

# SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATIN AMERICA

## Evidence from Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru\*

Joseph L. Klesner

Kenyon College

Received 10-4-2005; *Revise and Resubmit* 12-9-2005;  
Revised Received 3-8-2006; *Final Acceptance* 4-18-2006

*Abstract: Scholars have argued that social capital—understood to mean those social networks, norms, and trust that allow citizens to act together more successfully to pursue shared goals—encourages political participation and a more robust democratic experience. Consequently, international development agencies have made promotion of social capital a major emphasis in recent years. Using data from the 1999–2001 wave of the World Values Survey, I show that in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru this relationship holds true. Greater involvement in nonpolitical organizations does lead to more participation in explicitly political activities. Higher levels of interpersonal trust also promote political participation. However, despite encouraging results from studies of popular participation in the region, Latin American levels of organizational involvement and political participation are moderate by the standards of more mature democracies, and levels of trust are relatively low.*

With the return of democracy to the South American nations that had suffered under military rule in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and with the opening of the Mexican one-party regime to greater competition in the 1990s, some of the most significant barriers to citizen participation in politics in those nations came down. To varying degrees, democracies permit or even encourage citizen participation in political life, while most authoritarian regimes, particularly the military regimes that were explicitly antipolitical in the Southern Cone, discourage it. With the return of democracy to Latin America, then, we might expect greater political participation in the region. Indeed, democracy generally relies upon citizen participation to promote healthy and representative input

\*Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, August 28–September 1, 2002 and the International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Las Vegas, October 7–9, 2004. I thank the commentators on those panels, Mitch Seligson and Lisa Baldez, as well as Peter Ward and five anonymous reviewers from *LARR* for their comments. I remain responsible for the errors and omissions in this work.

*Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2, June 2007  
© 2007 by the University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819

## 2 Latin American Research Review

of public opinion about policy issues to decision-making authorities, and much of the collective effort that we might label *political* at the local level depends on voluntary contributions of time and resources by ordinary citizens. If democracy in Latin America is to go beyond its procedural minimums, citizen involvement in politics is a must.

The scholarly study of political participation has been reinvigorated by the recent attention by scholars, activists, and development professionals to the concept of social capital. Much of that attention has focused on developing countries, as social scientists and development workers have sought to determine whether communities with higher levels of social capital gain development benefits from their citizens' involvement in social groups.<sup>1</sup> Robert Putnam's influential *Bowling Alone* (2000), which focuses on the United States, has turned our attention toward the role of social capital in facilitating richness in the democratic experience, especially in the form of individuals' involvement in political life. In that widely read and provocative work, Putnam laments the decline of social capital in the United States and its implications for American democracy. His work has provoked several studies exploring the extent of social capital in the United States and other established democracies and exploring its relationship to political participation (e.g., the studies in Skocpol and Fiorina 2003 and in Putnam 2002; Teorell 2003; Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2003).

In many other contexts around the world, our concern may be less with the decline of social capital than with its simple dearth. In the former Soviet bloc, a long history of repression and surveillance discouraged people from broadly associating with others, which has led to political habits of apathy among citizens of those countries. Similarly, in Latin America, explicitly antipolitical military regimes endeavored to stamp out participative cultures in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and other nations. In other cases, of which Mexico is the best example, more inclusionary regimes nevertheless sought to channel political activity within very limited bounds.

Of course, if higher levels of social capital do not promote greater political participation and a richer, healthier democratic experience, then our worries about the meaning of low levels of social capital or declining stocks of social capital would be simply misplaced. If social capital does encourage political activity, however, then determining ways to engage citizens in all forms of social groups may be a particularly effective means to promote a higher quality of democratic life around the globe. Does social capital promote political participation? Do communities and nations with greater stocks of social capital also have higher levels of political activity by their citizens? Are citizens who participate in a

1. See the substantial library of works on social capital and development at the World Bank Web site: <http://www.worldbank.org/socialcapital>.

variety of nonpolitical civic groups thereby encouraged to engage in political activity?

This article explores the role of social capital and other causal factors in promoting political participation in Latin America. I attempt to assess the rates of political participation as well as stocks of social capital in Latin America when set in global perspective. I endeavor to determine the importance of social capital for promoting political involvement, in particular for gauging its relative weight as an explanatory factor. To do so, I analyze individual-level data drawn from the 1999–2001 wave of the World Values Survey, which includes data from Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru. Individual-level analysis of social capital and political participation is by no means the only appropriate approach to this important topic. Many studies of participation in Latin America have explored political participation at the community level to reveal the circumstances in which citizens can be motivated to involve themselves in collective efforts as well as the factors that may explain why these efforts succeed or fail. This study seeks to add to the literature on participation in Latin America by offering a more global perspective on the factors that motivate *individuals* to become politically active or stay home, a theme not widely analyzed by scholars of participation in Latin America.

#### SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In recent years scholars have paid significant attention to the role of social capital in promoting the effectiveness of democratic systems (e.g., Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). Social capital, understood to mean “features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam 1995, 664–65), may be closely related to political participation, although the two concepts are not synonymous. Indeed, Putnam argues that we must distinguish between political participation—“our relations with political institutions”—and social capital—“our relations with one another.” (Putnam 1995, 665) Whether social capital influences the propensity to participate politically is an empirical question, although Putnam (1995, 2000) has marshaled considerable evidence to argue that declining rates of political participation in the United States are associated with the erosion of social capital. In a similar vein, Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman (1995) have demonstrated that for acts of political participation requiring time, respondents who have acquired civic skills from their organizational or church memberships or from their jobs are more likely participate.

More recent studies have provided support for Putnam’s thesis linking social capital with political participation, while refining our understanding of the linkage. For example, in her study of political

#### 4 *Latin American Research Review*

activism in Central America, Amber Seligson (1999) explored the role of organizational involvement in encouraging political participation. Of the many forms of organization involvement examined in her study, Seligson found that only membership in community development organizations consistently predicted respondents' demand-making to local and national authorities. In another study using the same data as Seligson, John Booth and Patricia Richard explored the role of civil society activism in forming both social capital and political capital, by which they mean "attitudes and behaviors that actually influence regimes in some way" (1998, 782). Among their concerns, thus, was to understand how civil society activism forms attitudes that support democracy. Anirudh Krishna (2002), in a study of Indian villages, pointed out that social capital may promote political participation, but not necessarily democratic participation. Krishna's principal finding highlighted the role of new leaders in villages—he showed that capable new leaders were necessary to direct and channel the participation of high social capital villages. Pippa Norris (2002) contributes an extensive discussion of social capital in her global analysis of political participation and draws our attention to the importance of separately operationalizing the interpersonal trust and associational activism dimensions of social capital. In short, given the importance of the Putnam thesis for our understanding of political participation and given the relatively small attention paid to it by scholars, especially in the larger nations of Latin America, further exploration of the Putnam thesis in Latin America seems timely and important.

#### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATIN AMERICA

John Booth and Mitchell Seligson argued a generation ago that "much of the [then] conventional wisdom regarding political participation in Latin America lacks empirical validity" (1978, 26). Surveying the literature on participation in Latin America, Booth and Seligson identified several "images" of participation: violence, irrationality, political mobilization, limited mass participation, and participation monopolized by upper strata. Booth and Seligson argued, and the studies they compiled in the last comprehensive analysis of political participation in Latin America (Booth and Seligson 1978; Seligson and Booth 1979) showed, that none of these images accurately reflected Latin American reality in the 1970s. Indeed, the third, fourth, and fifth images are in conflict in significant ways. In addition, they have not reflected Latin American experience since then. Authors of a variety of studies of popular organizations and social movements have shown how ordinary, nonelite Latin Americans have created organizations and engaged in demand-making activities in

ways that can only be interpreted as rational (see Craig and Foweraker 1990; Chalmers 1997; Escobar and Alvarez 1992).

The preponderance of studies of Latin American political participation in recent years have tended to focus either on electoral turnout or on social movements and popular organizations, in which case the authors typically conduct careful case studies of (typically) successful efforts at mobilizing by neighborhood associations, human rights organizations, or other popular organizations. The latter group of studies tells us that the poor and the oppressed can create efficacious modes of political participation even in the face of resistance from authoritarian rulers and dominant economic elites. They do not as successfully provide a sense of how widely effective such mobilizing efforts have been—how many Latin Americans are involved in community-based organizations, or how many are members of human rights groups or environmental organizations, for example.

Most studies of Latin American political participation have not drawn on individual-level data either (however, for recent examples of studies that have drawn on individual-level data, see A. Seligson 1999 and Booth and Richard 1998). Survey evidence can tell us which kinds of individuals are more likely to participate politically. The social capital argument is in some ways a two-level argument, as Krishna (2002) makes clear. That is, there are collective characteristics of communities that cause them to be richer in social capital, which in turn facilitates the participation of individuals. Studying those collective characteristics of communities across nations, however, would prove to be a much larger research task than can be undertaken in this article. Rather, I will focus on the participation of individuals across four Latin American nations, and to get the basic data on political participation by individuals, we must rely on survey evidence.

#### DATA

This article draws on the 1999–2001 wave of the World Values Survey (WVS),<sup>2</sup> administered in eighty-two countries in all world regions in 1999–2001. Among the Latin American nations polled in that wave of the WVS, we focus on Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru.<sup>3</sup> The 1999–2001

2. See Ronald Inglehart, et al. (2003).

3. The 1999–2001 WVS was also given in Venezuela, but not all questions relevant to this study were included, so it is excluded from the full analysis. The 1999–2001 World Values data set also incorporates survey results from Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Uruguay taken from the previous (1995–1997) wave of the survey. Several questions used in the present study were not asked in the earlier waves of the WVS, and hence those countries are not included in the full multivariate analysis. Some bivariate relationships are reported for those countries, where data exist.

wave of the WVS incorporated questions designed to facilitate the study of political participation and social organization. Of the surveys publicly available, only the WVS provides the cross-national breadth that allows comparative analysis of political participation and organizational involvement in Latin America.<sup>4</sup>

Because it was not principally designed for the study of political participation, and because it is administered in countries in which elections are not held, the WVS does not ask about the respondents' voting behavior. Hence, regrettably, the WVS also does not ask about campaigning and various activities surrounding the political campaigns. Thus, I will not explore electoral participation and campaigning in this study. The WVS does ask a standard battery of questions about political activity, namely, whether the respondent had ever or would ever sign a petition, join a boycott, attend a demonstration, join an illegal strike, or occupy a building.<sup>5</sup> This standard battery of questions is intended to measure sequentially more risky or costly modes of political participation (especially in that joining an illegal strike or occupying a building are apt to bring strenuous resistance from the authorities). In addition, the most recent WVS questionnaire asked respondents whether they belonged to and contributed voluntary work for a series of social organizations, of which the following may be considered explicitly political: political parties, local political action, human rights or third world development organizations,<sup>6</sup> environmental groups, women's groups, and the peace movement. These modes of political participation form the behavioral basis of political activity as measured for the analysis in this article. When I refer to political participation in the remainder of this paper, I mean this particular set of demand-making and voluntary activities and, regrettably, I do not mean electoral participation or campaigning.

#### LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

To gain a better sense of the level of political activity of Latin Americans and to place that participation in comparative and global context, I created an index of political activity. For each respondent, I determined whether she or he had ever taken part in each of the political acts mentioned above: signing a petition, joining a boycott, attending

4. The Latinobarómetro has tracked Latin American attitudes and political behavior in annual cross-national surveys since 1995. However, no single annual poll by the Latinobarómetro has the full range of questions that would permit the variables used in this analysis to be examined in a single multivariate analysis.

5. See <http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/ques4.shtml> for the wording of this and other questions used in the analysis presented here.

6. The Mexican and Chilean World Values Surveys only asked whether the respondent was involved in human rights organizations, not third world development groups.

a demonstration, joining an unofficial strike, or occupying a building. I gave each respondent one point for having engaged in each of those acts. In addition, I gave each respondent one point each for having *provided voluntary work* for the following organizations: political parties, local political action groups, human rights or third world development organizations, environmental groups, women's organizations, and the peace movement. Thus, a respondent's political activity index could range from 0 to 11.<sup>7</sup> I then computed the mean of those individual scores for each nation.

