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# Join With Me, Won't You? Civic Engagement, COVID-19, and the Millennial Generation of Law Professors

Joseph A. Schremmer

## Introduction

Like many in my generation, I was raised to be a joiner. Growing up, before the world coined the term “millennial,” I followed my parents’ lead and joined all manner of groups, clubs, teams, organizations, and associations in our little town of Derby, Kansas. The scene in Derby in those days would have looked familiar to Alexis de Tocqueville.<sup>1</sup> Our evenings and weekends were full of pancake feeds for the Lions Club, spaghetti dinners with the Optimists, steak fries with the Knights of Columbus, burger burns for the Boy Scouts, and picnics with the church. My family competed in local speech contests, entered 4-H projects at the state fair, and joined leagues for nearly every sport involving a ball. In Derby, our cholesterol levels may have been high, but so was our level of social connectedness and sense of trust and reciprocity—what social scientists call “social capital.”<sup>2</sup>

Later in life, as a new lawyer practicing in the city of Wichita, I encountered firsthand the decline of civic engagement that these same social scientists have long documented. My state and local bar associations and inn of court were hurting to recruit new members and retain existing ones. The nonprofit and fraternal organizations I joined—secular and religious alike—suffered from flagging participation. The county-level political party I volunteered with needed more help than it could get. Committees within these organizations were headed up by the same people year after year. With virtually every group I joined, it seemed that attrition exceeded recruitment, and the best days were behind us.

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1. ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA* (D. Appleton & Co. 1899).
2. ROBERT D. PUTNAM, *BOWLING ALONE: THE COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY* 20 (2000).

Within each of these organizations, there appeared to be a rough consensus that: (1) the group was slowly fading away, (2) this fact was tragic (for the mission of the particular group as well as the community at large), and (3) there was nothing to be done because the younger generation was not interested in joining. But, as I looked around the rooms where these groups met, I started to draw a different conclusion. I was not the only millennial in most of these places. While millennials certainly did not come out in droves, we were usually represented, unlike the generation and a half that preceded us. These groups all had a variation on the same bimodal demographic distribution: lots of retirement-age baby boomers at the top of the organization, lots of freshly minted millennial professionals at the bottom, and few mid-career baby boomers and Gen Xers in the middle. Thus, while I concurred that the level of participation was tragic (for reasons I will outline),<sup>3</sup> I could not agree that millennials were the source of the problem. Indeed, I believe we could provide the solution.

As a generation, millennials have taken a lot of criticism from older generations for being different. Much of this disparagement centers on our generation's departure from certain supposedly traditional values relating to work and other social institutions. While some of these observations may have merit, when viewed broadly, the opposite is true: My generation represents a *return* to certain civic virtues from which the baby boomer and Gen X cohorts departed decades ago. As Neil Howe and William Strauss have fleshed out, millennials are a "civic generation," valuing consensus, teamwork, and social engagement, and focusing on rebuilding institutions.<sup>4</sup> It has been observed that millennials "engage in community involvement activities at higher rates than previous generations."<sup>5</sup> In particular, while millennial participation in conventional forms of political engagement, such as voting, is lower than for previous generations, millennials' willingness to engage in volunteer work, community service, and alternative forms of participation is significantly

3. See *infra* Part II.

4. NEIL HOWE & WILLIAM STRAUSS, *MILLENNIALS RISING: THE NEXT GREAT GENERATION* (2000).

5. Marlene K. Rebori, *Millennials: Shifting Values and Influences for Civic Engagement*, 7 J. HUMAN SCI. & EXTENSION 231, 233 (2019); see also NAT'L CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP, *Millennial Civic Health Index* 4 (2013), <https://ncoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2013MillennialsCHI.pdf>; Robert Grimm, Jr., et al., *Volunteer Growth in America: A Review of Trends Since 1974*, at 6 (2006), [https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/06\\_1203\\_volunteer\\_growth.pdf](https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/06_1203_volunteer_growth.pdf); *More Millennials Value Volunteering Than Previous Generation Did*, PHILANTHROPY NEWS DIGEST (Jan. 5, 2015), <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/more-millennials-value-volunteering-than-previous-generation-did>. It is worth noting that the increase in volunteerism among millennials may be the result of efforts to integrate service-learning programs in high schools since the 1980s, indicating the efficacy of incorporating civic themes in education. *More Millennials Value Volunteering Than Previous Generation Did*, PHILANTHROPY NEWS DIGEST (Jan. 5, 2015), <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/more-millennials-value-volunteering-than-previous-generation-did> (noting also that high rates of volunteerism may not equate to "stronger embrace of other civic virtues" like voting).

