of significant speakers, notes that this “even includes the KKK [Ku Klux Klan], further strengthening Cleveland’s reputation for free speech.” By the late 1980s the paper was using the club’s own self-affixed moniker, the “Citadel of Free Speech,” to identify the club, calling it a “democratic force . . . one of greater Cleveland’s finest assets,” while continuing to praise it for “holding debates, and their contribution to political discourse.”<sup>6</sup> In the editorial pages, the Cleveland club mostly served as a political weathervane, a form of telemetry, informing voters on where candidates stood on issues, and a regular venue through which the editorial board could justify its candidate choices. Interspersed with this was periodic praise, but barely a critical judgment of the club itself and the work it conducts.

Opinion columns show similar results as editorials and letters to the editor. Virtually all the columns cite a speaker in making an argument or discuss the relevance of the speech, although the laudatory language is not present to the same degree. The city club forums primarily serve as a reference point in political discourse. Readers, editorial boards, and columnists cite speakers when seeking to substantiate an argument or draw attention to an issue. An argument can be made that the club is aiding the articulation of discourse in this respect. However, there seems to be little linkage between forums and

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted editorials in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*: December 16, 1962; May 9, 1966; October 28, 1987; October 21, 1988.

the evolution and discussion surrounding issues and broader outcomes. Forums show little to no evidence of sparking a change of direction in an issue area or policy sector. In interviews with members, when I asked them about the club's impact on public discourse, they immediately pointed to candidate debates, and club debates on occasion have had a direct impact on electoral outcomes. Interviews with city councilors and chamber of commerce members generated similar responses. Yet when pressing members, especially on whether the club has ever moved a larger community debate forward in a policy area or on a social issue, they often responded, as one member did, "Well, I just think it's important. They are an open forum. We need free speech."

Venues for free speech are certainly important, although in this era of the Internet and increased connectivity, making sense of all this "speech" and being able to put it to good use are equally if not more important. The city club movement was never about free speech in and of itself. Yet this is where the Cleveland club has landed, as its role in the community was increasingly celebrated without criticism and its core leadership eulogized and enshrined. The Cleveland club, as with other clubs in the movement's formative years, believed that bringing people together of disparate views would bring some clarity to politics marked by partisanship and communities in the midst of historic transitions.

This media survey, though, reveals none of Putnam's "WD40" effect. Important in the WD40 effect is not simply exposing people to differing views, but giving actors the skills to wrestle with those views, to understand their place within these discourses and cultural frames—and to alter that terrain if need be. This is the value and import of developmental social capital: enabling people to articulate their values and negotiate

across barriers of difference, leading to collective outcomes. This is what it means to bridge. The Cleveland club as an institution, with its lauded reputation and reified leadership, has become a space where this type of engagement is increasingly difficult. Without participatory opportunities for the larger body of membership—where they can build leverage, gaining the skills and legitimacy to challenge the “old-timers”—this trend has become more entrenched in recent decades. The lack of flexibility and greater participation reduces member contribution to club life to sharing a meal amid icons and heroes of clubs past, while hearing about your dining mates’ river cruise down the Danube. Where is the “accumulation of capital before the constructive work can begin” that Hanifan called for one hundred years ago, in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*? It may exist for the club’s inner circle, but does not for its members.

### *Portland*

Portland represents the last and smaller group of city clubs—study groups. As noted above, research reports have been part of its identity and organizing principle since its inception. Portland does not have the reputation for drawing national speakers like Cleveland does (not to say some haven’t spoken there). The Portland club’s reputation rests more on its reports than its Friday Forums. The presence of research committees creates a very different environment. Member participation on committees has always been encouraged and sought. For much of the club’s history, it has been common to have multiple research committees running at any one time. The staff in Portland also has greater latitude than in Cleveland. While they work at the behest of the board, the executive director and staff have a greater scope to be creative while working within the

parameters the board has established and within the club's mission. This has produced a more diverse and varied club regarding activities, participation, and input by members. Portland's representation in the press also presents a different picture. There is none of the celebratory and reverential language one finds in Cleveland. The Portland club—through its research—opens itself up to more criticism than Cleveland's club. The result is a club that is more accessible through public discourse, a member of the community and its debates rather than situated above it. It reveals a club whose history, work, and leadership have not been reified, but one that is seen as a constructive community partner—even if its reports are not always agreed with. The club's significant participation opportunities, flexibility, and regular production of reports set it up as a good potential environment for capacity building and the growth of developmental social capital.

The Portland City Club was founded in the summer of 1916. A group of young men, mostly lawyers and business professionals, who had taken part in earlier reform efforts in Portland decided they wanted to start a club focused on examining municipal issues and city improvement (Lucia 1966).<sup>7</sup> In the summer of 1916 they organized a meeting at the Hollend Hotel and placed a call in the *Oregonian* for prospective members, seeking “those having progressive civic ideas and those willing to work to the full summation of the aims of the City Club” (*Portland Oregonian*, October 1, 1916).

The club, while also drawing from the business, professional, and middling classes, had

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, a number of important documents, including meeting minutes and some of the club's earliest reports from this period, have been lost—presumably in the course of compiling Lucia's book *The Conscience of a City* (1966). Lucia's notes, however, were still in the archive. His notes, the minutes that were available, and newspaper accounts were used for this period.

no real representation of the city's leading families in this period. On the Board of Governors in its early years, Reed professors and lawyers were the dominate professions. The only member of the board listed in the preeminent social registry of the time was progressive and populist activist William U'Ren, principal behind the Oregon initiative and referendum system. This stands in contrast to Cleveland, whose board and members had a significantly greater blue-book representation. With the onset of World War I, attendance dramatically dropped off, as many members had enlisted. The club would suspend activities until after the war.

At the war's end the club resumed and quickly got down to the work of conducting studies. In its first couple years the club completed twenty-one studies covering a wide range of issues, including proposed legislation, constitutional amendments, and infrastructural projects. By 1922, as city officials were dealing with the growing problem of municipal waste, they asked the city club to study the problem. A bond of two hundred thousand dollars had recently been passed to build a refuse incinerator, but city leaders wanted to study the issue further before spending the money to ensure this was the best route. The study of bond measures and state and local initiatives and referendums became a major focus of the club, alongside its longer, more comprehensive studies. Encouraging public deliberation of politics and policy was one of the major goals of the founders of the initiative and referendum process (which would become known nationally as the Oregon system) (Smith and Tolbert 2004, chap. 1). The club would benefit from the state's early embrace of the process and the low thresholds established for getting initiatives and referendums on ballots. While their comprehensive studies would help establish the club's reputation, the popular use of ballot measures over

the state's history would place club reports in the middle of many debates and significantly ratchet up its exposure.

Unlike Cleveland, facilities and the forum experience were secondary, as the board focused most of its energy on research reports. In the summer of 1927 the board concluded it would be in the best interest of the club to have the membership vote up or down on whether to accept reports from research committees. Over the following decade it would debate on how best to follow up on reports to help promote implementation of their recommendations and engage in collaboration with other interest groups, associations, and service providers.<sup>8</sup> This is, in part, representative of a historical tension within the club. Should the club just produce research for the members and the public's edification, or should it make a more active effort in seeing that its recommendations get implemented? This would ultimately lead to the establishment of the Advocacy and Awareness Board and the advocacy committees (more on this below). The ability of report production to engage members is not just a function of sitting on a committee. The very public nature of the reports (and what to do with them and about them when they are complete) is something that continually engages members—inducing them to ponder important public questions.

By the middle of the twentieth century, as the club was reaching the height of its influence, its reputation as an institution that could examine issues in a nonpartisan and disinterested fashion had been firmly established. Two studies in particular illustrate the

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<sup>8</sup> Board minutes quoted: June 6, 1927; September 12, 1927; March 21, 1932; September 13, 1937.



weight club studies could carry in the city.<sup>9</sup> One was the Forest Park study of 1945, which led to the creation of Forest Park in Portland—the largest natural forest park within the limits of a major city in the United States. The second was the club’s vice report, known as the Report on Law Enforcement in Portland and Multnomah County (1948). The board charged the committee with determining, among other things, the prevalence of vice, methods used, and the degree of police involvement. The report found Portland to be a “wide-open” town. Gambling, bootlegging, and prostitution were extensive. Committee members found that public officials had ignored the problem and that members of the police department who had not turned a blind eye had built a healthy protection racket. The report shook up Portland’s business and political community and caused them to throw their weight behind Dorothy McCullough Lee for mayor in the next election. Lee, a first-term city councilwoman, was seen as “clean.” She would win in a landslide, becoming one of the first women mayors of a major American city. These reports obviously represent a high point in the club’s impact on local politics. Yet, as will be seen below, club reports have at times produced “event cycles,” where reports produce discussion that moves events forward and leads to policy changes. More than nine hundred reports have been produced since the club’s founding.

The club format has stayed generally the same over the course of the club’s history—that of a membership organization overseen by a board of governors, with committees conducting research and organizing forum events. As an institution, however, the club has periodically looked at itself, questioning its mission and effectiveness, often

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<sup>9</sup> *City Club of Portland Bulletin* 26, no. 18; 28, no. 42.

forming research committees to do so.<sup>10</sup> This reflects a significant difference between the two clubs and has important implications for developmental social capital. Three strategic studies have been conducted by Cleveland over the past fifteen years, as its membership numbers have decreased and its leaders have questioned if its format and mission were still relevant. They have posited the need for format changes, embracing technology, and attracting young professionals. None of these ideas has gotten off the ground (New Leaders was the closest and will be discussed in the next chapter). Change and institutional flexibility are incredibly difficult to manifest in Cleveland. Associations, especially voluntary civic associations, which cannot adapt to the changing desires and concerns of their members, will find those members going elsewhere. And in the broader sense, associations that are adaptive in this way legitimize the interest and normative commitments of those they are bridging with—taking one step toward the rearticulation of power relations often needed to form bridges. The Portland club, while it can move slowly at times, is more successful in instituting change. When its committees are done turning the lens on themselves, the findings are shared with the membership through the club bulletin, and when appropriate membership has voted on proposed changes.

This self-evaluation has led to changes in how committees are structured and new event offerings, as well as expanded the ways in which members engage with the club. The process of conducting research has been one area of focus—progressively leading to a more responsive and robust research process. In 1953 the club established the Research Board to oversee the research process and help research committees meet the parameters established by the board while maintaining appropriate rigor. For much of the club's

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<sup>10</sup> *City Club of Portland Bulletin* 3, no. 17; 3, no. 25; 4, no. 1; 6, no. 13; 20, no. 3; 50, no. 23; 52, no. 22; 55, no. 51; 73, no. 6.

history, research was conducted by standing committees assigned to general subject areas. The formation and disbandment of standing committees would shift as the salience of issues ebbed and flowed, giving way, for instance, to an Americanization Committee at the club's formation and later an Education Committee in the 1960s. By the mid-1990s this format was no longer generating enough interest among the members, or enough work. It was not uncommon for some committees to have nothing to do for significant periods of time or very few members sitting on those committees. The desires, interest, and expectations of members had grown beyond the old format. In 1996 club leadership began exploring ways of reinvigorating the research committees and membership participation. This process would take years and a great deal of debate and tweaking. The executive director of the club at the time noted, "We had many many retreats, we were always trying to be creative in a way that moved the club forward." This meant finding ways to involve people "and give them more of a role than they had before." This maturation of the new committee form would span the work of two executive directors. The new incoming director described what concerns were driving the Board of Governors and Research Board and the types of conversations that were taking place as the new ad hoc committees that would replace the standing committees were taking shape:

And so, when I came, there was a lot of space to say, "Let's rethink how we do this. Let's get new people involved. What are their interests?" . . . So, I think a lot of what happened was, "Let's look and see what way that we can make this something that more people will want to participate in. Let's create more opportunities, more nimble opportunities, for people to participate. . . . Different kinds of people to participate; let's make it feel like . . ." You know, the whole

idea of standing committees feels like—how do you penetrate that? If I came to town, it would feel like, well, that's not for me. That's a committee appointed by God . . . So it was really to try to open, just make the doors a little more open.

The process of making the standing committees more open and responsive to membership and the issues they covered would eventually lead to their abandonment in favor of the ad hoc committee format ten years later.

In the spring of 2013, the Board of Governors approved an amendment to the club bylaws, allowing members to vote for reports online. This right had traditionally been available only to those who attended Friday Forum luncheons, a luxury for the couple hundred members who can take time off work or are retired to attend. A handful of members pushed for voting online, arguing that voting on reports was an important and defining element of club membership, and they succeeded in persuading the board. It is still new (at this writing, only one report has been voted for online), and it is too early to judge its effectiveness. This decision, like the initial one in 1927 to have the membership vote up or down on club reports, seeks to expand member engagement and connection with the club's work product—the most essential element of its identity, broadening members' ability to shape that identity.

What to do with these reports once they are finished, as mentioned above, is an old tension in the club. Traditionally, the club would publish its reports, and if more input was needed committee members would be asked or offer to testify before a legislative committee or community group—a good opportunity to hone their public-speaking ability and build capacity and confidence. However, they have always had to do it under the guise that they are acting as citizens and not as members of the club or representing it

in any way. If there is one area where Portland had an “old-timer” group unhappy with the direction the club was taking, it was in the area of advocacy. Some believed that advocacy was beyond the club’s mission. On the other hand, a growing number believed club research was not being utilized to its fullest extent and that too often its recommendations were being ignored and members’ time and effort squandered. In 1994 the club decided to establish the Advocacy and Awareness Board. Yet, just as with the shift in committee form, moving forward would involve a great deal of time and deliberation until the club felt it had it right. In 2006 the club published its *Advocacy and Awareness Guide*, establishing guidelines for appropriate advocacy that would not jeopardize the club’s 501(c)3 status. Much like the Research Board, the Advocacy Board oversees and advises the work of advocacy committees—which essentially parallel research committees. These committees deal with how to engage the public and the media as well as interaction with elected officials. Advocacy committees are deployed only when there is overwhelming support by the club membership of a report that the members have already voted to accept. Whereas accepting a report requires only a majority of member support, an Advocacy Committee requires a supermajority of 80 percent. The club has certainly grown more comfortable with this role. One member who echoed the sentiment of most other members regarding advocacy stated:

I think it is a positive step. There are people in the club, old-timers, who would disagree and believe that the club should issue its reports and then pass it on. I’m not one of those. I think it is a great step forward for the club to take a report that has been adopted by the membership that is the position of the club. I think it’s

important to be able to go out in the wider community and advocate for that, for those recommendations.

Research and advocacy are not the only areas where we see club flexibility in relation to membership concerns and interest. In the early 2000s the club embarked on further efforts to be more open to member concerns and interest, while also increasing its own transparency. At the club's new location a room was dedicated the "city club commons." This is an open meeting area where board meetings take place, research committees meet, and new member introductions take place—it is essentially the club's living room. Also at this time a new format of member-led forums was introduced, known as Agora. Agora gives members a venue to pursue interests and issues that cannot be covered in Friday Forums or through research committees. These are often smaller events that are not suitable for the forum stage (e.g., book readings, architectural tours, meetings with artists) and research interest that cannot be accommodated by research committees. The club has also instituted a relatively new venue called the "member caucuses." There had been concerns raised about a "growing culture of seniority" and that club leadership was not sufficiently transparent or giving full consideration to member concerns. While in Portland I participated in the fourth in a series of caucuses held in the previous twelve months. Online voting came out of a previous such meeting. Also, responding to demands for greater transparency from the caucus, Board of Governors meetings are now open to members as of the winter of 2013. On the night I attended we broke out into working groups on effective advocacy, youth engagement, member experience, and club engagement. The executive director and some governors attended and participated. Attendance at these events can vary widely. That night there were approximately thirty

people in attendance. A recent “Civic Drinks” (a social mixer at a local restaurant) drew around eighty. This culture of self-examination and willingness to encourage and embrace feedback represents an ability to adapt and a willingness to validate member concerns that are missing in Cleveland. These events often fed optimism among members that they could have an impact on the direction and nature of the club.