Latin American countries lag behind the wealthy, established democracies in terms of their volume of political activity. The average Swede (mean participation score = 1.85), Briton (1.43), or German (0.92) engages in significantly more types of political activity than the average Chilean (0.69) or Mexican (0.45). Indeed, Latin Americans participate in political activities at rates comparable to residents of most but not all of the republics that have emerged out of the Soviet Union (unweighted mean of former Soviet republics = 0.50) or Yugoslavia (0.69) and citizens of the Eastern European nations once dominated by the Soviet Union (0.63). The political participation of residents of three of the four African nations surveyed in the 1999–2001 WVS wave is greater in volume than that of Latin Americans. Vietnam, India, and Bangladesh experience higher rates of political activity than all Latin American countries reported here, while Filipino rates of participation are comparable to Latin American. So the rates of political participation of Latin Americans are not the lowest by global standards (e.g., Russia's mean = 0.39), but nor do they rival the rates of the wealthy democracies or even match those of many Asian and African developing countries. Moreover, we would hardly expect high volumes of participation in the nations of the former Soviet empire given that those peoples had little opportunity for voluntary participation for decades and that most manifestations of spontaneous or otherwise uncontrolled political initiative were squashed by the communist authorities. Latin American nations, of course, also experienced nondemocratic rule for substantial periods in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s by regimes explicitly oriented to discouraging political involvement by any but the most elite actors, which may account for their relatively low rates of political activity too.

Table 1 reports the percentage of each nation's respondents who stated that they had engaged in each of the political activities that make up our participation index. For comparative purposes, I have included data from the United States and Canada, as well as Japan and Spain. Here we see,

7. This index hence gauges the *breadth* of participation by an individual rather than its *intensity*. Both breadth and intensity of participation are relevant measures of an individual's political involvement, but these survey data do not allow us to gauge the intensity of involvement in any single one of these activities.

Table 1 Levels of Participation of Latin Americans in Political Activities in Comparative Perspective

	Political Parties	Voluntarism					Unconventional Political Activism				
		Local Community Action	Human Rights/Development	Environmentalism	Women's Groups	Peace Movement	Sign Petition	Join Boycott	Attend Demonstration	Join Illegal Strike	Occupy Building
Argentina	3.1	2.7	0.3	1.4	0.7	0.3	22.7	2.0	13.2	5.3	1.9
Brazil	—	—	—	—	—	—	47.1	6.4	24.8	6.5	2.7
Chile	1.8	3.7	1.6	2.0	4.5	2.2	19.9	5.3	15.9	8.9	4.2
Mexico	3.5	4.2	1.4	3.0	3.3	3.0	16.8	2.1	3.7	2.5	2.0
Peru	3.3	4.2	1.6	2.2	4.9	0.4	22.4	7.7	17.0	4.0	1.7
Venezuela	—	—	—	—	—	—	22.7	2.4	9.7	2.4	2.6
Uruguay	—	—	—	—	—	—	35.5	4.0	5.0		7.6
Colombia	—	—	—	—	—	—	18.9	7.7	11.5	10.2	4.9
U.S.	7.0	7.2	2.9	8.5	8.2	2.0	81.1	25.6	21.4	6.0	4.1
Canada	2.7	5.1	2.5	4.4	4.5	1.0	73.3	20.5	19.5	7.1	3.0
Japan	1.2	0.4	0.3	1.2	1.2	0.7	63.2	8.4	12.9	2.7	0.1
Spain	1.3	1.7	1.4	1.1	0.8	0.5	27.5	5.8	26.6	8.2	2.7



for example, that about one-third as many Chileans had signed petitions as had Brazilians. The propensities to attend demonstrations or join illegal strikes vary considerably across the region and are not out of line with those of the non-Latin American nations listed in the table. Compared to the U.S. and Canadian citizens, however, Latin Americans (and also Japanese and Spanish citizens) engaged in much less voluntary activity for politically oriented organizations. Those in the United States and Canada also engaged much more frequently in the less confrontational modes of political activism—signing petitions and joining boycotts—than did Latin Americans. Table 1 clearly indicates that Latin American levels of political participation remain relatively low.

The foregoing descriptive statistics suggest that Latin American non-electoral political participation is hardly out of line with that of other countries that have not had lengthy experiences with stable democracy or with other developing countries. It does, however, bear repeating that Latin Americans have not participated in politics at the same level as have citizens of established democracies. Is this due simply to differences in the level of socioeconomic development between the established democracies and Latin American countries? Is it a matter of political attitudes? Or, do differences in the region's stocks of social capital account for these differences? And, within Latin America, how can we account for differential rates of participation? In short, what factors propel greater and lesser participation of individuals in Latin America?

#### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: CAUSAL FACTORS

The literature on participation has focused on four groups of factors that shape political participation: resources, political values, social capital, and institutional opportunities and constraints and other contextual factors. Using data from the WVS, I will explore the first three of these groups of factors sequentially, and then I will examine the interaction of these factors in a multivariate analysis of political participation. A survey focusing on political attitudes provides very little in the way of direct evidence about institutional opportunities and constraints or other contextual factors that might shape patterns of political participation. Yet in a cross-national study we must recognize that there exist constraints on participation that operate differentially across national settings. Studies of political participation have placed heavy emphasis on the role of institutional constraints and opportunities in shaping the modes of participation pursued and the volume of that participation (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Asher, Richardson, and Weisberg 1984). Without relying on the direct testimony of either frustrated or empowered participants (which we cannot do with these data), we can nevertheless consider some of the key contextual matters

operating in Latin America that may structure political involvement. The best way to incorporate that analysis will be to examine the results of the multivariate analysis at the national level.

### *Socioeconomic Status and Demographic Factors*

Many past studies of political participation found the causal bases of political activity in class and other socioeconomic and demographic variables.<sup>8</sup> For instance, older citizens regularly have been identified as more likely to engage in political activities than the young because those who are older have more experience and, typically, a greater stake in society that they need to defend. Those with greater socioeconomic resources, as evidenced by higher incomes, can apply those resources to their political activity (for instance, they can make greater contributions to political campaigns) and, of course, they have a greater property stake at risk in the political sphere that they may wish to protect by participating in politics. More educated citizens usually participate more in politics than their less-educated fellow citizens. As Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry Brady, and Norman Nie (1993, 466–67) summarize the results of numerous studies regarding education and participation,

Education enhances participation more or less directly by developing skills that are relevant to politics—the ability to speak and write, knowledge of how to cope in an organizational setting—by imparting information about government and politics, and by encouraging attitudes such as a sense of civic responsibility or political efficacy that predispose an individual to political involvement. In addition, education affects activity indirectly: those who have high levels of education are much more likely to command jobs that are lucrative and to develop politically relevant skills at work, in church and in voluntary organizations.