greater.<sup>6</sup> They “prefer community engagement activities such as volunteering, helping a neighbor, or working to solve a community problem over traditional political avenues to bring about change.”<sup>7</sup> Of course, millennials also lead prior generations in the civic use of social media.<sup>8</sup> It is fair to say that millennials are engaged, just not based on the typical measures of political participation. Additionally, millennials are a racially diverse generation,<sup>9</sup> and have a “greater awareness of and comfort level with diversity of all kinds than previous generations.”<sup>10</sup> The millennial brand of social engagement is more diverse and inclusive than the civil society in Derby, Kansas, during my youth, which for all its social capital was racially homogeneous. Millennial social engagement is also highly issue-centric, decentralized, and politically progressive. Take, for example, the Black Lives Matter movement, which was founded by three Black women who are millennials.<sup>11</sup> The movement has become one of the largest, and most decentralized, social movements in American history, largely through the strength of millennial participation.<sup>12</sup> Millennial social participation is also highly gender-inclusive, as demonstrated when millennial women led the massive 2017 Women’s March on Washington, D.C.<sup>13</sup> Before BLM and the Women’s March, millennials formed an important part of the Occupy Wall Street movement, which was also noted for its diversity, decentralization, and progressive bent.<sup>14</sup>

These characteristics make millennials in general, and millennial law professors in particular, well suited to address the pressing social problems

6. Amy K. Syvertsen, et al., *Thirty Year Trends in U.S. Adolescents’ Civic Engagement: A Story of Changing Participation and Educational Differences*, 21 J. RSCH. ADOLESCENCE. 586, 586-94 (2011); see also Rebori, *supra* note 5, at 233.
7. Rebori, *supra* note 5, at 233.
8. Lee Rainie, et al., *Social Media and Political Engagement*, PEW RSCH. CTR., 5 (Oct. 19, 2012), [https://www.pewinternet.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/media/Files/Reports/2012/PIP\\_SocialMediaAndPoliticalEngagement\\_PDF.pdf](https://www.pewinternet.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/media/Files/Reports/2012/PIP_SocialMediaAndPoliticalEngagement_PDF.pdf).
9. William H. Frey, *Diversity Defines the Millennial Generation*, BROOKINGS (June 28, 2016), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/>.
10. Emily Benfer & Colleen F. Shanahan, *Educating the Invincible: Strategies for Educating the Millennial Generation in Law School*, 20 CLINICAL L. REV. 1, 9 (2013).
11. *Herstory*, BLACK LIVES MATTER, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/> (last visited July 20, 2020).
12. Larry Buchanan, et al., *Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History*, N.Y. TIMES (July 3, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>.
13. Ellen Wulforst, *Millennial Women Opposed to Trump Take to Streets, Many for the First Time*, REUTERS (Jan. 16, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-women-march-millennials/millennial-women-opposed-to-trump-take-to-streets-many-for-the-first-time-idUSKBN150215>.
14. See Jocelyn Noveck, *Protesters Want World to Know They’re Just Like Us*, LONG ISLAND PRESS.COM (Oct. 10, 2011), <https://web.archive.org/web/20120507064809/http://www.longislandpress.com/2011/10/10/protesters-want-world-to-know-theyre-just-like-us-2/> (discussing the Occupy Wall Street movement).

of our time, including the coronavirus pandemic's disruption of established methods of teaching and community building in legal education. While the extraordinary challenges of teaching during COVID-19 are certainly worthy of attention, it is important to view them in the broader societal context in which the public health and economic crises are occurring. This context is marked by a legacy of anemic civic engagement and social capital, which has eroded our communities' resilience and undermined our ability to come together to meet huge challenges.

My goals in this essay are to place legal education's COVID-19 crisis into this broader context and illuminate the unique opportunity that millennial law professors have to create the conditions for more robust community participation within and outside of our law schools. Part I summarizes the decline of civic engagement and social capital in preceding decades and its consequences for law, public discourse, and quality of life. Part II outlines how this deficit of social capital exacerbates the challenges facing law schools and professors in delivering legal education and constructing community during the coronavirus pandemic. Part III explores the unique opportunity for millennial law professors to respond, both to the particular challenges of COVID-19 and to the underlying social capital deficit.