These efforts also indirectly illuminate a growing desire by boards, over the past twenty years, to bring in more dynamic executive directors. EDs over this period have played a more active role, becoming more public representatives of the club, while also bringing a more active sense of leadership. This is in contrast to Cleveland, where the ED’s two main tasks are working to get the Friday Forum speaker on board and securing corporate sponsors for open tables at Friday Forums. Both of these can take considerable effort, but it is a role that is tightly defined. The ED has really no latitude to tinker around the edges regarding club events or mission. In Portland, on the other hand, the “city club commons” was an ED initiative. In interviewing four of the club’s directors, they all make very clear that the club is a true member-driven organization. The board hires the staff and sets the goals and priorities for the club and expects the staff to carry them out. Until the early 1990s executive directors operated under “very tight restrictions. The ED could not say anything in a [board] meeting other than helping out from behind the scenes” (similar to Cleveland). However, there does appear to be a conscious effort to bring in directors with a more public vision for the club and how it engages not only its members, but also the larger community. Yet like the changes above, they can move slowly as the process plays itself out. As one ED described their working relationship with the board, “There [was] a lot of negotiation. . . . [S]ometimes I had a lot of leeway . .

. sometimes I had less. . . . [I]t depended on the board.” Perhaps nothing exemplifies this expanding more dynamic role for EDs than the club’s latest hire for the position. Sam Adams, former mayor of Portland, was hired in the spring of 2013 as the new ED. Adams assumed the job during the last month of my fieldwork in Portland, making any assessment unrealistic.

The way in which inflexibility to member interest and tight control over information and decision processes (club work product) negatively or positively impact bridging will be treated in detail in the next chapter. The important takeaway here is how vertical, top-down organizations present a much more difficult environment for bridging and building development of social capital than those that are more horizontal in character. Flexibility to member concerns and the ability to contribute to club work product denote the give-and-take needed in a mutual relationship, and bridges that are not mutual are hierarchical and subservient and not real bridges at all. In Cleveland the members are part of the “brand” but in the most minimal way. To be a meaningful part of that brand and the “Athenians of Cleveland” is out of the reach of all but a few—which means capacity building is also out of reach. This is one of the fundamental distinctions between the two clubs. Over its history Portland has shown an ability to adapt to member desires and concerns—from committee changes and the addition of events to staff hirings. This is not to present the Portland club as an exemplar in this regard. The bridging of women started out ugly and was highly contentious—more so than in Cleveland—and its “culture of seniority” problem uncomfortably echoes Cleveland’s old-timers. Yet Portland manages to work its way out of these conundrums. Part of this is due to a commitment to “process,” the long-established history of research committees,



and collective analysis and decision making. Research committees attract significant numbers of members and also serve as a path to larger leadership opportunities in the club. These committees are certainly capacity-building sites, which will be dealt with below, but committee work also continually put the next generation of club leaders into collective decision-making and constructive processes with the other members. While the impacts of this are difficult to quantify, they are not making decisions in isolation, as they are in Cleveland. By the time the reports reach the Board of Governors in Portland, the club leadership has worked side by side with members for years in crafting them. This is a far more mutual and co-constitutive relationship with the membership than its counterpart on the shores of Lake Eire.

### Committees and Capacity Building

Committee work is an obvious landing point for capacity building. In committees individuals must learn to work with others. They have opportunities to hone their writing, speaking, and organizational skills and have the chance to contribute to the work product of the club. The building of these skill sets positions members to contribute in a meaningful way to the club's most valuable work product, and it also serves as a type of praxis—where individual performance can lead to greater and expanding opportunities and responsibilities for members. This coproductive work can also have the effect of fostering a set of intelligences and perceptions—which inform members about important political relationships, illuminating their “position” in the community in relation to public institutions and the community as a whole, in ways that may not be as obvious as the building of skill sets. Each of these elements is part of how members become agents in

defining their space in the web of associational relations. Over the club's history it has been common to have a number of research committees, and now parallel Advocacy Committees, operating in a given year. Long-term comprehensive study committees convene for roughly one year on average, meeting regularly once a week. Ballot-measure studies convene for a shorter period, but meet with similar frequency. The duration and frequency with which Advocacy Committees meet vary depending on the nature of the issue.

Volunteering to work on a city club committee is no small commitment. Committee members are expected to attend regularly, and all members are expected to carry their share of the workload over the course of the year. This can include compiling data, coordinating interviews, and writing briefs as well as producing the final report. It is not uncommon for members to devote ten to fifteen hours a week to their committee work. Even in light of this workload and long-term commitment, the club has seen an increase in committee applicants over the past few years. Committees often have around 8 members, give or take, but it is not uncommon to have between 30 and 40 applicants. The Research Board invests significant time in selecting the members. Applicants are thoroughly vetted for conflicts of interest. Committee chair selection is based on previous committee experience and club participation—often settling on folks who have played a significant role on a previous committee, such as writing the final report. Committee members are selected based on two main criteria—diversity and experience—to ensure a balanced committee. Regarding diversity, they focus primarily on neighborhood, gender, age, and interest. In terms of experience, they try to select at least a few members with previous committee experience, so the chair is not herding an entire group of newcomers

to the process. The participation ethic is still strong in the club, just as it was in the early years. Including the boards (governors, research, and advocacy), membership and forum committees, New Leaders Collective, and the research-related committees, this participation usually stands north of 250 members—representing between 20 and 25 percent of the overall membership in a given year. This number does not include members who attend various non-committee-related events noted above, such as Agora, Member Caucuses, and so on.

While in Portland I had the opportunity to observe the following committees: Redistricting, Air Quality (twice), Property Tax (4 occasions), Members Caucus, New Leaders Collective (twice), Board of Governors, and the Research Board. Outside of Redistricting and one of the New Leaders, which were in the fall of 2011, most of these observations took place in January and February 2013. They were usually held in the city club commons. The large number of meetings afforded the opportunity to observe committees at various stages of the process—from those at the very beginning (Property Tax) to those at the midway point (Redistricting) and still others about to embark on advocacy (Air Quality). The committees regularly deal with public problems that the broader community faced, often growing out of complex histories, involving multiple institutions and sectors, which are sometimes bound within entrenched political relationships. They do not just deal with Portland issues and local matters. They often look to tackle larger statewide issues as well. Sometimes they are questions the public is not aware of; other times they can be the thorny, unpopular subjects that most political actors and citizens would rather ignore and hope go away on their own.

Property Tax is a good example of the latter. The antitax movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which led to the statewide passage of Measures 5, 47, and 50, decreased property taxes, placed thresholds on those taxes, and then decoupled them from the actual market value for homes (Henkels 2005). This has created a slowly unfolding systematic and constitutionally entrenched problem for communities across the state, as they struggle to provide services against shrinking revenues. The Research Board charged the committee with studying the evolution of the Oregon property tax system, understanding and explaining the implementation of the tax system, evaluating its pros and cons, and recommending improvements. My observations were at the beginning of this process, as the committee was wrestling with how it would approach this subject and potential witnesses. The committee chair described my first observed meeting (the committee's second) as "thinking about how we want to think about the charges from the board." The first issue was how to manage the data, terminology, and concepts surrounding the subject in a way that made them accessible, while also facilitating their upcoming interviews. The second part of that meeting revolved around the process of how to interview witnesses.

I can attest from the scores of interviews for this research that there is a fine balance that needs to be held between asking a subject the questions you want answered, while also giving them enough space to tell their own stories, and it is a skill that can take some time to master. Often interviewees have stories or interpretations on events that are far more valuable than the answers to my questions. This is an area where the Research Board's desire to balance committees with some experienced members paid dividends. Right from the start the committee was sensitive to this challenge and devoted time to

how they would strike that balance before their first interview. Over the next few meetings as the committee called witnesses, what first began as basic questioning became increasingly more defined and focused. From basic questions on fundamentals (which are anything but fundamental in Oregon’s property tax system) to extracting the rub of the system from a particular witness’s perspective, the committee as a group quickly fashioned the aptitude to extract and unpack what witnesses could offer, while maintaining a balance, allowing witnesses to offer their own insights. These witnesses covered the political and professional spectrum, including advocates for and against the original measures, elected county and state officials, legal specialists in public finance law, treasurers, economists, public service officials (e.g., a fire chief), and developers from the private sector. Part of the function of research committees, especially with issues such as property taxes that can evolve into multistranded knots of complexity, is to bring clarity. Within the public sphere and through the media, such issues are often fractured, atomized, and dealt with on a piecemeal level—without any one group putting the whole story together. Untying such knots is not just a simple process of summation. Research committees must dig deep into a problem and then choose how they want to tell the story—making trade-offs here and emphasizing other elements there. These committees invest a great deal of energy in making sure they get this part of the process right.

The end result of this—the condensing of complex political problems into a “citizen perspective”—is often a degree of clarity that forums cannot always provide, which is just one person’s view and has the potential to get lost in the cacophony of other voices on a subject. In this way Portland committees operate as Dewey-like publics,

making the complex sensible while also arguing for “riverbanks” to contain the actions of the public and private sectors. Yet from a bridging perspective, the construction of this type of narrative may be just as important for committee members as it is for the public. For example, while discussing the potential list of witnesses, a debate ensued about bringing in a potential controversial figure. Some had trouble with the individual’s past and believed they should not be invited to testify. Others argued that if the study was to be considered legitimate and nonpartisan, the committee would have to give this person a chance to appear. Dissenters were eventually persuaded, and the group agreed to invite the individual. In putting these composite works together, then, committee members can struggle with what values should be represented—but they are also constructed with the idea that they need to speak to broader segments of society. These collectively constructed reports help actors understand and identify each other across perceived barriers of difference in much the same way as stories did in Putnam and Feldman’s *Better Together* (2003).

When looking to get at the root of complex public problems, research committees sometimes have to address relationships between the public and public institutions. A good example of this is the Redistricting Committee. In 2009 the club convened a committee to study partisanship in Oregon’s political system. The committee concluded that partisanship was a significant problem in the state and that legislative responsibility for redistricting exacerbated the existence and impact of partisanship. That report recommended the legislature put a constitutional amendment to the voters for an independent redistricting commission and that the club establish a committee to draft a plan on how best to put such a commission together. In 2011 the Board of Governors

chose to follow through on this recommendation and established the Redistricting Committee. The committee quickly landed on a major crux of devising such a commission. State legislators generally know their districts better than any other official or representative; removing them from the process eliminates a valuable resource and places a significant hurdle in front of any commission before it can even get a plan before the public. Second, replacing state legislators with an appointed commission introduces unelected officials in place of the people's representatives. The research committee was debating how to approach this problem. A conversation involving three committee members highlights this discussion:

A: To take those rights way from the legislature doesn't seem to adhere with the constitutional design of the democratic process. . . . I struggle with taking this out of the hands of the legislature.

B: When the legislature does it correctly, it seems to work out pretty well, but in the long run it seems as though the legislature has not been able to do it, and there is a public perception problem. And even though . . . we don't know what kind of language we want to use . . . we're not against the legislature doing it. At least philosophically, but in practice . . .

A: . . . and I think that's key for me, is that I'm not convinced that there is actually any real material benefit here other than perception. I just think this type of approach pushes that kind of partisan execution deeper undercover.

C: What we are struggling with . . . [is] they were partisan agents doing negotiations on behalf of their parties, but they were doing what the committee would be doing, right? They would start by interviewing legislators. We want to

take the good parts of that, but remove the horse trading and handshaking, because these are partisan agents engaging in negotiations on behalf of their parties.

The committee was debating what sort of approach to take in their recommendations—a “light” approach, where an appointed redistricting committee plays an advisory role, or a “heavy” approach, where the advisory committee assumes the authority to redraw district lines. The research committee had now moved beyond the “clarity” stage. The committee was now grappling with the difficult aspect of evaluating the role of institutions, the values behind those institutions, and how that interplay between values and institutions should be represented in their recommendations. Eventually, the committee decided on the “heavy” method. At this stage of the committee process, they had moved beyond the point where the Property Tax Committee was, that is, communicating the nature of the problem. They had now moved on to the challenge of “representation.” When putting together report recommendations, that is, action points for whoever is the “target” of a particular report, these recommendations represent a particular set of values and norms that members wish to see represented in society. It is one thing to construct a story of how a community or state got to a certain “point.” It is quite another to collectively formulate a way out of that problem. This has the effect of ratcheting up the seriousness and weight of deliberations. This can often require the strongest articulation and defense of norms and values of any point in the committee process, and most important it requires members to work with others who see things differently as they build a consensus. Occasionally, if a consensus cannot be reached, a minority report may also be produced, but this does not occur often and is the exception.



The Research Board assigns an adviser to each research committee. However, the Research Board does not concern itself with report conclusions or recommendations. It is concerned with the quality of the research and ensuring the committee adheres to the charge from the Board of Governors. This disinterest is true for the Board of Governors as well. As long as a committee meets its charge, then it has fulfilled its duty. The board has never withheld a report from a membership vote because it disagrees with the conclusions and recommendations. Committees have full ownership of what they produce. Once given this charge, they are fully vested in taking the research where it leads them. The recommendations of each report are truly their own. Through the interviewing of witnesses, the articulation of the “problem,” and the negotiation among committee members in producing the findings, members are building developmental social capital skills. Bridgers must have the authority of their own voice if associations are to have mutually constituted outcomes. Actors cannot bridge if they cannot carve out their own sense of legitimacy and space within an association—otherwise, they are just members, in the smallest sense of the word. In city club committees members are able to find that voice, and the Board of Governors legitimizes it by putting it before the club for a vote.

### Impact on Public Discourse

Besides the larger volume of articles it generated, Portland representations in the media stand out against Cleveland in two ways. First, given that the club was entering the political discourse in a more meaningful way, its relationship with the public was much different. The Portland club received more criticism than Cleveland, and while respected

it was not treated in the same reverential way Cleveland was. Second, review of the dialogue generated by the club illustrates a type of “event cycle” between reports and the responses that they helped promote. Here I am not referring to the club’s more successful reports (as noted above). What I mean by event cycles is on a more ambient level. The club has put out many reports, more than nine hundred over the course of its history. When taking the long view of how reports play out in the media over this period—for example, riverfront development, Housing Authority policy, and administration of medical facilities—a recognizable pattern occurs. Reports are released. This then instigates a series of editorials, letters, and sometimes opinion columns, which are later followed by a shift in policy. These shifts do not always mirror report recommendations, and when they occur they may have included only a recommendation or two from the club’s original report, but they often reflect the spirit of those reports. This may not be surprising, being embedded in the community’s political discourse in a way that is beyond Cleveland’s scope. It is not just a larger footprint, but it makes the club more accessible to members of the community—even if it is not always agreed with.

As in the case of Cleveland, letters to the editor reference speakers and debates, but these represent a smaller trigger in motivating authors to write to the *Oregonian*. Roughly half of the letters deal with club reports. Similar to Cleveland, some authors will cite reports to justify their positions. A minister, for example, citing the unremarkable finding of a club report that race relations in the Rose City are poor, argues that this time it is a city club report that has said it, and club members cannot be brushed off as a “bunch of irresponsible nuts, soft headed preachers, and idealistic social workers.” On the other hand, there is also an important difference in how authors engage report findings

and the club as a voice in the community. Many Portland letters often have a sense of action at their center. As one supporter of the Riverfront for the People movement states, “At the very least we should heed the city club report on riverfront development which, among other things calls for no action until full consideration of all alternatives have been discussed publically.” A Portland Zoo official writes, “We at the zoo would like to thank you for your story on April 6 regarding the city club report. . . . [A]s the report recommends, a new public entity should undertake responsibility for the zoo.” The club is more than just a vehicle for substantiating one’s point. Cleveland letters often read like sound bites from dinner table discussion. This is not to diminish the discussion the Cleveland club engenders. But a reproach against the narrow-mindedness of the president of the John Birch Society and a plea for the appropriate use of public space can mean very different things regarding developmental social capital. Certainly, injustice and intolerance by organizations such as the JBS and the KKK have motivated people to action. But speakers coming in and leaving town the same day are more like annoying flies who have snuck into the room. They may inspire you for a brief moment, but eventually they will be gone. At the very least, the Portland reports that inspire people to write often deal with issues of significant immediate importance and have future implications for the community and the state. Discourse on reports often focuses on proposed recommendations—instigating discussions that shape community relations, prompting the articulation and defense of norms, and the carving out of space and a voice that are of a higher magnitude than finding a speaker disagreeable.