In addition to age, income, and education, students of political participation also typically examine the role of urban and rural residency in promoting political activity. Those studies have reached mixed conclusions: while modernization theorists had argued that urbanization would likely make political participation easier, hence encouraging higher participation rates in cities, others have noted that in large cities the lack of connectedness among citizens discourages them from engaging in collective endeavors, including participating in politics (Asher, Richardson, and Weisberg 1984, 42–43). Finally, in many contexts, one's gender may influence the likelihood that one will participate in politics, especially in more male-dominated societies.

When we examine the simple bivariate relationships between the political activism index and the resource variables described above, we

8. For an argument about the need to transcend socioeconomically-based arguments about political participation, see Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1995.

find that one's sex has no apparent relationship to nonelectoral political participation in Latin America (the lambda coefficient = 0.00). Age is only very weakly related to participation ( $\tau - c = 0.03$ ), with youth less likely to participate than those in the prime of life. Income and education, though, show clear relationships to participation, with the wealthier and / or better educated more likely to participate than the poorer and / or less-well-educated segments of the population.<sup>9</sup> Because the WVS data have difficult-to-recode, country-specific categories to capture the degree of urbanization of the area in which a respondent lives, I have not included urbanization in a cross-regional analysis, but at the country level, no clear relationship emerges in any of the four countries studied here.

Education is the resource variable most strongly correlated with political participation at the bivariate level in Latin America (Somers'  $d = 0.17$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.15$ ), although this relationship is not as strong as in the wealthy, established democracies included in the WVS ( $d = 0.26$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.24$ ). Similarly, the strength of the relationship between participation and income for Latin America ( $d = 0.08$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.08$ ) is weaker than in the established democracies ( $d = 0.14$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.14$ ). So, while these findings reflect the conventional expectations based on comparative research (Asher, Richardson, and Weisberg 1984), which suggests that Latin American political participants share the social and demographic characteristics of those who are active in other societies, the resource variables do not seem to predict political participation as directly as they do in more established democracies.

### *Political Attitudes and Participation*

How do political attitudes shape political participation? Broadly, three different dimensions of political attitudes shape political behavior: those related to fundamental political values (one's ideological orientation, for example), to political efficacy, and to political engagement. The WVS does not offer a question that adequately taps political efficacy. Let us explore each of the other two dimensions and their implications for political participation.

*Fundamental Political Values.* By fundamental values, I mean the individual's orientation in favor of change or the status quo and in favor of guaranteeing material gains versus promoting postmaterial values, among others. The WVS offers a wealth of questions designed to measure the fundamental values of individuals. For brevity, I will focus on the standard left-right continuum and postmaterialism.

9. To facilitate comparability across nations, the World Values Survey recoded income so that the respondents in any country were grouped into roughly thirds—lowest income third, middle third, highest income third. I have retained that recoding here.

Table 2 Bivariate Relationships between Attitudes and Political Participation

Explanatory Variables	Political Activism Index (number of forms of non-electoral political participation)				% of Total
	None	One	Two	Three or more	
<b>Left-right Spectrum</b>					
Left	53.9	20.4	10.0	15.7	<b>11.9</b>
Center	64.5	21.2	7.8	6.6	<b>47.5</b>
Right	65.0	20.9	7.6	6.5	<b>19.8</b>
Don't Know	80.6	13.3	3.1	3.1	<b>20.8</b>
	<i>Somers' d = -.07</i>		<i>tau-c = -.06</i>		<b>N=4690</b>
<b>Postmaterialist Index</b>					
Materialist	73.1	15.8	6.6	4.6	<b>23.4</b>
Mixed	65.9	21.1	6.5	6.4	<b>58.6</b>
Postmaterialist	59.2	19.6	9.7	11.4	<b>18.0</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .09</i>		<i>tau-c = .08</i>		<b>N=4559</b>
<b>Importance of Politics</b>					
Not at all/Not very	71.1	18.7	5.4	4.7	<b>62.2</b>
Rather/Very	59.0	20.6	9.7	10.7	<b>36.7</b>
Don't Know	72.5	17.6	7.8	2.0	<b>1.1</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .14</i>		<i>tau-c = .13</i>		<b>N=4689</b>
<b>Political Interest</b>					
Little/None	72.6	17.9	5.0	4.5	<b>66.5</b>
Very/Somewhat	54.3	22.6	11.3	11.8	<b>32.8</b>
Don't Know	81.3	12.5	3.1	3.1	<b>0.7</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .20</i>		<i>tau-c = .14</i>		<b>N=4688</b>
<b>Interpersonal Trust</b>					
No Trust	68.5	18.9	6.7	5.9	<b>81.1</b>
Trust	59.3	21.8	8.5	10.4	<b>17.0</b>
Don't Know	55.6	20.0	7.8	16.7	<b>1.9</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .10</i>		<i>tau-c = .06</i>		<b>N=4688</b>
Total	66.7	19.4	7.0	6.9	100.0

Source: World Values Survey, 1999–2001 wave.

The standard left-right ideological continuum may measure different fundamental values in different societies, but in Latin America it generally either taps fundamentally different views about the state's role in the economy, with the left preferring greater state intervention and the right preferring market solutions, or it gauges commitment to the status quo (right) versus a fundamental desire for change (left). The WVS uses a 1 to 10 scale, with 1 representing the extreme left and 10 the extreme right, to measure self-placement in the ideological spectrum. In table 2 I have reduced that scale to three positions: left (those scoring 1–3 on the 10-point scale), center (4–7), and right (8–10). In Latin America, those on the left are more likely to be participants than those in the center or on the right. Still, a majority of those on the left take part in none of these nonelectoral modes of participation, whereas almost two-thirds of those in the center and on the right do not participate at all. Again, this relationship is stronger in the wealthy, established democracies ( $d = 0.17$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.12$ ) than in Latin America.