## I. The Social Capital Deficit

### *A. The Social Trends and their Consequences*

Volumes have been written about the sharp decline in all forms of civic participation since the 1960s. Robert Putnam's famous *Bowling Alone* thoroughly documents this decline across political participation (e.g., voting and party participation); civic participation (e.g., membership in fraternal organizations and parent-teacher associations); religious participation; participation in workplace and professional organizations (e.g., bar associations); informal social connections (e.g., giving dinner parties); and volunteerism and philanthropy.<sup>15</sup> As Putnam illustrates, the decline in participation is troublesome because the social capital and connections generated by voluntary associations "help make us healthy, wealthy, and wise."<sup>16</sup> This is so, says Putnam, because social connections inculcate society with norms of trust and reciprocity that allow individuals to resolve collective problems more easily. Thus, a decline in participation means a decline in trust, which means a decline in the functioning of society. A recent report of the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Senate confirms that the declines in social engagement and capital chronicled in Putnam's work have largely continued in the twenty years since its publication.<sup>17</sup>

15. See PUTNAM, *supra* note 2, at 31-115; see also William C. Kelly, Jr., *Renewing Civic Engagement: Lawyers and Civil Society*, 16 *EXPERIENCE* 23, 23 (2005) (noting the trend among lawyers).

16. PUTNAM, *supra* note 2, at 287-88.

17. Vice Chairman's Staff of the Joint Economic Committee, *What We Do Together: The State of Associational Life in America*, Soc. Cap. Project Report No. 1-17 (May 2017), <https://www.jec>.

As civic engagement declined over the latter half of the twentieth and first decades of the twenty-first centuries, so too did social capital. Since the 1960s, the “trust quotient” among Americans has fallen by half, to the point where fewer than half of individuals believe that “most people are honest.”<sup>18</sup> Alongside the downward trend in social trust, the number of lawyers per capita in the United States exploded after 1970,<sup>19</sup> as did the number of pages contained in the *Federal Register* and the *Federal Reports*,<sup>20</sup> and the share of GDP dedicated to legal services.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars believe there is a causal connection between the rise in law and demand for legal work and the decline in social trust. Several have suggested that additional legal regulation and associated lawyering became necessary to fill the gap left behind as social capital eroded.<sup>22</sup> Richard Epstein has suggested that “the causation could well run both ways: the rise in law leads to a decline in morality, as well as the other way around.”<sup>23</sup> Commenting on society’s increasing reliance on law to replace voluntary social norms, Epstein says that “[o]ur aspirations for what a legal system can do to improve social circumstances is simply too high. We try to solve more and more problems through legal intervention, and fewer through voluntary accommodation and informal practices.”<sup>24</sup>

The decline in social capital, trust, and reciprocity also has concrete consequences for quality of life.<sup>25</sup> Putnam documents that children are better off in states with higher indexes for social capital. This holds across numerous factors, ranging from rates of infant mortality to teen dropouts.<sup>26</sup> Violent crime is rarer in high-social-capital states,<sup>27</sup> and rates of mortality and disease are lower.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, if formal legal regulation is needed to order people’s

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senate.gov/public/\_cache/files/6f670ee8-74de-497a-85f6-4cf6502d52d4/1-17-what-we-do-together.pdf.

18. PUTNAM, *supra* note 2, at 140–41.

19. RICHARD A. EPSTEIN, *SIMPLE RULES FOR A COMPLEX WORLD* 3 (1994).

20. *Id.* at 6.

21. *Id.* at 5.

22. PUTNAM, *supra* note 2, at 146–47; Marc Galanter, *The Faces of Mistrust: The Image of Lawyers in Public Opinion, Jokes, and Political Discourse*, 66 U. CIN. L. REV. 805, 807 (1998); Soc. Cap. Project. Report. No. 1-17, *supra* note 17, at 10 (noting that the social-capital gap places increased reliance on “large institutions” rather than decentralized social groups for problem-solving and decision-making).

23. EPSTEIN, *supra* note 19, at 8.

24. *Id.* at 14.

25. Soc. Cap. Project. Report. No. 1-17, *supra* note 17 (noting several ways in which the report finds that the decline in “associational life” contributes to social problems).

26. PUTNAM, *supra* note 2, at 296–306.

27. *Id.* at 307–18.