On the other hand, the club also sets itself up for public critique in a way that is not present in Cleveland. On the issue of race, for example, one author, as he dresses

down the school board for a recent substandard race study, reminds readers of a city club report on the subject that pulled in a few “token Uncle Tom’s” to give it legitimacy. Other letters have noted blind spots in reports, where authors felt the club has missed an essential point, such as in a critique of a Housing Authority report, where the study failed to mention that the Housing Authority is required to have only one-third of its clients be low-income, while the rest of its efforts go toward making a profit. These letters critical of the club are a minority, but they represent a different attitude toward the club that is also illustrated by the conspicuous absence of the deferential treatment readers bestow upon the Cleveland club. Not once in the far larger volume of Portland letters did a writer refer to the club with a term of reverence or respect, not even a mention of its history or past reputation in the community. They simply referred to it by its name. Authors did, however, hold up the club’s self-applied moniker like a mirror—the Conscience of the City—using it as a sort of shaming, for not living up to its ideals.

Editorials are another area where club research produces a quantitative and qualitative difference compared to Cleveland. Editorials reference speakers and debates, but they are far from the major focus. Editorials referencing or specifically discussing club research outnumber speaker and debate editorials by a margin of seven to one. The majority of the editorials dealing with research are positive. At times editorials may just be a rendition of a report’s content and recommendations, which the editorial board affirms. However, on many other occasions the editorial board will seek to put the report in context with a larger issue. For example, in 1974 a city-county consolidation measure became highly contested and was debated in the media by supporters and opponents. The flurry of claims and counterclaims had confused the issue and discouraged voters. In

attempting to clarify the issue, the board cited the work of a recent club committee that studied the measures: “The 11 member Portland City Club committee has addressed itself effectively to the issues involved in city-county consolidation. It has exposed some of the false arguments employed against measure 7 on the May 28 ballot and has clipped the brush down to expose the key question: ‘Will the new government be better?’ The committee unanimously believes it will.”

Not all editorials were positive, as would be expected. Some criticisms were constructive, as with the Housing Authority report. It was “responsible and helpful . . . but its negative points should not be over looked.” Others showed plain disagreement, as with the club’s recommendation to legalize marijuana. Club members may have been in favor of it, but “that is the last thing that needs to be done.” In another case involving a report on the fiscal condition of Portland schools, the board took the interesting position of writing directly to club members, urging them to “disregard the report and vote against it.”<sup>11</sup> The editorial board appears to have viewed the club and its reports as a productive partner. And at times it even appears to be having a conversation with the club through its editorials.

Opinion columns reveal no significant difference from Cleveland. The majority of articles consist of debate analysis and referencing speakers (sometimes as a stand-alone subject and at others to substantiate a broader argument). There were no negative or critical columns.

The negative and critical letters and editorials are relatively small in number compared to the larger volume of print discourse that the Portland club generates. Yet

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<sup>11</sup> Editorials quoted in the *Portland Oregonian*: April 1, 1966; June 29, 1972; May 17, 1974; November 8, 1979.

their presence and the overall change of tone denote a different type of relationship between the club and the public than found in Cleveland. Cleveland was viewed as being above politics, by those in the community and by members of the club. Portland holds on to the same nonpartisan stance, but in a way that places it in the political debate. The Portland club is a partner in important political discussions in the community, whereas Cleveland is more a facilitator. Portland contributes, whereas Cleveland presides. Portland makes itself vulnerable with each report it presents; Cleveland becomes more esteemed with each milestone anniversary. In the end, Portland's position in public discourse invites contestation, and the ability to challenge an entity makes it more accessible to those in the community. The importance of this positioning would play a significant role in the breaking of the gender barrier and its impact on the club.

### Conclusion

The city club movement shares developmental roots with other similar Progressive Era movements. They sought to bring people together across political lines. They believed this would not only foster a greater sense of community, but also bring clarity to some of the challenging issues of the time. The movement was not necessarily representative of the population and had significant elite and upper-class representation while also drawing from the middling and professional classes. There was differentiation between the clubs, though, in how they believed they could achieve the movement's broader goals. Most clubs chose the more passive and less confrontational nonmilitant route, choosing to be a "clearinghouse" for ideas and speakers. Cleveland would take this

path. A minority of clubs looked for a more aggressive participatory route, some actively pushing for change, while others sought to study matters and make recommendations. Portland would follow the latter course. The two clubs to grow out of this history also offer two different pictures of capacity building.

The Cleveland club has been a top-down-oriented club from its inception. This character has only increased over the years. Participation of old-timers on the board has increased over the past thirty years, dampening possible efforts for change. Avenues for member participation and development are limited and have been on the decline. Informing these two factors are the place the club occupies in political discourse and its history as a speaking venue of national prominence. The result is a very strong impulse to protect the city club “brand,” which makes it exceedingly difficult for members who wish to explore new directions. It has also made the process of research more challenging. On more than one occasion, interviewees confided that they had contacted the executive director to see if it was okay to talk to me prior to our interview. Information (such as a recently completed strategic plan) and committee meetings (the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors) were off-limits. Overall, the Cleveland club offers little opportunity in the way of capacity development for its members. The elements identified as important to bridging—the ability to negotiate, skill development, articulation and legitimization of one’s view within the larger group, and, most important, opportunities for mutual construction—are absent in Cleveland.

Portland represents the opposite side of this equation. The Portland founders saw no conflict in being nonpartisan and doing research studies. Participation in research studies has been a core element of the club’s identity since its founding. That ethic is still

strong today, as roughly one in four members participate on a research committee, and club leadership is always looking to cycle in new participants. Committee work is highly developmental, providing members more extensive and substantive opportunities for capacity building. The scale of the club's productivity, its constructive place in political discourse, and the impact of some key studies have established the club's reputation as a reasoned voice in important political debates. It has also positioned the club in a different and more constructive way within the community discourse.

The Portland City Club is certainly not perfect. The emergence of Member Caucuses is a reflection of that. Yet club leadership has responded with open access to Board of Governors meetings and online voting, revealing a more sensitive ear to member concerns than its Cleveland counterparts when it comes to trying to be flexible and adapting to members' concerns. All of this add up to a very different environment when members are attempting to contribute to the building of the club, which allows Portland's members greater space to leave their normative and intellectual imprint on the club, playing a role in the mutual construction of the club.



## CHAPTER IV

### BRIDGING WOMEN AND NEW LEADERS

This research project has presented a developmental perspective for understanding the growth and decline of bridging social capital. It is more accurate to think of bridging social capital as what I have termed “developmental social capital,” given that building these connections rests on an actor’s ability to constructively contribute to those new networks of relations. This ability to contribute is often something that must be carved out and actively pursued. Bridges must be constructed. An actor crossing a boundary and simply becoming a member of an association is not sufficient. Rather than looking to associational membership and networks in the aggregate, I have proposed that scholars need to place greater emphasis on the character of institutions, context, and power when seeking to understand bridging relations. By focusing on these elements, the role of development in bridging relations comes to the fore. These clubs present two different models of civic engagement that shape their opportunities for participation and development. The integration of women and young professionals (referred to as “New Leaders [NL]” programs) into these clubs reflects their developmental capacity as associations. Both populations integrated more deeply and more meaningfully into Portland than in Cleveland, in part because of the greater opportunities for capacity building through participation in the Portland club. Yet the success of their ability to bridge into these associations is also a story of the creative use and expression of power by both of these populations. Cleveland is limited in its modes

of participation but not entirely bereft. Power asymmetries, the concentration of power in a group of “insiders” (old-timers), and its top-down structure have often derailed bridging opportunities and often foiled attempts at capacity building and development.

Conversely, both of these groups have been able to negotiate their own positions of power in Portland and thereby foster development in its participatory environment. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the importance of power in bridging, its role in institutional flexibility, and how the nexus of capacity building (via power and participation) produces mutual-construction outcomes and Putnam’s WD40 transformative effect.

The associational gender barrier has a long and entrenched history in the United States (Ryan 2001). Women’s use of associations to organize, make political claims, and demand and expand their rights and presence in politics and the public sphere has been well documented. From Civil War–era reading societies and suffragettes in the Progressive Era to the National Organization of Women (NOW) founded in the 1960s, women’s associations have often had a distinctly developmental character that early social capitalists would instantly recognize. It was also not unknown for these women’s associations to have male allies in their efforts—at individual and associational levels. Flow in the other direction, on the other hand, of women joining men’s associations, was far rarer. In the 1970s, the associational gender divide in each of these cities was still in place and strongly defended. Their elite associations were primarily male only, as was common across the country. If, in a rare instance, women were allowed entrance (not membership)—such as for lunch (only), for example, to meet their husbands at the University Club in Cleveland—they would have to come and go via the back entrance in

the alley. Political associations were no different. Vestiges of another time, the two city clubs held on to their tradition as the turmoil and change of the 1960s swirled around them. As the national debate surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment intensified, the clubs became ensnared as local examples of male political privilege. When time caught up with them, the options were change—that is, admit women—or face a very dark and uncertain future.

How this dance of contestation and women's admission unfolded would have significant consequences for bridging relations in both clubs. The way in which barriers are crossed, and the resulting new relations once they are, has much to say about the nature of power within those new relationships. In terms of developmental social capital, barrier crossing is an act of power articulation and the first step in bridging. In Portland the process was protracted and pugilistic, as the club resisted for more than two years. The fight for inclusion would bring the club to the point of submission, as women and their supporters worked to substantiate their claims on membership. This would represent a turning point for the club, producing a “founding event,” that altered the makeup of the membership and the direction of the club. Cleveland would follow a different path. Admission was relatively quick, motivated by political concerns, and aided by a coordinated campaign inside the club to open its doors. Women in Cleveland did not mount the challenge they did in Portland and were not able to define their place in the club on their own terms. As a result, power relations with insiders (old-timers) at the center were unchanged. The bridging of women would not produce the expected positive benefits of such relations—there was no “WD40” effect.

The New Leaders would be similar in some respects. Each club would approach young professionals with different motives. Over the decades each club had become older and grayer, lacking a significant youth segment (people in their twenties and thirties). Portland saw reaching out to young professionals as part of its mission. This younger cohort in turn used this opportunity to negotiate with the club the terms on which they would enter the club. This would enable the “New Leaders” to establish themselves and mature as a unit of the club, growing into a vital new segment of the club’s offerings. Cleveland, on the other hand, saw young leaders as a means of addressing declining membership numbers. They relied on their reputation to attract younger members. However, they did not allow them any autonomy. This would prove to be the downfall of the group, as it struggled to find an identity and withered as folks lost interest.

The Cleveland cases illustrate how bridging can fail when the potential bridgers are unable to or do not rearticulate power relations in a way that ensures them a voice in the association. Portland, though, tells a much fuller story. Power articulation is just the first step. This must then be met with meaningful opportunities for participation that lead to capacity building. When this is done, then bridgers can contribute to the work product of associations, the mutually constituted outcomes, leading to the transformative effects that scholars have traditionally associated with bridging relations.

### *The Admittance of Women: Power and Bridging*

#### *Portland*

In Portland the impetus for female membership initially came from a small handful of club members who believed it was “high time to open the club’s membership

to women.” On May 16, 1970, they presented a letter to the Board of Governors, making their case and asking the board to take steps to open the doors to women.<sup>1</sup> In November the Board of Governors took the half step of voting to allow women to attend forums and decided it would put the question of their inclusion in the club to a vote by the membership in the coming January. The vote was required because opening up the membership would necessitate amending the club’s constitution, which states, “The purpose of this organization shall be: To provide common meeting ground for congenial, forward-looking *men* of divergent beliefs, politics, and occupations . . .” (emphasis added). A club member who wrote a social-observer column for the *Oregonian*, titled “Behind the Mike” (“BTM”), noted in his space that “city club members will vote in early January to permit women membership. . . . While most city club members welcome serious minded women members, some fear the amendment would open the gates to shrill, professional Women’s Lib agitators” (January 19, 1970, 63). The vote was held at a membership meeting on January 8, 1971, and apparently there was enough such fear, as the amendment received a 143-to-142 vote in favor, well short of the two-thirds majority.

The vote understandably triggered reactions in the club and the community. Soon after the vote, a research committee chair resigned from his position in protest, and two club members denounced the club and withdrew their membership in letters to the editor—a sign of what the club would face in the coming years. In the advancing months, as letters filled the back pages of the *Oregonian*’s A section, they were roughly split between supporters and detractors. Many critics characterized women’s desire to join the

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<sup>1</sup> From a presentation by Donald J. Sterling Jr., made before the club on October 21, 1988, marking the fifteenth anniversary of the admission of women. Sterling was president of the Portland City Club in 1973, when women were admitted. The letter referenced could not be found in the club archives.

club as a trivial demand for admittance, often missing or ignoring the political benefits of club membership and the place it occupied in political discourse. Others derided them as “Lony-tic” women and complained that they were attempting to “henpeck men out of their city club.” In the spring a group of twenty professional women sympathetic to the male objectors formed their own civic study group. It was short-lived and never got off the ground. One of the interesting distinctions between Portland and Cleveland is that women in Portland received much harsher treatment and much less support in the press. The first vote generated the largest batch of letters. In Cleveland the number of “objection” letters was relatively small compared to supporters (four to one). Cleveland also had a columnist who wrote two columns in support of the amendment, whereas Portland only had “Behind the Mike.” As the reader may have discerned, “BTM”’s author attempted to present himself as objective, but any observations always seemed to eventually express negative stereotypes of the women’s movement and of women in general.

Supporters, on the other hand, while defending women’s rights to membership, also challenged the club’s reputation. Many letters echoed the sentiments of one author when they stated that this affair had “rendered suspect the value of [the club’s] judgments on all its recommendations.” This is a view that would be expressed often by women activists and supporters over the many months of the fight. It represented one of their major claims on membership. The club’s mission and its moniker—Conscience of the City—were increasingly seen as irreconcilable with discrimination. Not long after the first vote, a group of supporters came together to form a coalition to pressure the club. The group of ninety-one women and men cosigned a letter that they sent to national,

state, and local politicians and officials, imploring them to not speak at the club as long as it discriminated against women and warning that they would campaign against them if they did.<sup>2</sup> The signatories included a group of women who knew each other through their experiences on recent political campaigns and met regularly for lunch. They called themselves the “Wednesday Winos.” That summer they began picketing the club’s Friday Forums and would reorganize under the name “Politically Oriented Women.” One POW member, Sally Landauer, described their motivations:

The City Club had a tremendous influence in those days. It was the only think tank in town. It was the only sort of bastion of credibility (really) in town, in the city. At least that’s the way I remember it. And so we decided that we should do something about that. And what was really fun was to picket it. So the Wednesday Winos became POW (Politically Oriented Women) or, as some of the men in the City Club called it, Penis Oriented Women. We picketed the City Club for at least two years. Every Friday we marched around the front of the Benson Hotel (the Hotel did not appreciate it!). That was where the City Club met even then. We carried our signs. We marched. We tried to interfere with the speakers. (Bonner 1994)

POW included a cohort of women who would play a leading role in Portland politics in the decades ahead, including Gretchen Kafoury and Vera Katz. Kafoury would serve in the Oregon Legislature, the Multnomah County Commission, and the Portland City Council; Katz would later become mayor of Portland. The formation of POW and questioning of the club’s mission and reputation reflect the importance and position the

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<sup>2</sup> *Portland Oregonian*, January 15, 1971, 36; March 16, 1971, 22; May 27, 1971, 58; June 14, 1971, 22; September 3, 1971, 34; October 30, 1971, 40.

club held in the community's political discourse. The challengers were arguing that this bastion of credibility, this think tank, had to be representative of the whole community if that importance and position were to be maintained. As will be seen below, this is something that was absent in Cleveland.