Ronald Inglehart and other investigators involved with the WVS have operationalized a materialism/postmaterialism index to capture changes in the orientation to politics that they associate with the movement from a society focused primarily on the attainment of material well-being to a postmaterialist world in which values such as the ability of all to participate in society, the defense of the natural environment, and the pursuit of individual spiritual goals take precedence over material concerns (e.g., Inglehart 1997).<sup>10</sup> The second panel of table 2 reports the cross-tabulation of the materialist/postmaterialist index with our participation index. Clearly, postmaterialists are more likely to be engaged in nonelectoral political activities than materialists or those of mixed materialist/postmaterialist values. Again, though, a majority of postmaterialists do not participate in these ways, and postmaterialists are not abundant in Latin America (18 percent of the respondents in the four countries examined here). They tend to participate beyond their numbers, but not as strongly so as in the wealthy democracies, where the relationship between the postmaterialism index and our political activity index is stronger ( $d = 0.21$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.17$ ).

*Political Engagement.* By political engagement, I mean the psychological dimension of involvement in politics. While some scholars have

10. The four-point materialism/postmaterialism index is composed out of the following question: "If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important? And which would be the next most important? Maintaining order in the nation; giving people more say in important government decisions; fighting rising prices; protecting freedom of speech." Order and prices are considered materialist concerns while the other two responses are postmaterialist. Those respondents choosing postmaterialist concerns as both first and second in importance are coded as holding postmaterialist values. Similarly, two materialist responses put an interviewee into the materialist values camp. One of each means the respondent has mixed values.

suggested that following politics in the media and discussing politics with acquaintances constitutes one mode of political participation,<sup>11</sup> here I am distinguishing between a *subjective engagement* in political affairs that remains on the sidelines and an *active participation* in politics that requires going into the public sphere in one way or another. Key elements of political engagement include the level of one's interest in politics and the importance one attributes to politics. Major studies of political participation have found that subjective political involvement plays a role as an intervening variable between socioeconomic status and political participation (e.g., Nie, Powell, and Prewitt 1969).

The third and fourth panels of table 2 display the relationship between two indicators of political engagement and our participation index. A casual glance will suffice to demonstrate the strong relationship between political interest and the volume of participation, and a somewhat weaker but still important connection between the respondents' sense of the importance of politics and participation: those who are much more interested participate more frequently in politics and those who think politics is important similarly participate more than those who do not. Once again, in Latin America the relationships do not hold as strongly as in democracies that have existed longer (where, for interest,  $d = 0.29$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.29$ ; for importance of politics,  $d = 0.25$ ,  $\tau - c = 0.24$ ).

Hence, the expected relationships between political attitudes and political participation seem to hold in Latin America, at least at the bivariate level. However, only small minorities of the samples (see the last column of table 2) hold each of the attitudes that encourage political activism (a belief that politics is important, a strong interest in politics, or more leftist or postmodern values). Unless more Latin Americans develop these attitudes, based on these attitudes alone we would not expect to see growing levels of political participation.

### *Social Capital*

To operationalize the concept of social capital, we can use one attitudinal variable from the WVS—interpersonal trust—and three different sets of behavioral variables, namely, membership in nonpolitical organizations; volunteer work for nonpolitical organizations; and social networking—defined as frequently spending time socializing with friends, work colleagues, and those one meets at church or sports clubs. Putnam characterizes membership in organizations as a major element of civic engagement. He also argues that one of the major forms of social capital is the relationships that people develop when spending time with others in activities not specifically focused on accomplished collective objectives—playing cards in bridge clubs, for instance (2000,

11. See the discussion in Asher, Richardson, and Weisberg, 1984: 48–49.

93–115). Finally, he suggests that interpersonal trust is essential for effective civic engagement. Several other scholars have explored the role of trust in promoting political participation (e.g., Power and Clark 2001; Benson and Rochon 2004) without reaching a clear consensus yet. The basic assumption from which scholars begin to explore this relationship is James Coleman's: "a group whose members manifest trustworthiness and place extensive trust in one another will be able to accomplish much more than a comparable group lacking that trustworthiness and trust." (Benson and Rochon 2004, 437–38)

How do Latin American nations compare to other countries surveyed in the WVS in terms of interpersonal trust, organizational involvement, voluntary work for nonpolitical organizations, and social networking? Figure 1 shows how the four Latin American countries we are examining here compare to WVS nations from other categories on their affirmative response to the question, "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"<sup>12</sup> Here we see that interpersonal trust in Latin America is not as widely shared as in the wealthy, established democracies or most of the Asian countries in the WVS and falls about in the range of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. On this attitudinal dimension, Latin American societies cannot claim to have strongly developed social capital.

Figure 2 displays a similar comparison for a nonpolitical voluntarism index that sums up respondents' replies to the question about whether they had contributed unpaid work to following types of organizations: social welfare service agencies, religious (church, mosque, and so forth) organizations, cultural activities (which include education, hence parent-teacher associations), labor unions, professional associations, youth organizations, and organizations associated with health care (hospitals or neighborhood clinics, for example). The nonpolitical voluntarism index can thus range from 0 to 7. With the exception of Argentines, Latin Americans rank quite favorably when compared to citizens of other countries in terms of volunteer work in nonpolitical organizations. Even the wealthy democracies do not prove to be substantially higher

12. I chose these categories to be able to compare Latin American countries to (1) those wealthy, established democracies on which much of the literature about participation was developed; (2) the post-communist nations that had only a decade of experience with democracy when the 1999–2001 WVS was conducted; (3) developing countries in Asia; and (4) developing countries in Africa. The countries are listed by category—wealthy democracies: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States; post-communist countries: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Ukraine; Asia: Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, and Vietnam; and Africa: South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