28. *Id.* at 327–35.

behaviors when social norms fade away, the decline in social capital means an increase in public spending to implement and enforce this regulatory apparatus.

Finally, the decline in civic participation and social capital implicates the proper functioning of our democracy on all levels. Putnam explains that voluntary associations and social networks contribute to democracy by allowing individuals to express their interests and make demands of their government. As important, however, is that voluntary associations have *internal* effects on the participants themselves by giving them an opportunity to voice their opinions and instilling in them the habits and practical skills for participating in public life.<sup>29</sup> Voluntary associations are “schools for democracy” where members learn how to run meetings, speak in public, organize and manage projects, and debate significant issues productively.<sup>30</sup> Notably, these are many of the same skills we seek to develop in our students through legal education.

There are many possible factors contributing to the decline in civic participation, and, in turn, social capital. These include the rise of electronic and digital entertainment and social media; the economic and time pressures experienced by two-career and multigenerational families; rising student debt; and suburbanization and the increase in rates and lengths of commuting. Of all the possible factors, however, by far the most significant, at least to Robert Putnam, has been generational change—“the slow, steady, and ineluctable replacement of the long civic generation by their less involved children and grandchildren.”<sup>31</sup>

At the time Putnam was writing, these “children and grandchildren” were baby boomers and Gen Xers. I believe the next generational change can and will work in the reverse, as these relatively disconnected generations are slowly, steadily, and ineluctably replaced by their *more* civic-minded children and grandchildren—the millennials and Gen Zers. Yet, despite my optimism, this is no *fait accompli*. The millennial generation can stimulate diverse and inclusive civic engagement, and fill the social capital deficit, only through substantial effort.

### B. *The Role of Lawyers and Law Schools*

Lawyers, by virtue of their legal skills, knowledge, and status in society, have played an important role in the creation and functioning of civil society in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Yet lawyers are less civically engaged than fifty years ago,

29. *Id.* at 358.

30. Soc. Cap. Project. Report. No. 1-17, *supra* note 17, at 37 (“The connective tissue that facilitates cooperation has eroded, leaving us less equipped to solve problems together within our communities.”).

31. PUTNAM, *supra* note 2, at 283–84.

32. James Willard Hurst, *Lawyers in American Society, 1750–1966*, 50 MARQ. L. REV. 594, 598–601, 605–06 (1967) (discussing the profession’s role in society over time).



both in terms of pro bono legal service and leadership in civic organizations.<sup>33</sup> In my own experience, which is by no means unique, lawyer participation in voluntary bar associations has been waning for years.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, just as social trust and reciprocity have declined in the general population, the same phenomenon has been observed among practicing lawyers in their interactions with one another.<sup>35</sup>

The literature also describes a flight of lawyers from the places where they grew up to a handful of massive legal markets like Washington, D.C., and New York City.<sup>36</sup> Especially in such large markets, the size of law firms has grown, as has the level of specialization of big-firm lawyers. “Unsurprisingly, as a result many lawyers find themselves isolated from their communities.”<sup>37</sup>

Usual explanations for the decline in lawyers’ civic participation include the tendency of debt-burdened graduates to seek high-paying Big Law jobs with high billable hour requirements.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, lawyers suffer from the same societal pressures that drive down participation among the rest of the population. As Putnam concludes about the general population, however, the most potent factor causing declines in lawyer participation in civil society is likely a generational decline in civic-mindedness.<sup>39</sup>

33. See Kelly, *supra* note 15, at 23.

34. *Recently Released 2017 State and Local Bar Benchmarks Survey Report Reveals Declining Numbers, Bar Associations Trying New Strategies*, 42(3) B. LEADER, Jan-Feb 2018, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/bar\\_services/publications/bar\\_leader/2017-18/january-february/highlights-from-the-recently-released-2017-state-and-local-bar-benchmarks/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/bar_services/publications/bar_leader/2017-18/january-february/highlights-from-the-recently-released-2017-state-and-local-bar-benchmarks/) (describing the trend in state and local bar associations of declining membership and participation reported in the ABA’s 2017 study); see, e.g., James L. Baillie, *The Decline in Civic Participation: Bowling Alone*, 60 BENCH & B. MINN. 5 (Sept. 2003) (discussing the decline in participation in the Minnesota state bar association in the context of Putnam’s book).