Ten months later, in October 1971, the club held another election on the amendment, and again failed to reach the two-thirds majority—by fifty-five votes. With this second failure, signs of stress in local politics and in the club were becoming more apparent, as dissenters in the club grew louder and pressure from activists increased.<sup>3</sup> Letters to the editor reveal infighting between Multnomah County Democratic Party officials, as precinct captains called out the vice chairwoman for not supporting the protesters and local politicians came to her defense. US Senator Wayne Morse and State Treasurer Robert Straub publicly began to question if they could continue being members, as did US Attorney Sid Lezak, who was the club's president-elect. Morse even publicly threw his weight behind an idea being floated around by pro-women club members—to break away and form their own club. A dissident movement had been growing in the club, and by the winter of 1971 more than one hundred members had withheld their dues in protest and a small number had submitted letters of resignation.

Shortly after the second vote, POW members held a press conference. In the fall they backed off from picketing and decided to give the club a chance to correct the matter in house before taking more aggressive measures. Now the time for patience had passed. In front of the Portland press and reading from a prepared statement, Kafoury declared, “The City Club has lost any claim to a leadership role in community matters and has

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<sup>3</sup> *Portland Oregonian*, November 5, 1971, 57; November 6, 1971, 21; November 9, 1971, 22; November 17, 1971, 39; November 22, 1971, 22; December 7, 1971, 42, 74.



surrendered any pretension of being considered the conscience of the city.” They were appalled by the arguments used to justify their exclusion. There was the baseless (“We need a private domain where men can be men”), and there was the insulting (“I dread the thought of fighting for luncheon seating with housewives who can get here at 11:15”).<sup>4</sup> POW had heard enough, seen no progress, and decided to move forward with their action plan. They would continue pressuring politicians and resume picketing, and now they would be calling on all club members who believed in civil rights to resign from the club. They also called on Lezak specifically to resign, since he was the state’s top civil rights official. “We used the same tactics as a labor union would,” POW member Margo Perry explained. “We are playing the same game men have traditionally played.”

In the spring of 1972 POW stepped up its efforts by forming a coalition with other women’s equality groups. Partnering with the local chapters of the National Organization of Women and the National Women’s Political Caucus, they attempted to make life even more difficult for the club. At a press conference that March, they reiterated their call for Lezak to resign and announced that they had sent a formal request to the United States Attorney’s Office to investigate if the City Club Foundation could maintain its tax-free status and ability to offer tax-deductible contributions if the club continued its policy of discrimination. They also sent letters to all city club members explaining the lawsuit and asking all club members to withhold paying dues (which were due June 1). The letter also provided an update on political candidates who agreed with their charge to not appear at the club—presidential candidates McGovern, Muskie, Mink, and Lindsey and local candidates Goldschmidt and Morse. As summer approached, the Board of Governors

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<sup>4</sup> Sterling quoting members’ arguments in his comments before the club on October 21, 1988.

continued to struggle with how to deal with “the issue,” as it was increasingly referred to in meeting minutes. Official letters of resignation were growing and now included prominent board members. The number of members not paying dues was also growing, and increasing numbers of members were declining requests to serve on committees. “The issue” had grown beyond the “bad press” that made the club look bigoted and narrow-minded, a threat to its reputation, and was beginning to impact its ability to function on a daily basis.<sup>5</sup>

On June 5 the outgoing Board of Governors held their last meeting. They had received a letter from a member addressed to the incoming board, questioning the status of “the issue.” The incoming board was also in attendance that day. The soon to be ex-officio president noted that the collection of dues over the next few weeks was “crucial” and that some assurances to the members that “concern is felt for the future of the club might be successful in holding on to members upset by the issue but not yet resigned.” They had already lost 165 members due to the fallout, and there was real worry that more losses were on the horizon. Pushing another vote “so soon after the last one,” it was feared by some, might chase off those who “voted no twice already.” A straw poll on a potential vote without any statement from the board on the status of the issue was also seen as potentially inflammatory—to partisans on both sides. It was agreed that no action be taken on the letter until the new board assumed its post. The new board, with Lezak as president, held its first meeting on June 12, one week later. They quickly raised the issue of women’s membership and reviewed what they saw as their three options: hold another vote, conduct a straw poll (nonbinding) on how members would vote, or conduct a survey

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<sup>5</sup> *Portland Oregonian*, March 29, 1972; Board of Governors meeting minutes, June 5, 1972.

and solicit comments from the members on the subject. They decided to have a vote and passed a resolution. The third vote would be in a month, July 14, 1972. And again, the vote failed, this time falling six votes short. The board met again on July 17, and after some discussion about the vote it unanimously passed the following statement:

The Board of Governors has considered the membership vote at the recent City Club election concerning the admission of women to membership, and has also considered many suggestions for further action submitted by members since that time.

The Board acknowledges that the membership has spoken. Under existing circumstances this Board has no plans to initiate further action.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the women objectors might have taken comfort in the board's statement, but "the issue" was not going away.

A year earlier Gretchen Kafoury wrote an open letter to the *Oregonian's* editorial board, asking them how they could remain silent as a major civic institution such as the city club engaged in "blatant and obvious discrimination." She concluded the paper was not taking the issue seriously in light of its coverage of the votes—based on poorly conceived headlines such as "Cleavage Clobbered." Ten days after the third vote the editorial board finally answered, with a piece titled "Tunnel Vision." Editors argued that the club had a bad case of tunnel vision for not accepting women members and that it "looks out of date." Not entirely a biting criticism. They actually saved their strongest words for the club members who resigned in protest, blaming them for the failed vote and suggesting they didn't appear so "foresighted or progressive after all" (making a play on

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<sup>6</sup> Board of Governors meeting minutes, June 5, 12, July 17, 1972.

the club's statement of purpose). The pithy, ill-humored prose would continue that fall. As picketing continued outside the Benson Hotel on Fridays, women came under increasing abuse by men entering the club, getting pinched and shoved and having posters knocked out of their hands by men entering the building. POW asked for help from the club with the unruly males. The abusers were never identified, and it is unclear if the club actually offered assistance. The *Oregonian*, however, ran an article entitled "Pickets Want Pinch End" and described their efforts to protect themselves as a "rearguard action." Objectors appeared to be feeling some exuberance.<sup>7</sup>

They were also consolidating their power on the board. The number of pro-women supporters was shrinking, as another board member resigned following the third vote. At this point even the thought of another vote riled the governors. Lezak was now on the defensive, as he had to deflect "further accusations that he was going to resubmit the proposal to admit women." Even though "objectors" were now a majority on the board, in the fall they decided to conduct a survey of where members stood on the issue. They found that 55 percent still supported resubmitting the amendment. Still, they decided not to resubmit and further agreed not to do so for the remainder of the board's term. In December Lezak resigned his position as president, citing the board's refusal to deal with the issue.

Why would a board that does not appear interested in pursuing another vote conduct such a survey? In the *Oregonian* the survey was referred to as a "straw poll" of members' position on the issue—implying a simple up-or-down vote. But the minutes reveal that the survey also gauged the standing of "supporters" in the club—55 percent

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<sup>7</sup> *Portland Oregonian*, November 7, 1971, 75; July 24, 1972; October 5, 1972, 1.

supported a resubmit, 53 percent of the members in “good standing” supported a resubmit, and 78 percent of the “delinquent” members supported a resubmit. Delinquents around this time represented approximately 140 members (membership numbers for this time are disputed but were probably around 1,200 and would continue to drop in the coming months). There is no evidence in the minutes why the board sought to delineate the standing of supporters. However, it is reasonable to assume they used this information to at least estimate the potential fallout from not resubmitting the amendment.

Regardless, the reaction from their nonaction would be significant and endanger the club and its mission. The meeting minutes for this period—between the third and last votes—are dominated by a growing list of members who submitted their names for resignation, their reasoning, and the delinquents who just stopped paying dues. For much of the time the board chose to hold the resignations in abeyance and appeared to ignore the delinquents. Accepted resignations by the end had reached 341.<sup>8</sup> The board could not ignore the financial impact of dissident members. It was feared that membership losses would soon “place the year’s operating budget in jeopardy.” Soon, the club found itself running short of money to print reports and had to dip into savings accounts to cover the cost. It was not only printing that was impacted, but research committees also stopped functioning, as the Board of Governors and Research Board had to scramble to find replacements. Things had gotten so bad that in a club full of lawyers, they could not find

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<sup>8</sup> In interviews with staff and members from during and right after this period, they stated that resignations reached 50 percent of total membership—which would put membership around 800. I found no confirmation of this, but club records are incomplete and the situation was very fluid. It is possible, as it appears a number of resignations were not entered into the record. Resignation and membership numbers used here are derived from Sterling’s comments and the available minutes. Regardless of the actual number, club leadership on both sides of the issue saw declining membership as a direct and immediate threat to the survival of the club in its present form.

one willing to represent the club's interest pro bono regarding the lawsuit against the foundation. With the survey findings in mind, the board of 1972-73 chose to ride out the storm and take no action—even as some of its members knew the situation was untenable and openly questioned, “How much longer can we hang in there . . . ?” The club would have to wait for the new board to assume office before the issue could be addressed again.<sup>9</sup>

The election of the new board would signal a change of direction, as the board would make a direct and unified case for why the amendment needed to be passed. In a letter to the members, which was supported by the entire board, they argued that the admittance of women would “strengthen the club and increase acceptance of its pronouncements on community issues, and preserve the fundamental nature, structure, and direction of the club and its activities.” Membership over the course of the battle had dropped from 1,623 to 1,282 when the new board assumed office, and they knew they had not yet reached the bottom. If the club was going to survive in its current form and character, the board believed the vote would have to succeed. They scheduled the vote for October 26, hoping the time between the announcement and the vote would allow participants to “approach the subject reflectively and without emotion” to ensure the two-thirds majority needed for passage. The amendment passed, by seven votes. The first woman to apply for membership was Portland city councilor Midred Schwab.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Board of Governors meeting minutes, July 31, September 25, November 6, 27, 1972; Lezak letter of resignation to the board, December 4, 1972; “Club President Resigns Post,” *Portland Oregonian*, December 5, 1972, 1.

<sup>10</sup> President's letter to the Board of Governors, June 19, 1973; *Portland Oregonian*, October 27, 1973, 1.

The day before the very first vote, back in January 1971, “Behind the Mike” asked rhetorically in its column, “When the chips are down, would the women be just as conscientious as the men about meeting reporting deadlines?”—suggesting they may not be fit for membership (January 7, 1971, 47). Over the next two and a half years, the women of POW and their supporters did their best to push those chips to the center of the “table” and raise the “bet.” In their press conferences POW challenged the club’s position in the community, arguing that any claim to be the conscience of the city or justification to argue on its behalf was repudiated by its exclusivity. Through their lawsuit and lobbying of politicians they threatened its legal standing and place in the political landscape. From within the members pushed for the amendment while jeopardizing the club’s long-term existence and day-to-day operations. In this collective effort the club was wrestled into submission. In pushing the doors to the club open, activists were defending the right of women to full membership, not just the ability to attend forums. Women and their supporters were redefining the male-only power relations that made up the city club.

This contestation represents an aggressive form of negotiated power relations that are crucial to developmental social capital. Bridging must be reciprocal. Actors need to have some control over defining their relations, especially those newly entering associations; otherwise, the relationship is a hierarchical one—which is antithetical to social capital development. This does not imply that hierarchies and centers of power do not exist (there is still a board), but bridgers must be able to have some authority within their associational relations. Nor can this take place at the expense of the authority of (formerly) “privileged” males who remained with the club, replacing one hierarchy with

another. They are, after all, part of the larger history that made the club worth fighting for. In this way bridging represents the creation of a space “in between.” It was no longer the old club, but it was not entirely foreign either. It would now be familiar and new at the same time. The club remains, yet through their protest, organizing, and contestation, the women activists and their male allies would add their imprint to what it meant to be a city club member. As will be seen below, this idea of “the same but different” would be fundamental to the bridging event’s role in transforming the club, but it would grow out of their contestation leading to expanded membership, which represented development in the fullest sense of the term. This signaled a durable shift in the power and organization of the institution and would be the first step in making a bridge across the boundaries that separated members from “others.” Without this, opportunities for capacity building that lead to genuine mutual construction and co-creation turn into carrying out someone else’s mission, which is what happened in Cleveland.

### *Cleveland*

Cleveland’s story of how women gained membership reveals what happens in bridging relations when important issues of power are not negotiated and old bonds remain. Women did not play the role of “challenger” to the club and its membership the way they did in Portland. The perception that excluding women could threaten Portland’s reputation and its work was not expressed by the leadership until the new board came in before the final vote. Leaving the dissenters aside, there is a surprising lack of concern by Portland’s objectors with how its policy would impact the club in the long term. But the turn came, and it was the activists who forced it. Cleveland was quite different. From its



very first mention in the Board of Directors meeting minutes, the process had a sense of urgency about it. It would take only four months, and two votes, for women to gain membership. There were objectors, naturally, but the fight did not last long. Once the matter was raised, it was pursued and achieved rather quickly. The vigor with which the club moved to open its doors stands out in the record; what does not are the leadership's motivations. Club records are ambiguous, never offering a "how" or "why" the issue emerged. The very first mention of women members in the minutes is a brief paragraph at the end of the board meeting minutes for January 20, 1972:

The President then reported on the matter of female membership in the City Club. A committee has been appointed to investigate all of the implications of this issue and report to the board as soon as possible. Opinions were expressed and ideas suggested will be passed on to the special committee chaired by Craig Spangenberg and Tom Campbell.

That special committee meeting took place six days later, on January 26. If "implications" were discussed at the meeting, they were not reflected in the minutes; nor were any "opinions" or "ideas." Instead of investigating or exploring the matter, the committee appeared intent on putting together a plan to proceed directly with integration—reflected in the committee minutes in only two substantive paragraphs:

Special meeting, January 26, re: women members in the City Club

Thomas Campbell, presiding

Moved by Hollander, seconded by Barnard that the Board of Directors hold a special meeting of the entire membership for the purposes of changing the by-

laws of the City Club, Article III, Section 1. Change to: Membership shall be open to all persons of good repute upon written application sponsored by a member in good standing or the Executive Director . . .”

(changing “men” to “persons”)

Motion passed.

Moved by Barnard, seconded by Hollander that the special meeting to change the by-laws be held in the tradition of a City Club Forum debate with the vote to be taken afterward by those present. Further, that the chairman of the special committee, Thomas Campbell, should preside; that President Larry Robinson and one other of his choice present the arguments in favor of the change in by-laws, and that former President Craig Spangenberg and one other of his choice present the argument against.

Motion passed.

Recommendations of this special committee to be presented to the Board of Directors at a special meeting to be held Monday, January 31st.

At the special Board of Directors meeting that followed, the first motion to hold a vote on the amendment was passed, and the second was tweaked, slightly. Instead of an “open” discussion involving both sides, each side would be timed and the debate would be moderated.<sup>11</sup>

In decades of meeting minutes that I reviewed for this research, the Cleveland Board of Directors met monthly. “Special board meetings” breaking this pattern were very rare. The directors wanted to move on this issue quickly, meeting again on

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<sup>11</sup> Board of Directors meeting minutes, January 20, 1971; Special Committee minutes, January 26, 1971.

January 31, only eleven days after their last session. What makes this interesting, besides its celerity, is that there is no mention of where its impetus came from in the club records. That would emerge in the press. On January 27, the day after the succinct special committee meeting, and before the board even had a chance to rule on its recommendations, an article appeared in the *Plain Dealer* titled “Special City Club Forum Urged on Issue of Admitting Women” (January 27, 1972, 4). The article explained that a special committee in the club was pushing for the admittance of women and that it would present the motions outlined above at the board’s next meeting. This in itself is also unique. In the thirty years of the media survey of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the only articles dealing with committees discussed board elections and attendant changing of the guard. In the *Portland Oregonian*, an article on the ongoing work of a research committee was not uncommon. But in Cleveland this was not the norm. The committee, and presumably club leadership, appears to have wanted to get out in front of this issue before the board even had a chance to vote on it, and the board would be meeting *again* in just five days to discuss it. Why the haste? The “Forum Urged” article, which never attributed a source, did close its final paragraph with a brief mention of motivations.

Club members long have debated, on an informal basis, the question of admitting women as members. But the issue was brought to a head recently with the application of 10 women.

A thorough review of Membership Committee briefings to the board for the year prior revealed no mention or evidence of women ever submitting applications before the subject of their membership first appeared in the record on January 20.