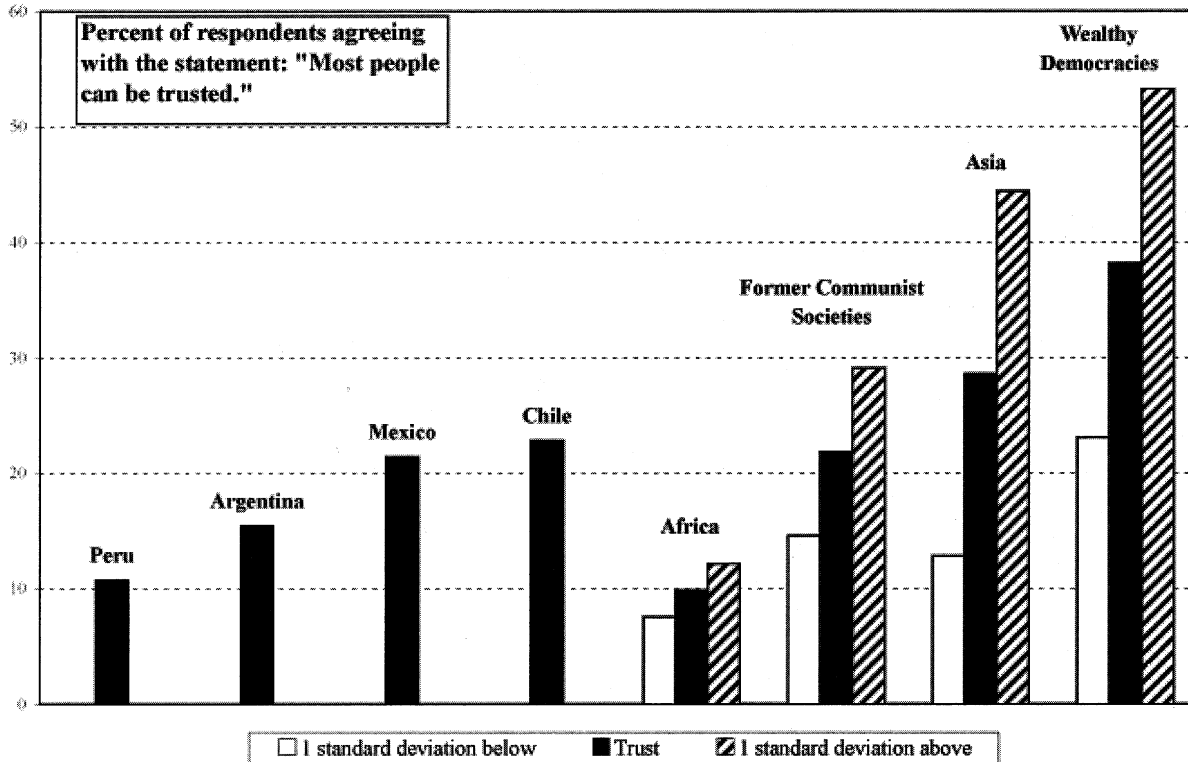


Figure 1. Interpersonal Trust: Latin America in Comparative Perspective



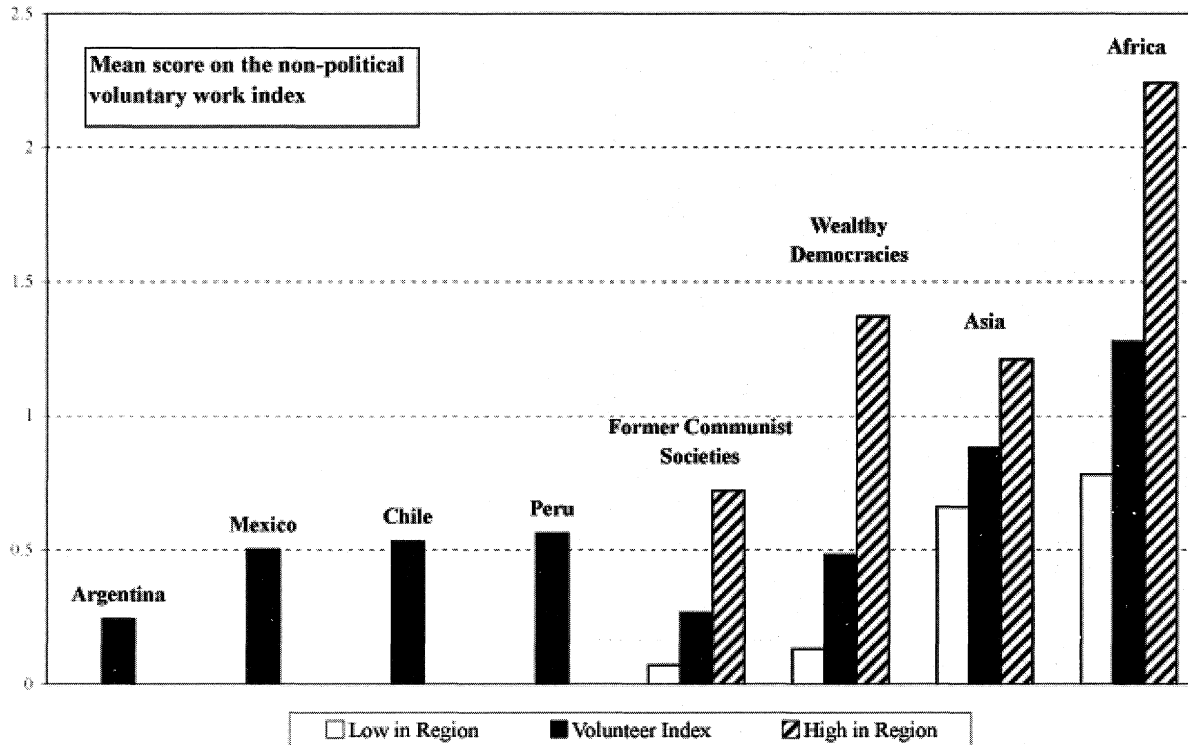


Figure 2. Voluntary Work for Non-Political Organizations

than Chile, Mexico, and Peru in the volume of nonpolitical voluntarism undertaken by their citizens, and those three nations undertake unpaid work in nonpolitical social organizations at a considerably higher rate than the residents of formerly communist countries.<sup>13</sup>

To explore the impact of the attitudinal dimension of social capital, i.e., interpersonal trust, on political participation, consider the bottom panel of table 2, which provides evidence of a positive relationship between interpersonal trust and participation in Latin America. The relationship is not especially strong, however. Moreover, given that citizens of these four countries hold low levels of interpersonal trust, even though a relationship between trust and participation exists at bivariate level, the low levels of trust would generally depress political participation in the region.

Turning to the behavioral dimension of social capital, both nonpolitical organizational membership and nonpolitical voluntarism are associated with the political activism index. Spearman's rho for the relationship between nonpolitical organizational membership and political activism is 0.22, while for the relationship between nonpolitical voluntarism and political activism it also reaches 0.22 (Somers'  $d = 0.19$  and  $0.21$  for those relationships, respectively). In short, those Latin Americans who belong to civic associations *not specifically devoted to political causes* nevertheless participate politically at higher rates than those who do not belong, and the relationship also holds for those who go beyond membership in such organizations and actually volunteer their time to those causes. Here the relationship is comparable to that in wealthy democracies (rho for the correlation between nonpolitical voluntarism and political activism = 0.26).