35. R.J. Gilson & R.H. Mnookin, *Disputing Through Agents: Cooperation and Conflict Between Lawyers in Litigation*, 94 COLUM. L. REV. 509, 514-23 (1994). Chief Justice Warren Burger famously lamented the decline of professionalism in the law in the mid-1990s. In particular, Burger criticized bar associations for failing to maintain high standards. Warren E. Burger, *The Decline of Professionalism*, 63 FORDHAM L. REV. 949, 950 (1995). Observers of the profession continue to note a lack of civility. E.g., Cheryl B. Preston & Hilary Lawrence, *Incentivizing Lawyers to Play Nice: A National Survey of Civility Standards and Options for Enforcement*, 48 U. MICH. J. L. REFORM 701, 703-06 (2015) (connecting the problems with professionalism to stress among lawyers and poor public perception of the profession); Amelia Craig Cramer, et al., *Civility for Arizona Lawyers: Essential, Endangered, Enforceable*, 6 PHOENIX L. REV. 465, n.3 (2015) (noting that a Westlaw search conducted in 2012 returned 394 results for United States law reviews and journals with sentences containing both “decline” and “civility”).

36. Kelly, *supra* note 15, at 23; EPSTEIN, *supra* note 19, at 3.

37. Kelly, *supra* note 15, at 23.

38. *Id.*; see also Michael H. Hoefflich, *Legal Ethics and Depression*, 74 J. KAN. BAR. ASS’N. 33, 35 (Sept. 2005) (noting that the practice of law “has become more competitive and far more stressful. Standards of civility of dropped. Collaborative work among lawyers has become more difficult. Hours worked, particularly among young lawyers, have increased.”).

39. See *supra* note 31 and accompanying text.



Contemporary bar associations and judges have sounded the alarm on declining civic engagement.<sup>40</sup> These calls to action, however, focus on improving civic education among nonlawyers rather than increasing engagement or civic-mindedness among lawyers themselves. While law schools are in an ideal position to inculcate future lawyers with a civic ethic, there must be more effort to train students to think like good citizens and to emphasize civic participation as integral to the lawyer's professional identity.

## II. The Unique Challenges of COVID-19

The underlying social capital deficit will both exacerbate and be exacerbated by the changes to legal education required by COVID-19. As classes and meetings move online, there will be few opportunities for formal and informal interaction among students, faculty, and members of the legal and lay communities. Cumulatively, these lost opportunities will undermine students' ability to find mentors, get jobs, develop networks and affinity groups, and establish professional identities as lawyers—which should include an ethic of civic engagement. All this while the “loneliest,” most socially isolated generation—Gen Z—begins to dominate law school rosters.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, online interactions may not necessarily foster civic skills—public speaking and debate, for example—as effectively as in-person interactions. They might also exacerbate or increase the frequency of inequities already encountered in in-person settings. For example, it has already been observed that women receive fewer opportunities to speak in online meetings compared with in-person meetings.<sup>42</sup> Together with the lost opportunities for personal interaction, these factors may stunt students' acquisition of civic skills, which are indispensable both to the practice of law and to community participation.

## III. Solving the Social Capital Deficit: Enter the Millennial Law Professor

Especially during the pandemic, law schools must find ways to create the conditions to foster social and civic participation within their own institutions, as well as to instill in students the virtues and skills to cultivate social capital in their communities before and after graduation. This moment in history calls not only for immediate action to address the social and physical distancing

40. See, e.g., Baillie, *supra* note 34, at 5; Nancy E. Rice, *Lawyers as Leaders—A Call for Civic Outreach and Engagement*, 43 COLORADO LAW. 81, 81–82 (May 2014); Vicki C. Jackson, *Law Schools and Civic Education*, AALS NEWS (2019), <https://www.aals.org/about/publications/newsletters/aals-news-fall-2019/law-schools-and-civic-education/>.

41. See Jenna Hilliard, *Study Reveals Gen Z as the Loneliest Generation in America*, ADDICTION CENTER (Aug. 14, 2019), <https://www.addictioncenter.com/news/2019/08/gen-z-loneliest-generation/>; Jean M. Twenge, *Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?*, ATLANTIC MONTHLY (Sept. 2017), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>.

42. Alisha Haridasani Gupta, *It's Not Just You: In Online Meetings Many Women Can't Get a Word In*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 14, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/us/zoom-meetings-gender.html>.

required by the virus, but also for long-term efforts to correct the dire decline in social capital across our communities. By virtue of their diversity, experience navigating crises, tech savvy, and civic-mindedness, millennial law professors are uniquely suited to undertake both tasks.