Interviews with members from this period provide an answer to the mystery and a more persuasive story for why the club was moving so quickly. Their responses suggest the club was not pressured by a group of female applicants and that this fanned the embers of older previous debates. Rather, the club was receiving pressure from politicians who would be making appearances and campaign stops at the club, most notably Senator George McGovern (D-SD), who was running for president in 1972. As one member explained it:

First of all, the way it came about was very simple. It was in the lead-up to the 1972 elections. The Equal Rights Amendment was a very, very major issue at the time. We were told by more than one political type that had they known the city club had not admitted women, they would not have agreed to speak. It was just made very plain: if you were going to stay in the political game, you could not be a single-sex organization. Period. That was it.

Who was the senator from South Dakota? . . . Specifically, he was the one. Either do this, or the next major election cycle we will have no major candidates appearing. So the board put a vote to the membership to allow female members. There were . . . I was surprised at some of the people who were opposed. They were . . . The idea of having a men's club, there was some significant appeal to that. . . . I mean, if you're going to go on a camping trip, are you going to take a woman with you? It does add a bit of complication to the arrangement. But we swung the gates wide open.

None of the members from this period mentioned any women applicants in response to why the club chose to open its doors. All concurred that it was pressure from

politicians that started the process, and all cite McGovern. The timing also coincides with the work of activists in Portland, who sent out their petition imploring presidential candidates to avoid the Portland club in the spring of 1971, so it is possible that this was already on the campaign's radar in January, although I have found no evidence linking the two. The issue's emergence grew not out of concern for the interests of women, but out of political considerations. The club's exclusionary policy and its threat to their place "in the political game" appear to have scared the leadership into action.

Why this attention on the haste and the dates, their motivations and concerns? This presents a different atmosphere and context than the struggle for inclusion in Portland. In Portland the extended nature of the contestation was an opportunity for activists and supporters to challenge club leadership and build their own position of authority when making claims on membership. In Cleveland the window for organization was much smaller, as its board moved in a more strategic fashion in working to get the amendment passed. Over the years in Portland as the board dealt with the issue, the minutes reveal how it struggled as the governors discussed and disagreed on the viability and implications of potential votes. As this played out, it was also exploited by those pushing for change. The Rose City's Midwest counterpart, on the other hand, had much less debate and focused on the task at hand. One obfuscating paragraph in the opening minutes of the January 31 special board meeting reveals the degree to which they wrestled with the idea of admittance and their larger desire to move forward:

The meeting was called to act upon the recommendations of the special committee in regards to a change in the by-laws to admit women into club membership.

After much discussion and several motions and amendments that were later withdrawn or otherwise not acted upon, it was agreed to act on each of the two recommendations separately.

How much is “much,” and what was the nature of this discussion? Like the paragraph that introduced the issue of women’s membership, there are no details, no concerns, only actions that result. One of the biggest moments in the club’s history has received two paragraphs, with only references to deliberations. The club was moving forward.

Whereas in Portland the doors had to be forced open by a collection of actors from within and without, in Cleveland it was the leadership that was moving the issue. After passing the two motions and deciding on a date (February 16), the board then moved to take a vote on the amendment itself, believing it needed its position on the record. The vote passed 6-3 in favor of including women. Portland governors would not take a similar position until the summer of 1973, at the very end of the struggle. On February 16, in spite of majority support on the board and their efforts to move quickly, the vote failed to reach the needed two-thirds majority; of 178 votes, only 68 voted affirmative. The board responded to this with a more concerted effort.<sup>12</sup>

Over the next three months in its regular meetings and additional special meetings, the board worked on plans for a second election, eventually scheduled for June 6. They would run special issues of *The City*, the club newsletter, with letters from members regarding the proposed change, and conduct a poll, surveying members about how they felt about women’s membership and whether this would impact their lunch habits at the club. The survey revealed a surprising 71 percent of members supported the

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<sup>12</sup> Board of Directors meeting minutes, January 31, 1972; member meeting minutes, February 6, 1972.

idea of women members and that the presence of females in the dining room wouldn't scare away weekly lunch patrons. Still, meetings were held on the possibility of setting up a "men's grill," in an attempt to mollify objectors (it was not pursued). In April, as a sign of the club's possible future, McGovern canceled his appearance due to the unchanged policy. To help ensure passage in the lead-up to the vote, the board even used the staff of a member's firm to conduct a get-out-the-vote campaign. All of these efforts worked. Turnout was high, 325, and 228 voted to amend the constitution, passing the amendment (reflecting quite closely the poll percentage).<sup>13</sup>

There was some protest during this process. On the day of the first vote, the local chapter of the National Women's Political Caucus and the National Organization for Women organized an impromptu picket line outside the club. Carol Sauers, head of the NOW speakers division, explained their reasons for the picket to a *Plain Dealer* reporter: "We assumed the City Club was modern enough and reasonable enough and unchauvinistic enough in 1972 to accept women as members." This is the only statement in the press by activists regarding the club's discriminatory policy over the whole period. There were a couple of letters to the editor and political columns that noted the irony of the "Citadel of Free Speech" denying it to half the population, but there were no editorials on the subject. This was the only day on record of picketing. Some members mentioned the possibility of a lawsuit against the foundation (similar to Portland's), but no record has been found, nor is there any mention of a threatened suit in the minutes.

As of this writing, I am unable to assess why there was so little done by activists, excluding the shorter time frame. Did the club's reputation in the community lead them

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<sup>13</sup> Board of Directors meeting minutes, February 28, 1972; February 29, March 15, 1971; April 15, 25, May 2, 17, June 2, 1972.

to back off? Did members of the club intervene? Unfortunately, the women noted in the press as taking part have died. None of the early women members whom I interviewed took part in the one day of protest, even though they were members of Cleveland's NOW chapter, which has since disbanded. They argued that Cleveland's feminist movement was not very strong, which may have been a factor. In the club only three members submitted letters of resignation; only one actually resigned. No members withheld dues or relinquished committee or board positions because of the policy. Outside of the one day of protest, neither the community nor its members posed any real challenge to the club. The only significant threat was by the politicians. So where is the problem? The board was pushing for the amendment change and was successful in a matter of months, rather than years. They had swung the door open. Club members were also more supportive of women as members, 71 percent compared to Portland's 53 percent. Even among the public—measured through letters to the editor—support was higher, four to one rather than evenly split, in Portland. Did the women in Portland just have a higher degree of sexism to overcome?

This is where motivations and context become important. In Portland passing the amendment became a necessity, brought about by the actions of activists and supporters. Their actions would redefine the club's landscape. When women entered the club, they brought a new energy and a new cohort with them, and soon they would be playing a significant role on research committees and eventually boards. This was an environment that they helped create and in which they had ownership. For Cleveland there was also necessity involved—to stay in the political game—but it is not how the issue was presented to the public. When it “swung the gates open,” there was no previous battle that



brought about some agreed-upon realities across gender lines; instead, a presumption and appearance were created by the club going to all this effort for those alleged applicants. Only one woman applied to the club on its first day, and she was the executive director of the Women's City Club (WCC), which was on the same floor as the Cleveland City Club. One wonders if they had to go across the hall to find a woman, any women, to apply that first day. Three months later only eighteen women had joined, and the *Plain Dealer* ran an article entitled "Women In; City Club Unaltered." The author notes that nothing had changed. This was true, and in fact that would be the problem. The women and their supporters had not articulated a claim to leadership in a way that forced the club and its leadership to acknowledge and integrate them in a full and meaningful way. At the two meetings when members voted on the amendment, proponents of each side had a chance to make their case. The club invited women activists to take part in this debate at the first meeting—including the heads of the local chapters of the National Women's Political Caucus, the National Organization of Women, and a college professor. A *Plain Dealer* reporter covered the event. After the women made their case for the negative social, economic, and political impacts of gender inequality and gender stereotypes, one of the "supporters" of the amendment and a member of the club's "inner circle" noted, "I wish they had been more effective. . . . I'm glad we had the vote before, because I think it might have been worse." The reporter then observes that the member felt they spoke too softly. No women were invited for the second debate and vote. The insiders felt women were not helping their cause, but they needed them as members to "stay in the political game."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 19, 1972, 10; June 3, 1972, 1; September 2, 118

The result of this is that the women members in Cleveland would enter their club in a very different, and weaker, position of power than their counterparts in Portland. The experiences of women in these two clubs would grow out of these very different histories.

### *Women's Experience and Impact on the Clubs*

#### *Portland*

A Portland staff member who joined the club decades after women had been admitted reflected on how folks from that period talked about and remembered the events. "People would look back on it. Men and women were super proud of it. The cancer had been killed, and the club was made better." Many would describe it as a type of turning point. Coming out of the attrition battle, the club gained a new vitality. Its mission remained the same and its image was battered, but because of the POW coalition's victory, the club would be seen in a different light, especially by the baby-boomer generation. Boomers responded by joining in large numbers. Women were immediately accepted and quickly became enmeshed in committee work. By the mid-1980s club membership had rebounded to twenty-eight hundred, with a 41 percent women membership.

Ellamae Naylor, the club's long-serving executive secretary, objected to women joining the club and resigned a week before the last vote. The club hired a new executive secretary, Marilyn Day, who brought Chris Tobkin on board as the new research director. Tobkin would later move up to the executive position herself, a title she would insist be

changed to executive director. She observed how the club responded during this transition in membership:

Marilyn called and said, “I need you, but I can’t promise you more than two months’ salary because we have no dues. Our first thing is to get new members.” You have to understand, we lost half our members. The Board of Governors did a good job of recruiting people. It was easier for them because younger people were more interested. And we had at that time business and professional people who joined—and you talk about women’s rights coming into the hiring milieu of professions; a lot of female graduates of law schools who were taken on as junior partners, it was the senior partners often responsible for bringing in new members [to the club]. . . . [A] lot of the old guys resigned because they didn’t want to change. But after that, membership grew really fast. Within a year and a half more members joined than had resigned. . . . [A]nd so, you had a real situation of an organization that was caught up in the flow of the much larger picture in the country.

Recruitment by coworkers was a factor for some women who joined—not uncommon among the town’s law firms and medical institutions, which had a history of membership. For many, though, it would be their interest in civic affairs that compelled them to join, and the city club was the only substantive choice at the time. Summing up the landscape, one woman noted, “There weren’t many other options. The League of Women Voters, the Junior League, and that was it.” Another added, “This is where you become informed and you help form opinions. It’s the forum in Portland that makes a difference in civic life. That’s the reason. I didn’t care if it was female or male at this point.” Whereas the

city club today is one of a hundred voices trying to shape policy and politics, in the early 1970s it was a much smaller circle. A year after the amendment, women made up 20 percent of the overall membership.

Did the introduction of women have a broad or systemic impact on the club? A constant element in bridging research is the benefits that come out of those relationships. Did the women bring a new perspective or normative concern to the club or, perhaps, new resources through new untapped networks? Victoria Lowndes has argued that women's social capital operates along different circuits, which she posited as "getting by" social capital. Did "getting by" social capital, with its greater focus on issues of family, children, and neighborhood networks, inform the club at all? Given the forty years that have passed, time may not have helped their recollections. Yet interviewees, men and women, were consistent in stating that women, as a group, shared many of the same commitments and concerns as the men. Their focus was no more on "private" issues than the men on "public" issues. Members saw no gendering of interest. Club forums and reports do not show any shift in this direction, either. Women did report on multiple occasions that child rearing got in the way of their ability to participate in the club, whereas men of this same period did not appear to be hampered by the same restrictions. Gendered notions of social capital did not make their way into the club, but they still operated outside of it. Where women did have a systemic impact, interviewees agreed, was on overall admission. One early woman member, with a sense of frustration in her voice as I once more turned the conversation to possible impacts by her female compatriots, steered me to the crux of their impact:

It was quite more than just women, but triggered a total change in membership. Because after they admitted women, a lot of younger men joined who didn't think like their fathers or grandfathers and who were more interested in civic affairs than social affairs. . . . [A]gain, I refer you to the context of the 1960s, and men who were in their thirties at that time in the 1970s were very affected by the civil rights movement, by the political upheaval, the hippy revolution, all of that was . . . They came from colleges where those issues were big on campus, so when the city club opened up to women, that was a signal that it was no longer a nineteenth-century organization and meant that they felt more comfortable there.

The bridging of women and their ability to make claims upon the club served as a type of miner's canary. The women acting as intrepid associational pioneers proved the club had changed. Pushing the club to be more responsive and representative fitted within the larger frames of political movements of the period and signaled it was okay not only for women to join, but for men of the baby-boomer generation to join as well. Bridging the gender barrier had the unintended consequence of leading to a bridge in the club's generational divide as well.

Network analysis would certainly pick up on this shift in membership; but, the contextual importance of the struggle and redefining of power relations would most likely be missed. The bridging of women was producing the type of positive-effect network analysts point to when studying bridging. Most network scholars point to new resources and frames that actors bring with them to networks. This was different. First of all, this process had to be negotiated, or, more accurately, fought out. The fight itself was part of

the dynamic that would produce later bridging benefits. This is not just a simple case of a new “nodal connection” through which flow new resources. The process could have gone a different way (as will be seen below with Cleveland), where boundaries were crossed but no positive outcomes emerged. Too often in network analysis bridges get treated as a type of “transmission line,” through which resources pass. However, what this research reveals is that the role of power plays a qualitative difference in the character of those bridges. The dynamics of bridges appear to be far more complex than even the very busy spider web diagrams analyst use to depict them. Women’s battle for entry did not just mean they were now part of the schematic, and then some other people (who were also new) were added to it as well—presenting a bigger, more diverse spiderweb. The bridging of women and the way it came about had a particular meaning to other groups that would produce more bridging. The act of bridging, the complexities it entails, and the meaning these acts carry are too often absent in social capital and network research, which can undervalue, or worse miss, its transformative effects.

The introduction of women triggered a generational shift in the club, producing a “founding effect.” Clemens (2001) argues that the ability of associations to recruit is dependent, in part, on their changing patterns of membership, their offering of organizational vehicles, and the relationship of these to the categories of political discourse and the association’s position in them. If a club’s position within certain categories of discourse resonates with a particular group and it offers attractive participatory vehicles, it greatly enhances its chance of bridging and attracting new members. This, in turn, can then have a founding effect on the association. This often results in associations taking new directions and introducing new goals and modes of

operation. Boomer men were not excluded by “rule,” but chose not to join based on “identity” and what the club represented. Women fighting and winning changed the position of the club from an exclusionary institution of established power to one that was more representative of the community. The only game in town for meaningful civic engagement had taken on a new character in the minds of boomers, women and men. The club’s historic role was still just as important to these new members, but its character had changed. The same, but now very different.

The impacts of this generational shift would be felt more in some areas than others. It did not reveal any significant change in the subject matter of research committees, but it did influence the selection of forum speakers, reflecting more alternative interests, such as members of the Rajneesh Ashram and proponents of “citizen diplomacy.” Where this shift would have its greatest impact would be in the broader changes in the club in the decades that followed. As one member put it:

The club needed to do what it did, the reports, that’s what it’s about, but there were times it wasn’t working so well. We were . . . many of us were not afraid to change the status quo, that was still with us. You know, at times there was a pent-up demand for change. . . . I think that’s what really pushed advocacy. If it were up to the old guys, they would never have done it. And it helped the club—people responded.

Many of the changes that were implemented in the club through the 1990s, which sought to increase participation and advocacy, can trace their roots to this period (described in Chapter 3). The shift in research format to ad hoc committees to increase participation, the creation of the advocacy arm of the club, and the increasingly public role of the

executive director in engaging the community are outgrowths of the attitudes and values the new founding cohort brought with them. The flexibility of the club to respond to member concerns, a key element in capacity building, was enhanced by this group.