Social networking has a weaker impact on political activism, however, as shown in table 3. Spending time with people one meets at church seems to have little influence on the likelihood that one will engage in political activism, while socializing with friends, colleagues from work, or acquaintances from sports clubs and voluntary organizations has a modestly higher impact on the likelihood that one will participate politically. The latter relationships are not negligible, but they are not especially strong either.

In sum, having higher levels of social capital, whether measured attitudinally or in terms of organizational memberships, does seem to encourage political participation in Latin America, at least at the individual level. This bivariate analysis supports Putnam's thesis about the role of social capital in promoting political participation. However, a more complete analysis of the causal factors promoting political activity must include the

13. Because volunteer work for organizations tends to parallel membership in the same organizations, I do not report an index of organizational membership here.

Table 3 Bivariate Relationship between Social Networking and Political Activism

How often do you spend time socially with . . . ?	Political Activism Index (number of forms of non-electoral political participation)				% of Total
	None	One	Two	Three or more	
<b>Friends</b>					
Weekly	61.4	22.7	8.6	7.3	<b>33.4</b>
Less Often	69.3	17.7	6.3	6.7	<b>66.6</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .08</i>		<i>Tau-c = .07</i>		<b>N=4689</b>
<b>Work colleagues</b>					
Weekly	59.1	23.3	8.9	8.8	<b>22.4</b>
Less Often	68.9	18.3	6.5	6.3	<b>77.6</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .10</i>		<i>Tau-c = .07</i>		<b>N=4689</b>
<b>People from church</b>					
Weekly	64.9	21.3	6.7	7.0	<b>23.4</b>
Less Often	67.2	18.8	7.1	6.9	<b>76.6</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .01</i>		<i>Tau-c = .04</i>		<b>N=4689</b>
<b>People from sports clubs or voluntary organizations</b>					
Weekly	59.3	20.2	7.5	13.0	<b>11.6</b>
Less Often	67.7	19.3	7.0	6.1	<b>88.4</b>
	<i>Somers' d = .10</i>		<i>Tau-c = .04</i>		<b>N=4689</b>
% of Total	66.7	19.4	7.0	6.9	100.0

Source: World Values Survey, 1999–2001 wave.

attitudinal and resource factors discussed above, along with social capital in a multivariate analysis. Moreover, some analysis of contextual factors will help explain away national-level differences that are not explained by these socioeconomic, attitudinal, and social capital factors.

#### RESOURCES, VALUES, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND PARTICIPATION: A MULTIVARIATE MODEL

Since the political attitudes, socioeconomic resources, and dimensions of social capital discussed above are by no means unrelated to each other, I conducted a multiple regression analysis of the predictors of participation

to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship of political attitudes, social capital, socioeconomic resources, and contextual (institutional) factors to political participation. Because analysts of political participation have long recognized socioeconomic status variables to be strong predictors of participation, I incorporated the following variables into the model: age, gender, education level, and self-reported income.<sup>14</sup>

Under political attitudes, two questions asked in the WVS tap political engagement: one's self-professed interest in politics and one's assessment of the importance of politics. Greater political interest (coded dichotomously—those who have much or some interest in politics versus those who have little or no interest in politics) should be positively related to participation. A greater sense of the importance of politics (coded dichotomously as those who believe politics is somewhat or very important versus those who think it is not very important or not important at all) should likewise stimulate political participation. I incorporated two variables to capture fundamental political values: the ten-point left-right ideological scale (recoded as in table 2) and the WVS four-point materialism/postmaterialism index.

Social capital is tapped by three variables: the nonpolitical voluntarism index, social networking, and interpersonal trust. I coded the networking terms as dichotomous variables—whether one spends time weekly socializing with each category versus those who do so less frequently. Trust is similarly a dichotomous variable.

Because the dependent variable—the political activism index, truncated to four categories (no participation, one mode of activism, two modes, and three or more)—is an ordinal variable, ordinary least squares regression is inappropriate in this case. Thus I used an ordinal logit regression procedure to estimate two versions of the model, the first of which uses the nonpolitical voluntarism index as one of the social capital variables while the second version disaggregates that index into its component voluntary activities. Table 4 reports the results of those regression estimates. Since the logit regression coefficients are not intuitively interpretable, I also report the partial odds ratios for the independent variables (the natural anti-log of the estimated coefficients).

From table 4 we see that most of the expected relationships between the explanatory variables and the dependent variable, nonelectoral political activism, prove to be statistically significant (coefficients shown in bold are statistically significant at the .05 level). Among the resource variables, younger people (ages 15–29) participate less frequently than those in the prime adult years (30–49). Those who have only received primary education participate less frequently than those with secondary education, while

14. Because of measurement irregularities in two of the Latin American countries for the variable reporting the size of the city in which the respondent lives, I had to exclude that variable from the analysis.

those with higher education (at least some university education) participate even more often. Among the attitudinal variables, a sense that politics is important appears to encourage political activism, as does an interest in politics, a leftist ideology, and postmaterialist values.

Of the social capital variables about which we are particularly concerned in this study, interpersonal trust and nonpolitical activism show statistically significant positive relationships with nonelectoral political activism. The kind of networking associated with spending time frequently in social settings appears to be a less important contributor to political participation: only socializing with friends seems to encourage political activism. When nonpolitical voluntarism is disaggregated into the individual activities, all of those forms of unpaid nonpolitical work for social organizations, except volunteer work for sports and recreation organizations, prove to be statistically significant predictors of political activism. Of these, unpaid work for one's labor union, social welfare service agencies, and health organizations has the greatest impact of any voluntary labor on political participation. Of course, to some extent unpaid work for some organizations—particularly labor unions—may not be entirely voluntary and may not be entirely nonpolitical, which may explain the strong association between voluntary efforts for labor unions and political activism.

The implication of this multiple regression analysis is that social capital, especially in the forms of interpersonal trust and (nonpolitical) organizational involvement and volunteering, does promote political participation in Latin America, supporting Putnam's hypothesis. However, education and subjective political engagement, measured by levels of interest in politics and the sense that politics is important, also matter, maybe every bit as much as social capital. Because Latin Americans have moderate levels of organizational involvement and education by world standards, this converts to intermediate levels of political activity. Because trust proves to be a less powerful predictor of participation, Latin Americans' low levels of trust have less consequence for their political activity than would be the case if their organizational memberships were equally low, comparatively.