There are at least three avenues for millennial law professors to address these issues: (1) incorporating civic engagement into their coursework, (2) modeling civic engagement for their students, and (3) incorporating civic considerations into their scholarship. With no intent to be the final word on the subject, here I will sketch out a few of the available methods.

*Incorporating Civic Engagement in Teaching.* Starting in 2013, the law faculty at the Chinese University of Hong Kong responded to a report outlining concerns with the quality of legal education in Hong Kong by incorporating civic engagement into the school's curriculum.<sup>43</sup> The report criticized the "black-letter approach" to law practiced by Hong Kong's law schools as overemphasizing traditional classroom teaching and the needs of the market economy.<sup>44</sup> In response, the school adopted a number of initiatives to bring students into the community, including requiring students to complete a community-focused research project.

The faculty also required students to complete a course in experiential learning. Because the core skills of public participation are also core skills for the practice of law, there is little difficulty, and a lot of return on investment, in incorporating civic engagement themes and skills into experiential courses. In fact, the community lawyering clinic at my own institution, the University of New Mexico School of Law, does this very thing by partnering with local nonprofits to send third-year clinic students into the community to represent real clients.

Doctrinal professors can also incorporate civic engagement into their courses.<sup>45</sup> My colleague and co-author Veronica Gonzales-Zamora, for example, invites practicing lawyers to her ethics class each year to build professional and community connections among local lawyers and her students. In addition, students practice speaking and collaborating in small groups, develop skills to consult senior lawyers in resolving ethical dilemmas, and engage in debates about gray areas of professional responsibility. While the impact of an activity like this may be diminished in a remote-teaching format, it is much easier from a practical standpoint to invite practicing lawyers and members of the community to participate in a virtual setting.

*Modeling Civic Virtues.* Perhaps the most important, and least costly in terms of trade-offs, means of instructing students in civic virtue is through being a

43. Luke Marsh & Michael Ramsden, *Fostering Civic Engagement in Legal Education: Observations from Hong Kong*, 1 ASIAN J. LEGAL EDUC. 57, 57-58 (2014).

44. *Id.* at 59.

45. For example, Epstein's *Simple Rules for a Complex World* expressly describes the interaction of legal rules of property, contract, and tort with the functioning of free associations within civil society. See generally EPSTEIN, *supra* note 19.

role model. For my own part, I aim to model good civic behavior in two ways. First, I enthusiastically embrace my role as the faculty advisor for two student organizations. Student organizations offer an unparalleled opportunity for direct civic instruction. Like miniature “schools for democracy,” student leaders and members learn how to run meetings, speak in public, and organize and manage projects. In my role as advisor, despite the challenges of being miles or even cities apart, I am encouraging and supporting the leaders of these organizations in continuing to build community and foster civic virtues.

Second, I try to practice what I preach by getting involved in local, state, and national bar associations and legal foundations. By inviting my students to join me at conferences and CLE presentations through these organizations, I model how professional associations function and I introduce them to new networks of professionals to build their own social capital. This practice has many obvious fringe benefits, such as helping current students find jobs and former students find good employees.

*Incorporating Civic Considerations in Scholarship.* Recall that social capital, civil society, and the law are mutually dependent and interconnected. In our scholarship, millennial academics should bear in mind the interrelationship between public regulation and the private sphere of custom and association, consider the conditions under which voluntary association thrives, and examine the role voluntary associations play in furthering social goals. In this pursuit, my cohort and I are indebted to our predecessors who have developed these themes in previous scholarship.<sup>46</sup>

### Conclusion

Derided for our untraditional approach to work, we millennials in fact represent a return to traditional virtues of civic participation and social trust, which are needed more than ever, given the isolating effects of online legal education in response to COVID-19. In our work as millennial law professors, we have the opportunity, and perhaps the obligation, to create the conditions for community building in our schools, instill civic virtues in our students, and lead the resurgence of civic engagement in our communities. Let’s initiate our own versions of spaghetti dinners and burger burns; but this time, everybody is invited.

46. See, e.g., Linda C. McClain, *The Domain of Civic Virtue in a Good Society: Families, Schools, and Sex Equality*, 69 *FORDHAM L. REV.* 1617 (2001).