The story of women in the Portland club is not only about the developmental role of power to set the dynamics of bridging in motion. Rearticulating power relations in itself is not sufficient to sustain bridging relations. Participatory venues are needed for actors to build capacity through which those bridges then function. Without a participatory apparatus, it would be difficult for bridging to have its transformative effects, what Putnam refers to as “sociological WD40.” Their research and advocacy committees were an obvious source for this. Committee reports and their “event cycles,” which have moved community debates forward and informed the actions of government and the private sector, are an area to look for this type of effect. Here, however, I wish to look at how committee participation reflects on women’s leadership in the club and how that has informed their perceived horizons. Participation on these committees serves as a path to leadership on the club boards—the Advocacy and Awareness Board, Research Board, and Board of Governors. Traditionally, members serve on a couple of research committees before they are nominated to serve on the Advocacy or Research Board, from which they are often then tapped to serve on the Board of Governors. Nomination is the normal route to a governor position, but members can also be elected by the membership.

Scholars of women in associations have observed that women are often relegated to “women’s work,” that is, housekeeping types of positions, where they are passed over for leadership positions in favor of men. Analyzing research-committee gender composition in four-year intervals from 1974 to 1994, I was able to estimate levels of



participation following integration. Since joining the club, women have been active on research committees. In the early years their representation was slightly higher than their proportion of overall membership—for example, in 1974 women were 12.7 percent of the membership and 19.8 percent of research committee members, but held no committee chairs. Their presence on committees would roughly match their percentage of the overall membership through this period—fluctuating plus or minus 8 points. Their number of committee chairs, however, would grow beyond their proportion in the club. By 1982 they held a proportional 39.1 percent of the chairs and 37 percent of the membership. By 1990 this number had expanded to a surprising 77 percent of chairmanships and 40 percent within the club. Representation on the Board of Governors showed a similar pattern. In 1974 there was one woman on the board—Jean McCall Babson, the governor’s sister. By 1983-84 it would be 45 percent, and by 1990 it had reached 54 percent. Women were taking advantage of the participation opportunities and advancing in club leadership. Through participation women would advance the gains achieved by their admittance. They were progressively building their presence in the organization through performance on committees, which has produced results contrary to women’s traditional experience in other mixed-gender associations.

Women on research committees found the integration to be relatively smooth. All those interviewed said they were quickly accepted and treated as equals, although there were some adjustments and awkward moments. “I was very well treated,” observed one of the first women to join the club. “I was immediately appointed to one committee. . . . I remember when I first came into the room, the men all stood up.” She would serve on four committees by her second year. Another, who was one of the first to hold a research

chair, became pregnant while serving. An older male member who noticed started to question if she could continue in the position: “Umm . . . Well, I did not know you were in the family way . . .” She replied, “Being pregnant does not impact my ability to think!” These instances, though, appear to have been rare. By their own account, these women felt there was no difference in their contribution to the men. There never appeared to be any evidence of women being bracketed into less meaningful or gender-defined roles on committees. Women never experience or witnessed any attempts to cordon them off into traditional “women’s roles.” In questioning members, male and female, about their work on committees, I consistently asked if they ever felt that the group had been steered or commandeered by strong personalities, taking them in a direction not entirely supported by the committee. Here again there was unanimous agreement. All felt committee reports are collective efforts—mutual construction by the committees. The club’s one hundred years of experience producing reports that the committees had control over and ownership of produced a tradition of collective work product. The introduction of women would not change this. The image conveyed by their growing number of committee chairs and leadership positions is substantiated by their experience. Women felt they were quickly accepted as equals, and their roles in the club appear to confirm this.

In their traversal of the gender barrier, women’s participation on committees offered a unique opportunity to unpack some of the facets of capacity building in a civic association often seen as a vehicle for men with larger ambitions. Historically, working on committees had sometimes been seen as a stepping-stone for men looking to advance their careers, usually at the state and local levels in the public and private sectors. One of

the important distinctions between the Portland and Cleveland clubs is that Portland's identity and the work it does are far more "public," integrating it deeper into local and state politics. All of the research committees deal with issues of public concern; the long-term comprehensive studies and certainly the ballot-measure studies directly address important political and policy debates. Sitting on committees, developing expertise in particular policy areas, and having substantive face-to-face discussion with public officials they would not otherwise meet could open people's horizons.

Pulling the associational gender barrier down made this avenue open to women, and a group of them felt it was directly responsible for their taking on greater roles in the community. In three cases their experiences on committees would lead them to run for public office. Most notable was Pauline Anderson, the city club's first female president (1982). She rose through the ranks in committees and was nominated for a Board of Governors position. After serving on the board for two years, she received a call from Sid Lezak (no longer on the board, but now part of the nominating committee), saying the governors would like to nominate her for vice president of the board. The vice president position is traditionally the first step to becoming president. "I called him the next day and said, 'I think I can do it.' He said, and this is the crux of the whole scene for me, he said to me, 'Good, you better be good'—implying that the weight of womanhood was on my shoulders." As president she attended many civic events and public meetings. After the city club political leaders tried to recruit her to run for mayor of Portland. However, her club experience with public policy and governance would pull her to the county, where the mission was more in line with her policy interests. She ran for commissioner of Multnomah County and held the seat for two terms. Noting the visibility and credibility

she gained from her position as president, she stated, “I do attribute the city club experience and exposure to the fact that I was able to win those elections.”

Naturally, not all women saw their work on committees in such transformative terms. Most, though, said it did help them hone new skills and that it was a source of pride. Many remember particular committees with great satisfaction—taking on the utility companies to establish citizen utility commissions, working to expose a Portland Port expansion as a boondoggle, drawing attention to the scourge of domestic violence. It was not uncommon for committee members and chairs to speak before legislative committees or to the press on behalf of their reports, as one member observed: “It gave me a lot more experience in public speaking. . . . [T]he citizens utility ballot . . . [was] on TV, and that gives you a lot of exposure.” Another common observation by women was that it gave them a fuller sense of citizenship and membership in the community. One, who was recruited by her firm to join, said, “It made me feel useful as a citizen of Portland. . . . [I]t’s not like the city club needs lawyers—it’s full of them—but it was a way to win the respect of your peers.”

This development via committee experiences is the story of women’s rise in the city club. One executive director, in commenting on the importance of committee work to women’s experience in the club, relayed a story:

One of the things the city club does best [is that] it creates civic capacity for people to do the next thing. So, one of the first reports that came out when I was there was on the Portland Development Commission [PDC]. And it was very critical. It said that the Portland Family Fund, which was one of their investment funds, was unconstitutional. So it was a big, fat, controversial report . . . but,

God bless them, the committee went through a lot of criticism and a lot of pressure from the PDC to pull that back. But one of the things in talking with the committee members afterwards, those committee members may never have to deal with the PDC ever again in their civilian life, but what that experience did do was give them the capacity to deal with other institutions. It gave them a lot of personal ability to understand how institutions work and analyze power, to think through which levers to pull.

Committee work provides its members with the space to sharpen their intellectual capacities and normative commitments, and in doing so it strengthens those bridges and relationships that are the foundation of the associations. Through this development women have more meaningful and impactful experiences as members. This is reflected in their work product and the large number of leadership positions they have occupied in the club.

The experiences of women in the Portland club run counter to those women have traditionally experienced in mixed-gender associations. Neither were they relegated to “women’s work,” nor did they avoid leadership positions due to the pressure of gendered expectations that those positions may not be appropriate for women. Their efforts, and those of their supporters, set the tone for power relations at the outset. Women’s bridging would lead to a founding effect that would transform the club. This would expose how power and bridging can signal to other groups that it is okay to join, highlighting the role of meaning in bridging’s transformative properties. It would shape the club’s direction as it instituted new research formats to increase participation and the establishment of systematized and coordinated advocacy efforts. The demands of family life outside the

club would still impact women more than men; however, women embraced the committee work in numbers that reached beyond their proportion of the membership. They gained capacity and skill development through the challenges of this work. In the end, they would become an integral part of the club leadership and research process, mutual partners in the club's most important co-constructions—leaving their imprint on the club, its operations, and its all-important research.

### *Cleveland*<sup>15</sup>

Women would not have the broad impact in Cleveland that they did in Portland. In fact, their bridging would have no impact at all. Their admittance would not produce the type of generational change Portland experienced. There was no founding effect. The club's insider culture severely limited any type of capacity building or mutual construction needed for bridging to take place. Many women, and men, who served on the boards and committees had little power, as the insiders' clique of old-timers made most of the important decisions out of sight of the board.

The women who joined in the early years of admittance saw their integration into the club as relatively seamless. Male members and staff have similar recollections. Any consternation aired during the debate over amending the club constitution quickly dissipated, they suggested, and once they were part of the club, it was no big deal. Although this picture of an easy integration may sound similar to Portland's experience, once membership was open to women, almost all of those to cross that earlier barrier said

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<sup>15</sup> The women interviewed for Portland all sat on committees or boards or both. To maintain consistency, most of the women interviewed for Cleveland sat on the Board of Directors at one time or another or on the Programming Committee.

they were periodically approached by a handful of men who told them that they had “ruined the club.” This behavior continued for decades after admittance. None of the women in Portland told of similar latent hostilities.

The first membership roster available after women were admitted is 1979. That year they represented 17 percent of the membership. Over the coming decades, this proportion would change very little: 20 percent in 1987, 19 percent in 1997, and 21 percent in 2005. Women’s representation in the club has remained relatively flat since the doors opened, not reaching half the proportional numbers of women in Portland. When men and women from this period were asked what impact women had upon joining the club, they didn’t think it had any impact other than making the club more representative of the community. Cleveland did not have the mass resignations that Portland experienced, and it did not experience a surge or shift in membership after women were admitted. There was no change in the generational dynamic and no founding effect.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, the number of Cleveland women in leadership positions could be interpreted as bridging success, if the context is not considered. Like in Portland, women’s representation in leadership positions would grow beyond the proportion of the membership. The club’s first women on the Board of Directors would be seated in December 1973—their two seats made up 15 percent of the directors. The club had its first woman president in 1979. By 1985 their numbers on the board had reached 25 percent, in 1997 it would reach a high point of 42 percent. They have worked their way up the leadership ranks of one of the city’s elite civic associations, and held 42 percent of the board positions while only comprising 21 percent of club membership. Yet, without

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<sup>16</sup> *City Club of Cleveland: Membership Directory and Yearbook*, 1979, 1982, 1997, 2005.

understand the strength of the clubs insider culture and the role of the old-timers, this conclusion would be misleading. When asking one woman who served on the board in the 1980s as chair of the Membership Committee how women shaped the club, she went directly to the old-timers. “I don’t know about shaping it,” she responded. “Even when I was on the board, it was really shaped by a core of old-timers who held on to its role pretty tightly.” She did state that she saw herself as a meaningful participant on the board, but made clear that these insiders held the reins. Developments at the club over the next decade, though, would change the makeup of the old-timers, further diminishing women’s roles on the board.<sup>17</sup>

In interviews with men and women made it clear that not all old-timers were alike. “They were not a monolith.” In the early 1990s, as the club membership declined significantly and the club ran into budget problems, there was a struggle for control and direction of the club between the liberal progressive and conservative wings of the old-timers. The old-timers stretch back to the club’s tradition of “tables.” In the earlier decades of the club’s history, it was a heavily frequented lunch club for its members. The left-leaning progressives established what would be called the “Soviet Table,” while the more conservative wing sat at what would come to be known as the “Sanhedrin Table.” The daily lunch tradition would die out due to the push in the legal community to increase “billable hours.” Long lunches and debates over politics were no longer affordable. But the distinction between the two camps would carry forward. Up to the late 1980s, “there was a good tension through the ranks of the club,” “good” indicating a constructive tension between the camps.

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<sup>17</sup> Board of Directors meeting minutes, December 4, 1973; February 11, 1985; December 12, 1997; *City Club of Cleveland: Membership Directory and Yearbook*, 2005.



Around this time another tradition was coming to an end that was adding to the budget problems. Cleveland had always had a city club and a parallel Women's City Club. Many cities with city clubs had this arrangement (Portland did not). Women's city clubs (as noted earlier) followed the traditional gendered social roles and public-private divide, focusing on the arts and literature, not public affairs. The Women's City Club shared the same floor, kitchen, and some dining rooms with the (formerly men's only) city club. Through an organization called "Civic House," made up of the senior officers of each club, they oversaw the management of the facilities at the site. By the late 1980s, the women's club membership was declining and the organization was in danger of folding. Some suspected it was due to the city club's admitting women. It's unclear how likely this is, since most women interviewed had no interest in joining the women's club, before or after the men's club admitted women. In August 1990 the women's club was gone, leaving the city club to meet the site's full operational cost. The club would have to lean on the foundation for a period to cover its budgetary shortfalls due to the loss of the Women's City Club and the decline in its own membership.

With looming financial troubles, declining membership, and now increasing recurring debt from their restaurant operations (as a result of the WCC's closing), some board members floated the idea of filing for bankruptcy. During this time meeting minutes reveal an increasing presence of foundation board members along with other old-timers (past presidents) at Board of Directors meetings. This was the beginning of a process to push out the current executive director, who was more focused on the club's traditional mission of promoting free speech, and bring in one who was better at fund-raising. One long-serving board member observed that with the hiring of the new

executive director, the more liberal group of old-timers had “lost the fight” and the conservative wing had begun consolidating its power “with the help of the Foundation.” “They wanted to take it in a more corporate direction and make it a gentlemen’s club.” The conservative wing of the old-timers, with the help of the foundation’s money and greater presence as part of the club’s insider circle, would now make fund-raising a greater imperative while wielding even greater control over the club. With this new change in direction, tight hold of the reins would graduate to dominance over the board.<sup>18</sup>

By the mid-1990s board members, male and female, report a very difficult working environment. Decisions were being made behind the scenes without board involvement. One woman who served as treasurer and later as president said, “I was not sure where decisions were being made. . . . [P]articipation in the leadership was not always an obvious role, for me and probably a lot of other people.” Personnel decisions and important financial decisions were being made without any input or involvement from the board. One board member, in a moment of frustration at a board meeting, stated, “There is a lot going on here that is semi-official and influenced by people not on the Board.” Others reported that old-timer dominance over the board was so complete that “there were things we were supposed to talk about and not talk about, things we were supposed to support and not support. . . . [T]he Board was controlled.” During this period, for instance, a majority of the board and most of the membership wanted to move the club from its current location to a newly proposed site. The current location at Ninth and Euclid, in downtown Cleveland, was considered old and run down by many, and most important it did not have sufficient parking space. Their membership losses are, in

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<sup>18</sup> Board of Directors meeting minutes, January 13, May 18, 1992.

part, due its location, as many have stopped attending forums and resigned because of parking difficulties. The old-timers, however, would never let the move happen. They are still at that location today.

The power and presence of the old-timer clique were certainly present when women entered the club and through the 1980s. The clique might have held ultimate and final authority, but women at least had some room to work and contribute in a meaningful way. Not that this was a sufficient environment for bridging or a just and equal situation in terms of women's rights as members. It was not. But it at least appeared to be something that could have been built on, a chance for "freedom through the virtuous performance," as experienced by the women in Portland. By the 1990s this opportunity was gone. The role of board members (women and men) in club leadership had narrowed to the shallowest definitions of the term by the 1990s. The city club may have been a membership association on paper, but it was not in practice where leadership was concerned.

During this period hostility toward women would emerge again as an issue. A woman board member, worried about the way the board was closed out of its leadership role and offended by the way women were treated during board meetings, wrote a letter to all board members expressing her concerns. An unknown board member leaked the letter to an alternative newspaper, *Point of View*, edited by former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Roldo Bartimole. In an article titled "City Club Falls Prey to Civic Elites," Bartimole would criticize the corporate turn of the club and its impact on club leadership and the board (vol. 27, no. 12). He cites the letter, which argues how the board has been squeezed out of its leadership role. He then notes how the author had also expressed

concern for a “lack of meaningful roles for women” and “continuing insensitive and insulting remarks made to and about females at board meetings.”<sup>19</sup> This behavior was confirmed by other women board members of the period. The woman president from the 1990s, referenced above, wished to make a farewell speech to the club at the close of her term at a Friday Forum. In attending more than one dozen forums in the course of this research, such observations by presidents at the beginning forums were common. “I wanted to make a farewell speech, and I was told by one of the reigning old boys that I could not do that. . . . I guess I was not a legitimate spokesperson for the club.” When I asked why the “old boys” seemed to have such a problem with women board members, she replied, “The inadequacy of women is important to their feelings of adequacy in terms of men and the scope of women’s participation in the city club.” Twenty years after admitting women, not only had the club failed to fully and meaningfully integrate them, but their inclusion had now become a false sign of diversity.

Membership numbers and traditional social capital research tools would not expose the true bridging relations, or lack thereof, in Cleveland. Nor would network and nodal analysis reveal the dynamics of this relationship. In fact, using both methods, researchers could even argue there was some bridging success here, since women’s numbers in leadership were greater than their total membership numbers. On the ground the old-timer, old-boy, insider culture still remains at the Cleveland City Club. Some of the old-timers are clearly known and acknowledged and have been interviewed for this work. It is unclear if, by 2013, any women were able to break into this inner circle. For

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<sup>19</sup> The author of the letter has been interviewed multiple times for this research. Unfortunately, she cannot recall the incident that prompted the letter. She did confirm its contents and the observations by other board members from this period. *Point of View* is, to date, the only publication in Cleveland to offer substantive criticism of the club.

the women who crossed that barrier first and in the decades that followed, they were excluded. Women did not bridge the group, even though they were members. Some women had ties to the old boys, such as one woman president whose deceased husband was part of the liberal wing. But as a group and certainly by the 1990s, feelings had hardened toward women. Women did not contribute in a meaningful way to the club's output. There was no evidence of mutual construction. The club's direction and its major decisions were products of the old-timers. If the fight for inclusion had been longer, perhaps the power dynamics would have changed. If there was a serious contestation perhaps a founding effect could have occurred that would have challenged old-timer power over the club. Yet each time the club encountered a crisis or important decision, it would be the clique of insiders who determined the course of action. This total control and inability to shape important decisions and outcomes in the club would also be experienced by the New Leaders group, thwarting its development and evolution.

### *New Leaders*

#### *New Leaders Program, Cleveland*

Growing out of the club's concern that their membership numbers were slowly declining, they understood that they would have to bring in new and younger members. In the early 1990s club leadership recognized that there was a problem in retaining younger members and keeping them interested in the club. Acknowledging that the club was increasingly seen as "elitist" and "isolated" from the community, they saw attracting young professionals as a way to address this problem. The history of its role in the civic life of the city still made it attractive to some young professionals who were interested in

civic affairs and setting out to build a career in the community. Often they had been exposed to it through television or the club's long-running high school program, which regularly brought students in as guests at forums. The program, though, would run into the same type of issue that board members had faced. Lack of empowerment and lack of support from the club leadership would be a continual problem for the New Leaders Program in Cleveland.

Club leadership first began to deal with the issue in the early 1990s. Initially, they planned to attract young professionals, later to be called New Leaders, using acts of recognition and free evening events. A seat at the club's "head table" is traditionally an honor bestowed upon high-ranking members and distinguished guests. It is usually reserved for members of the board, the executive director, and special guests—related to the speaker or a major donor. The club decided it would offer this honor to any young member who had attended four forums consecutively or brought in four new members. Alternate board members were also expected to sit with the NL for at least one forum per month. It is unclear how long this process lasted, or if it even took place. It is not mentioned further in the minutes, and a number of New Leaders from later years admitted never meeting or even seeing a board member during their years in the club. What is clear is that once the program was formally established, the board and club insiders didn't appear to have any real interaction with New Leaders. This recognition plan was meant to be complemented by a monthly free roundtable meeting, where interesting guests would hold informal discussions with the group at the club. As outlined in the initial plan, different NL members were to be "responsible for selecting the guest."

Last, there were to be informal meetings, after work, perhaps at a local tavern, where members would meet over drinks.<sup>20</sup>

In the early years of the program, however, it would be the club leadership that would move the program forward. This started in the mid-1990s with a string of popular events. The club leadership would use its “civic connectedness,” as the executive director would phrase it, to arranging events. In these initial years the club’s position in the community and its core insiders (some of whom were partners in some of the city’s biggest law firms and chief executive officers of major banks) enabled it to establish a number of high-profile NL events. This included a chance to sit down with the ownership of the Cleveland Browns of the National Football League (NFL) to talk about football, a one-on-one with the mayor of Cleveland, a reception with the Cleveland State University Basketball Team, and discussion on economics with the officers of the Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank. Up until this time the initiative to attract young professionals was driven by the club leadership. The slate of events and the tradition and stature of the club had some effect in pulling in young professionals. By 2000 the number of younger members grew from a handful (around 20 for much of the 1990’s) to 140. It was around this time that they handed the reins of running the program over to the group’s chair, whom they chose and appointed.

Early on, however, problems would emerge, as NL members struggled over the group’s identity and place within the club. The New Leaders Program was perceived as a type of auxiliary or subordinate group within the club. They would have their own Steering Committee, made up of the treasurer, and the chairs from the Marketing, and

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<sup>20</sup> Board of Directors meeting minutes, February 8, 1990; March 18, 1992.

Programming Committees. Steering Committee members already perceived problems with this arrangement. The feeling of at least some in the group was that they were not integrated into the club in a meaningful way and that they were brought in only to raise interest in the club and bring in new members and that this was not going to work. One NL member made the case in an e-mail. “When our role is primarily that of cheerleader—raise a little money, create some visibility, maybe recruit some volunteers or members, and that is the extent of our permitted responsibilities, young professionals see no reason to commit long term—there is no true upside or upward mobility.”<sup>21</sup> The problem was the group had no power or authority on its own. All power was officially vested in the board, but wielded by the insiders, the old-timers. Just as with the women, they were hand-cuffed as the old-timers held all the power. The board had to approve all events, daytime forums, evening forums, even informal events outside the club. The group could not pick its own leader, its chair. Nor would the NL have any representation on the board. (They did not gain a seat on the board until 2008, not that that implied any real voice in club leadership.) One staff member described the feeling inside the NL Program as being stuck at the “kid’s table at Thanksgiving.” This struggle with identity and place within the club would continue as they tried to carve out their own space within the club’s top-down (vertical) asymmetrical power arrangement.

The years of operating under this setup would take a toll on the NL Program. There was a period during 2005 and 2006 when they were able to put together some events and generate some interest. A city councilor or a local business executive might attend an evening meeting that fifteen or twenty NL members attended. Yet as the years

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<sup>21</sup> E-mail dated May 22, 2001, written by an NL Steering Committee member and circulated among the group.



progressed, the group started to unravel. Continually having to go to the board for approval for events frustrated the NL leadership. Moreover, they would have to rely on a staff member to make the case to the board. NL members had no interaction with the board, nor had most ever even met a board member. Having a position on the board didn't make any difference. In fact, when they attained a position on the board is when the program really started to fall apart. When talking about programming, NL members have more recollections of the programs that were rejected rather than approved, which seemed to be the majority of cases. NL members were never privy to the decision process and would find out from staff only if an event was accepted or not. The reasoning behind the rejections was often a mystery. In discussing reasons for the decline of the program, some cited lack of support from the club leadership, others pointed to poor staff support, but common in all the critiques was a lack of power. Many felt that if they had been given sufficient power to make some of their own decisions in key areas, such as programming, they could have made it work. When one former NL Steering Committee member, who dropped out because of the dysfunction, was asked why the group was having trouble establishing itself, he put it this way:

I'll be perfectly honest. It's because there is no focus by the actual board to try and engage those folks and provide them with the support they need and the programming. . . . [Y]ou have a group that has to go to the mother for every question or everything you want to do. They simply aren't empowered. Without empowering the group, people start to get disenfranchised and it's very discouraging. You try to get a movement started and put a framework behind it, and you're constantly looking back, waiting for approval.

By 2009 the New Leaders group had “disappeared,” as one former member characterized it. A few top officials, such as the president and a couple of others, met occasionally, if at all. In 2011 and 2013 when I was in Cleveland, the group was no longer meeting, nor could (would?) staff recommend any NL members for me to speak to. Interview candidates had to be culled from old documents.

On the surface the NL Program looks like it should have succeeded as a group within the club and as a bridging enterprise. Members of the board used their “civic connectedness” to kick it off with some great events. They attracted a small cohort of young professionals eager to be part of the Cleveland City Club brand, and it was a far larger cohort than Portland had when it officially started its program. Furthermore, the design and structure of New Leaders offered a higher level of participation and engagement than the club’s Friday Forums. NL was a relatively small group. It would require greater participation from more of its members to function effectively—hypothetically offering greater chances for capacity building and skill development. NL was expected to do its own marketing, fund-raising, programming, and administrative functions (chair, vice chair, treasurer). Yet even with these factors in its favor, it failed.

The club’s executive director and club leaders who were interviewed blamed poor staff support and the inferior “quality” of some of the volunteers. NL interviewees, on the other hand, reveal a different picture. New Leaders were never able to take that first step in bridging—articulating power relations in a way that gave them some voice in the process. Without this, capacity building has a very limited chance to take off. NL members were essentially carrying out the club leadership’s mission, without a chance to add their own interpretation to the process. Members did talk about some skill

development—managing budgets, trying to put events together—yet this was rare and very short-lived. More often than not, they spoke of opportunities lost and frustrations of trying to get a program off the ground. Some questioned if the leadership really wanted them to succeed and bring what they could offer to the table and felt all they really wanted were the “bodies.” Without that first step of power articulation, there was no mutual construction. New Leaders, like the early women members, were unable to add their contribution and their interpretation to what would be the City Club of Cleveland. Without a founding event bringing in a strong and legitimized cohort—and given the venerated place the club holds in the public discourse, which has fed the history lionizing insiders—the old-timers have remained deeply entrenched. As long as they are, any chance of other members shaping its course, engaging in the mutual construction of bridging, seems highly slim.

*New Leaders Collective, Portland*

For Portland, the New Leaders Collective grew out of a sense that the club was not living up to its mission. Paddy Tillett, then president of the club, explained. “I was appalled that in the 2000 election the eighteen-to-thirty-two cohort, or whatever it is, only something like 7.5 percent voted. I was shocked by that, and I thought the city club is really failing in its mission if that is the case.” Portland, like Cleveland, had grown increasingly grayer, and lacked any significant youthful membership. To address this Tillett reached out to a small group of civic-minded folks, some already club members, some not, until he was able to build a large-enough group to sit down and hear what they thought about the club and what it would take to get them to build their presence in the

club. Whereas Cleveland sought out young professionals as a way to address its failing membership numbers, Portland's efforts sprang from different motivations. Portland's efforts were not about "new bodies" (not that this benefit was lost on anyone). However, its NL program emerged out of its sense of mission, and its (more recent) history. Here again, the club's position in important cultural categories and discourses played a role in the bridging process. The club's position in the polity as an instrument of civic engagement, with a responsibility to weigh in on important political questions, was not serving its next generation of citizens. The drive for inclusion and great participation that grew out of its founding effect, the generational shift, was also still churning during this period. Cleveland, by comparison, in its position as an arbiter that presided over public discourse, had no similar impulse, nor was its inner circle interested in inclusion and greater participation.

In that first meeting Tillett told them, "Tell us what you need to make [the club] a useful place for you, where you can grow and work." In typical Portland City Club fashion, this group went out and conducted research. Through a survey they would develop answers to those questions. The group came back with a manifesto explaining what they would want. As one person involved in the research who was also a club member stated, "We weren't asking the club." They were telling the leadership, "If you really want to do this, this is what we need." This included the ability to run their own events and hold them at alternative times, such as in the evenings, and they wanted a seat on the Board of Governors. It was with some satisfaction that Tillett recalled this experience. "It was their invention; it was not thrust on them by the city club." Like the women before them, the New Leaders in Portland negotiated their position and autonomy

in the club right from the start. But they would also be the heirs of that struggle and its founding as it reverberated forward. The push for greater inclusion and participation in the club, best captured in the changed research format and advocacy program, was in full swing during this period. NL represented one more step in broadening this effort. Once again the bridging of women would impact the bridging of others. This culture of inclusion and the wherewithal of younger club members to negotiate their own position within the organization and establish their power relations at the outset put them in a far better position to bridge than their counterparts in Cleveland. This enabled their NL program to develop its own programming, find its identity, and mature as a program in a way that Cleveland could not.

This linkage between the two bridging events, though, does raise a question. Are these events related temporally or systemically? This is to say, is it just that NL took place close enough in the wake of women bridging that it aided the outcome? Or does the act of bridging produce some sort of predisposition to further bridging? It is difficult to say at this point, but I am inclined to say it is temporal, with a caveat. Bridges appear to need tending if they are to be sustained, suggesting temporality; they are not like a light switch. The club has traditionally had difficulty bridging certain groups and populations. The club has historically been perceived to have weaker representation in eastern sections of the city. Also, the club has never been particularly good at bridging racial barriers.<sup>22</sup> The bridging of women and the attendant founding effect did not dramatically alter this. The founding effect has not helped in the mitigating of these boundaries. There have been

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<sup>22</sup> Both clubs had difficulty bridging particular neighborhoods and especially racial barriers. Unfortunately, their study was beyond the immediate scope of this project.

some recent efforts to close these gaps; it remains to be seen if they will be effective. But the tending to bridges can set the stage for other bridges, as is the case with the line from women to NL. Also, as discussed above, bridges do produce a type of momentum that can be unpredictable and transformative. One of the interesting outcomes of the NL emerging out of this dynamic nexus—of tended bridging relations that can produce their own momentum and energy—is that the NL are now adding to it. As the NL program matures, it too is taking the club in new directions. So, the caveat is, while bridging events may be temporal, there could be a sustainable quality to them. The NL program may not have shot out of the gate, like women, but its progress has been steady.

In 2001 (the program's first official year) the New Leaders chairs (there were co-chairs that first year) were given a position on the board, and the program was off and running. They did not have the type of organized "pull" that Cleveland put behind their programs in the beginning. There were no sit-downs with officers of the Federal Reserve. There were no big headliners or meetings with NFL owners, but there was much more freedom. The New Leaders Council (NLC), as it would be called in Portland, had very little oversight. They could choose their own chairs. They also had a great deal of latitude to create their own events, without the board having to give its blessing, and they were allowed to develop and run the NLC as they saw fit. Having this freedom, they never struggled with their identity and their place within the club. They were not carrying out the board's mission. Their mission would be their own. Their first event was a "board fair," which sought to connect young people with various nonprofits around the city. Given the club's history of dealing with policy and political issues, it was felt this was possibly a bit of a stretch outside of the club's mission. Following events would be more

in line with the club's mission. Soon they would put out a "cattle call" to members and nonmembers simply asking them what they were interested in. It did not take long to develop a small nucleus of members with interests in subjects such as transportation and health care, who then worked with the chairs putting together events, discussion topics, and speakers to bring in.

Not all the events in those first few years succeeded, and NLC leaders were okay with that; they were still tinkering to find what worked. It was okay with the Board of Governors, too. "It was pretty organic, and it was pretty loose; it was kind of woolly, but it kind of worked," noted one of the chairs. "They were super-committed to the club," observed the executive director during this time, "but also willing to try all sorts of stuff." This is another important distinction from Cleveland. What frustrated many staff, board, and committee members in Cleveland was that whenever they tried something new and it failed or turnout was low, the old-timers would shoot it down and scuttle any chance of trying it again. This was especially true of their New Leaders Program. Instead of the years of fretting over identity and events while having their hands tied in Cleveland, Portland's program was marked by a consistent, maybe not speedy, move forward. The organization was able to mature and develop as time passed. The NLC has always been about programming; events are what it does. When it was first established, thought and energy were directed toward programming in a basic way that all start-ups face—get programs on the schedule that can get people in the seats and sustain the effort. This obviously never changes. Yet as endeavors become more stable, they are able to approach this same dilemma from other angles that can serve broader purposes—often developmental purposes. For instance, in those early years the chairs played the primary

role in setting up events. With a new chair and some time and stability under its belt came developmental tweaks, as the new chair explained:

My vision was not to create interesting programs, but the value was really in getting someone else the experience of interacting with a local official, or interacting with policy makers, or asking questions about their community. . . . [T]he event was secondary to sort of citizen building by what they were getting from the *process*. I wanted people to create programs about issues and hoped to give them some guidance about . . . how to make the call or coordinate with the city club, or do the marketing, but it was really their idea to develop the program.

As the program matured, capacity building was becoming more of a focus. By having members play a greater role in developing programming, they are not only developing skill sets (marketing, for instance). They are also getting expanded opportunities to articulate ideas and values that will then contribute to the larger group product and its own identity. This is the capacity, the ability, that leads to viable bridging. It would start with the manifesto. Carving out that authority is what gave them the room and time to build these mechanisms, but the mechanisms must be present.

Over the years the NLC has also shown the flexibility so often needed for capacity building to grow as members' concerns and interests shift. A programming staple of the NLC is the leadership spotlight, in which a local official or community figure will come to address the group. Increasingly, though, there has been a growing desire among the NLC members for programming that engages the community more directly. Whereas their first event in 2001, the "board fair," was seen as pushing beyond



the club's mission, members were now looking for programming that was more service oriented. This would move progressively from outreach efforts to presentations from service providers (such as Habitat for Humanity) to one of their most recent events, called "Mix 'n Serve." Mix 'n Serve worked to educate members who may be interested in serving on the board of a local community service organization, held at a local tavern or other public venue outside the club. It is essentially the board fair revisited. In terms of individual events and in broader currents, the NLC shows the ability to incorporate member concerns and interest.<sup>23</sup>

During its evolution the NLC has maintained its strong working relationship with the board. In addition to its seat on the board, the NLC also has a strong informal working relationship with the club leadership. What started out as courting by the club president has been a continual process. The NLC holds regular retreats where they evaluate the past year and plan for the future. The club president and executive director regularly attend these events and participate, keeping the group abreast of the work and overall direction of the board and other areas of the club. Currently, a former chair of the NLC is president of the club. The NLC has grown to 250 members, and roughly 20 percent of those members participate in committees (both club research committees and NLC committees). The group has also had to address growth in its recent strategic plan, as its regular meetings are starting to outgrow its meeting space in the city club commons.<sup>24</sup> The group's development and maturity as an arm of the club are being met by growing numbers.

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<sup>23</sup> New Leaders Council meeting summary notes, January 9, 2011; April 2, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> New Leaders Council Retreat meeting notes, April 6, 2009; June 6, 2010; 2012.

During the course of this research, though, a nagging and problematic question dug at me, is the NLC really bridging? Some club members and NLC members referred to the NLC as a type of separate group, as though it was distinct from the club. This left me to ask, if it is doing all the right things—power articulation, capacity building, flexibility—but remains unto itself, does this constitute bridging? The admittance of women was a clear case. When women crossed the associational barrier and started working with men, that was a bridging event, or not, in the case of Cleveland. Cleveland’s New Leaders are another example of a nonbridge. But Portland’s NLC? The establishment of a young professional group, in a club where a fifty-year-old is still considered young, is a legitimate act of bridging, and wielding the manifesto upon entrance made it so. Does this sense of separation by some matter?

Yes, there is a degree of detachment between the NLC and the club, but that does not mean they are necessarily separate. The group is distinct, which is part of its attractiveness to other young professionals, as it is developing its own identity. Yet it is also weaving itself into the larger fabric of the club, which is evident in a few ways. First, given its shift in programming to more community service-oriented events, it is increasing the profile of the club in areas of the community and sectors where it did not have much exposure. Local leaders of the United Way or Habitat for Humanity may have appeared at the club or attended an event, but now the flow is going the other way, as NLC members seek to connect with these institutions in a more systematized way, and that’s new. Second, the club does not keep records of the number of NLC members on research committees, but staff and committee chairs see an increase. Of the committees I observed, each had at least one NLC member on it. Of interviewees, slightly fewer than

half of the NLC members had sat on a club research or advocacy committee at one point, including one who is currently chairing the Redistricting Advocacy Committee. In his capacity as chair helped draft a redistricting bill and find a sponsor for it in the state legislature, and learned the intricacies and skills of a citizen lobbyist. He referred to this experience as the “the best thing I’ve done professionally and personally in the last several years of my life.” Third, the profile of NLC events is rising, attracting more nonclub members and club members who are too old for the NLC. These events are also becoming more sophisticated, as they work to leverage the club’s other offerings. One example is the Friday Evening Forums. These events look to build off and pair with club research reports and Friday Forums. They take place away from club facilities, at a venue such as a tavern or club, where they invite speakers associated with past forums or reports to continue the discussion.

The current chair of the NLC said recently on this subject, “You know, in companies ‘departments’ are healthy. Everyone can’t do everything; some are good at this, and some are good at that. . . . [O]ne of the things we’ve done is bring people together.” The NLC has recently changed its name to the “New Leaders Collective” to emphasize this idea that they are working to cast a broader net and pull in other members of the club into their sphere, as well as communicate greater accessibility to those outside the club. When Paddy Tillett made his case to the group of potential New Leaders back in 2000, he told them, “The club needs what you bring.” What they bring are a certain amount of the unknown and an energy, which may not be bad for a one-hundred-year-old club based on a nineteenth-century model. The NLC evidences of the sort of dynamics and changes bridging creates. The NLC is bringing new resources and vision to the club.

Their uniqueness is part of the club's larger voice and identity. It has been progressively establishing itself over the past ten-plus years. Its members are concerned and working at establishing not only their place in the club, but their place in the community as club members. Perhaps the NLC's own version of "the same but different," exhibiting its uniqueness while being a meaningful member of a club with an old tradition, will have its own meaning and importance that will foster the next bridging event.

### Conclusion

Establishing bridging relationships starts with power. Actors must have the ability to act with some freedom and autonomy if they are going to engage in capacity building and leave their imprint on the coproductions of associations. Power and autonomy alone are not sufficient in associational bridging. They need to be accompanied by participatory venues that enable collective expression for bridges to be viable, genuine, and mutual. This requires flexibility so that participatory venues can meet the changing norms, concerns, and demands of members. Without this process, bridging relations run the danger of becoming functional relations across boundaries of difference. It is the understanding of the importance of this process in bridging that lends the term "developmental social capital." To expose this aspect of social capital scholars need to use more historicist approaches. Bridging social capital needs to be viewed temporally to fully conceptualize its rhythms in relation to broader social currents.

The articulation of power played a crucial role in these bridging cases. Activists in Portland—Politically Oriented Women and their supporters—would mount a sustained challenge against the club to open the doors to women. POW members would creatively

use the club's reputation and position in political discourse to make claims and substantiate their challenge. In their deft framing and patience, the challengers forced the club to acquiesce and would enter the club as equals. This was a transformative moment for the club. The event would change how many viewed the club. Baby-boomers, male and female, would join the club in large numbers, creating a founding event. This founding event showed how bridges themselves, in the power and meanings in the act of bridging itself, can be transformative. As women rose up the club ranks through the committee system, they would assume a major role in club leadership and take on more public roles in policy debates, speaking on behalf of their committees. The club itself would place greater focus on inclusion and participation. Events and research formats were readily adjusted and changed in response, and an entirely new advocacy arm of the club was created. This past would also lay the seeds for the New Leadership Council. However, this spirit of inclusion was met by young professionals who made demands of their own. In negotiating their own place in the club, the group was able to grow and develop into a community within the club that is both part of it and still maintains its own identity.

While Portland illustrated how bridges are able to mitigate politics and discourse, Cleveland showed just how much bridges can be mitigated by the same when they cannot stake out their own ground. Bridges were crossed in both cases. However, none of the positive effects that scholars normally associate with bridging events occurred. To begin with, club leadership would work quickly to open the doors, while creating the illusion they were doing it for mysterious women applicants. When women joined, they would progressively assume leadership roles, yet these positions increasingly became less

meaningful. This would be just as true for male members on the board, as insiders, the clique of old-timers, held tighter and tighter onto the levers of power, except women would have to endure misogynistic language and a discourse of dominance targeted specifically at them by the insiders. The board as a participatory view offered no capacity building because of the oppressive control of the old-timers. Their New Leaders Program would experience similar troubles. The program never gained any authority for itself or support from the board. It would struggle for years until it basically evaporated.

Using traditional social capital measures, each of these clubs would be held up as bridging success stories, at least in the case of women. However, if scholars took a snapshot of Cleveland's New Leaders just five years earlier, both clubs would be seen as strong examples of bridging for both populations. Both have sufficient membership numbers and "participation" to pass as good examples of associations with strong stocks of social capital and as bridging associations. Yet when looking at context, institutional differences, and the application of power, a totally different picture emerges. For example, Cleveland has been struggling with declining membership numbers for more than twenty-five years. In this time they have produced three strategic plans, including one a year ago. All three say the same thing: attract younger members, embrace technology, and diversify the offering of events. The club has shown little success, or interest, in accomplishing any of these things (although it did set up a Facebook page—last year). Each new bridging opportunity, and whatever new perspective or dynamic it may have brought, has been lost or squandered. Portland, on the other hand, in an age of supposed social capital decline, continues to move forward. The club has been able to build on its first bridging event by embracing and building on the developmental aspects

of the club. The result is that the effects of that first bridging event would reverberate forward, adding in the development of its New Leaders program. From that first bridging event, as members have said, “the cancer was killed and the club is better for it.” If only Cleveland had been so lucky.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

There are two pillars on which this project rests. The first is that bridging is a developmental process. It is not a singular event, and crossing boundaries alone is not sufficient. Actors must have a degree of autonomy to define their bridging relations on their own terms; if this is not present, they need to exercise power to negotiate and reconfigure those power relations. This application of power takes place within larger cultural categories and political discourses. Actors looking to integrate need to be able to navigate these currents to carve out their own space within associations. This needs to be coupled with participatory opportunities for them to shape and direct that associations work product together with other members. Through this dynamic two-step dance emerge the mutual constructions of bridging relations. The second pillar regards the “WD40” effects of bridging. The transformative effects of bridging are more complex than the exposure to more diverse resources, repertoires, and frames through linkages created by bridging—which network analysis typically points to as the outcomes of bridging. Transformative outcomes of bridging relations appear to be connected to exercises of power as well as diversity. Here I am referring not to power and its role in capacity building in associations (though that is a factor), but, rather, how it can lead to other unintended consequences that are transformative. Acts of contestation and rights claiming by one group can have particular and important meanings for other groups outside the association looking to bridge. This is more than increased access via diversity. What is



required to pull back the curtain on these developmental and transformative elements is a conception of social capital that focuses more temporality and context, a historicist approach.

Part of what has led to the obscuring of development and the impacts of bridging are the decontextualizing and depoliticizing of social capital generally as a concept and theory in its latest latter-twentieth-century iteration. For activists of the Progressive Era, building social capital was a conscious developmental project. Fostering its growth in programs such as the social centers of Rochester and similar efforts in rural West Virginia was a purposeful effort to build the capacities of community members so they could play a greater role in determining political and economic outcomes in their communities. These were not “spin-offs.” They were the point. When social capital was “rediscovered,” scholars focused on its “structural” elements, such as membership numbers within associations, norms of generalizable trust, and the configuration of networks. Although these factors are important, they would overshadow earlier ideas regarding social capital’s developmental and transformative qualities.

Cleveland has lacked many of the developmental qualities important for bridging. From the outside it appears “horizontal” in form: it’s a membership organization administered by a board voted from the membership. It’s not the Catholic Church or the Mafia, Putnam’s two classic examples of vertical organizations that are antithetical to social capital development. Yet a study of the club’s history, and its position in the community and media, reveals it shares more in leadership style with those institutions than any old-timer would like to admit. As the club came under greater stress, losing money and members, the old-timers’ grip grew tighter and their dominance over the

board greater. Social capital theorists and scholars need to approach associations with a “long view” if they are going to fully understand how institutions and their leadership impact social capital development. Capacity building and struggles over power cannot be dissected through methodological generalizations and “snapshots.” They evolve over time. Taking this long view illuminates that club leadership approached women and New Leaders as a means to an end—a chance to stay in the political game and an opportunity to bring in new members.

Trying to gain a full understanding of how board authority deteriorated over the decades, and how little board participation adds to member development, is impossible without grasping the rise of insider culture. There is a direct line from the “Athenians of Cleveland,” those successors to Pericles, and the power the old-timers currently wield. Cleveland does not have the degree of participatory venues Portland has, but they should have revealed at least some evidence of bridging. Yet the insider clique presides over its club just as the club presides over the political discourse of the community. Cleveland may be an institution people want to be a “part” of (and even look up to), but this is not bridging. There was no transformative effect, nor was there any real change at all. Outside of a couple paragraphs in meeting minutes forty years ago, and some female names on the membership list, the club has not changed.

Portland tells a far different story. Both women and New Leaders would successfully bridge into the club. The power women negotiated with their contestation, and New Leaders with their manifesto, would set them up for success. Working within the club’s participatory venues would then aid in the capacity building that cemented this relationship. The club’s position within political discourse would play a major part in

this. It would serve as the most effective foil as women made their claims on membership, and it motivated club leadership to follow the spirit of their mission in pursuing New Leaders. In this interplay between political currents and claims on power and the full use of participatory venues is the point where much of the ebb and flow of bridging take place.

Although I do not wish to make short shrift of a proper closing discussion of “bridging as process” in Portland, I wish to use the remainder of this conclusion to discuss findings and insights regarding bridging and its transformative effects. The transformative impacts of bridging reveal themselves on an individual level, often as an outgrowth of the co-constructive processes of bridging. Part of the reason for giving extensive treatment to the histories of women’s experiences in the club and New Leaders was to tease this out. Two good examples of this are Pauline Anderson and the New Leaders who worked with state legislators on the redistricting bill. From here, though, I wish to discuss the wider transformative impacts of bridging.

Although it is still not entirely clear why women did not mount more of a challenge in Cleveland, one thing is clear. The club’s position in the discourse did not invite a challenge to the same degree it did in Portland. Cleveland might have a grand reputation, but it did not impact political and policy debates like Portland reports could. As activist quotes showed, this was a major motivation. That challenge would leave an indelible mark on the club, signifying life before it, and opening up new possibilities after it. In the fight to open the club, women not only tore down the gender barrier, but tore down the identity of one of the city’s leading civic institutions, perhaps its leading civic institution, as a bastion of white-male power and symbol of the old regime. The role of

meaning and acts of power are largely absent from most of the bridging and network analysis. This meaning shift and exercise of power represent a sort of “messy middle” in this event. Power opens the door for women. The changed meaning of the club and this act of power are then both a transformative effect and a type of conduit through which another bridge is formed. How should scholars interpret this in terms of causality? The role of meaning and power in this bridging event is still not entirely clear. Further research is needed. However, this was not “bridge as transmission line” transformation.

The second point regarding bridging and transformation is that they feed off each other. Here I am not talking about women and male baby boomers—that does not suggest something as passive as feeding, but rather more incendiary, like an ignition. What I am referring to now is the link between women and New Leaders. The long chain of events set in motion by women bridging would eventually set up the club for its NL program. The founding event and its attendant pushes for more inclusion, new research format, advocacy program, agora, the more public role for executive directors—these were all related (some more than others) to that founding cohort’s vision and values. President Tillett approaching the potential NL in that first meeting and essentially saying “What can we do to make you want to join?” and then embracing their manifesto reflects the spirit of the club in the midst of all these changes. How or why do bridges feed off other bridging events? Is this a one-off occurrence? (This same question could be asked of the women-male boomer link.) The idea of “weak ties,” network bridges, spreading across space (geographic or otherwise) is not new—but within an institution over decades? Again, the lack of an answer to this question is a reflection of the lack of historical contextual analysis in the field. It does not seem to be chance in this case (as I have

explained above). Nor does this conclusion seem overly surprising as it sinks in. Wouldn't you expect—in an institution where a major bridging event has occurred, and you have the associated “WD40” effects taking place—that this would then at some point nurture future bridging events? Efforts to make societies more democratic often lead to more openness, more participation—more democracy. If, as Putnam proposes, and I think he is correct, bridging has important *democratic* transformative qualities—how we should perceive and respond to this idea of bridges feeding off each other? Or, the even grander idea, if they happen in close-enough time and space to each other that there could be a sustainable bridging environment?

Well, my initial reaction is that the women/founding event and New Leaders (event) are almost twenty years apart, yet there is this discernible connection between the two. It is not unreasonable to think this is not a rare instance. This could be happening at other institutions, in other communities. Scholars need to embrace the temporal and contextual nature of bridging relations if they wish to fully understand how they shape the landscape of civic engagement.

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