Many studies of political participation have concluded that different modes of participation may be explained by different variables (Asher, Richardson, and Weisberg 1984). Does the global model reported in table 4 explain the individual modes of participation subsumed in the political activism index? To assess whether the general model applies to specific forms of participation, I applied the independent variables used in the second model shown in table 4 in a series of binary logistic regressions, one for each of the forms of political activity summed in the political activism index. I show the results in table 5, with the forms of conventional and unconventional nonelectoral political activity reported in the first half of the table and the different modes of political voluntarism in

Table 4 Ordered Logit Regression Models to Predict Non-electoral Political Activism

<i>Explanatory variables</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>exp(B)</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>exp(B)</i>
<b><i>Resources</i></b>						
Male	-0.05	0.07	0.95	-0.03	0.08	0.97
Ages 15-29	<b>-0.51</b>	0.09	<b>0.60</b>	<b>-0.45</b>	0.09	<b>0.64</b>
Ages 50 and above	0.12	0.10	1.12	0.11	0.10	1.11
Primary education only	<b>-0.27</b>	0.11	<b>0.76</b>	<b>-0.26</b>	0.11	<b>0.77</b>
Higher education	<b>0.44</b>	0.09	<b>1.55</b>	<b>0.45</b>	0.10	<b>1.56</b>
Lower income	-0.09	0.09	0.92	-0.09	0.09	0.91
Upper income	0.04	0.09	1.04	0.05	0.09	1.05
<b><i>Attitudes</i></b>						
Interested in politics	<b>0.26</b>	0.08	<b>1.30</b>	<b>0.27</b>	0.08	<b>1.32</b>
Politics is important	<b>0.55</b>	0.08	<b>1.73</b>	<b>0.54</b>	0.08	<b>1.72</b>
Left ideology	<b>0.62</b>	0.10	<b>1.87</b>	<b>0.62</b>	0.10	<b>1.86</b>
Right ideology	0.08	0.09	1.08	0.08	0.09	1.08
Postmaterialist	<b>0.37</b>	0.12	<b>1.44</b>	<b>0.37</b>	0.12	<b>1.45</b>
Mixed postmaterialist/ materialist	0.19	0.10	1.20	<b>0.19</b>	0.10	<b>1.21</b>
<b><i>Social capital</i></b>						
People can be trusted	<b>0.33</b>	0.09	<b>1.39</b>	<b>0.30</b>	0.09	<b>1.36</b>

Table 4 (continued)

<i>Explanatory variables</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>exp(B)</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>exp(B)</i>
Networking—spend time weekly socializing with . . .						
Friends	<b>0.20</b>	0.08	<b>1.22</b>	<b>0.21</b>	0.08	<b>1.24</b>
Work colleagues	0.12	0.09	1.13	0.10	0.09	1.10
Church members	-0.17	0.09	0.85	-0.12	0.10	0.88
Club members	-0.04	0.11	0.96	-0.02	0.11	0.98
Volunteer for . . .						
Labor unions				<b>1.18</b>	0.21	<b>3.24</b>
Church				<b>0.36</b>	0.10	<b>1.43</b>
Cultural/educational groups				<b>0.62</b>	0.13	<b>1.86</b>
Professional association				<b>0.53</b>	0.23	<b>1.70</b>
Youth groups				<b>0.47</b>	0.17	<b>1.60</b>
Sport/recreation organizations				0.18	0.13	1.20
Health organizations				<b>1.00</b>	0.18	<b>2.71</b>
Social welfare organizations				<b>0.94</b>	0.16	<b>2.56</b>
Non-Political Voluntarism Index	<b>0.57</b>	0.04	<b>1.77</b>			
Chile	-0.13	0.11	0.88	-0.09	0.11	0.91
Mexico	<b>-0.67</b>	0.12	<b>0.51</b>	<b>-0.68</b>	0.12	<b>0.51</b>
Peru	-0.16	0.11	0.86	-0.15	0.11	0.86
N = 3392	$\chi^2=511.50$	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> =0.16	$\chi^2=542.16$	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> = 0.17		

Coefficients in **bold** are statistically significant at the .05 level. The constants have been omitted.

Table 5 Determinants of Participation in Distinct Modes of Participation in Four Latin American Nations

<i>Explanatory variables</i>	<i>Signed Petition</i>	<i>Joined Boycott</i>	<i>Lawful Demonstration</i>	<i>Occupy Building</i>	<i>Party Voluntarism</i>	<i>Local Political Activity</i>	<i>Human Rights Groups</i>	<i>Environmental Groups</i>	<i>Women's Groups</i>	<i>Peace Movement</i>	
<b><i>Resources</i></b>											
Male	1.05	0.97	1.14	1.06	1.24	<b>1.90</b>	0.72	<b>0.50</b>	<b>1.74</b>	<b>0.08</b>	0.85
Ages 15-29	<b>0.55</b>	0.70	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.49</b>	0.82	<b>0.62</b>	0.66	0.53	0.96	0.63	0.55
Ages 50 and above	1.13	1.23	1.10	1.01	0.69	0.96	1.34	1.54	1.02	0.93	0.60
Primary education only	<b>0.61</b>	0.93	0.81	1.14	1.77	0.84	1.28	0.83	0.67	1.33	1.82
Higher education	<b>1.86</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>2.54</b>	1.54	0.80	1.00	1.06	0.62	0.40
Lower income	0.89	0.90	0.96	0.75	<b>0.34</b>	1.22	0.92	1.88	0.69	1.08	<b>0.43</b>
Upper income	1.02	<b>1.65</b>	1.04	0.89	<b>0.55</b>	1.24	0.91	1.49	1.02	1.01	0.67
<b><i>Attitudes</i></b>											
Interested in politics	<b>1.59</b>	1.23	<b>2.08</b>	<b>2.03</b>	1.48	<b>4.57</b>	1.12	1.23	0.61	1.19	0.60
Politics is important	<b>1.27</b>	<b>1.63</b>	<b>1.35</b>	1.16	<b>1.63</b>	<b>1.70</b>	0.73	1.37	1.29	1.00	1.75
Left ideology	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>2.11</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>2.23</b>	1.25	<b>4.20</b>	1.08	1.47	<b>2.86</b>
Right ideology	0.99	1.43	0.85	0.96	1.19	1.20	1.16	1.88	0.93	1.26	<b>3.49</b>
Postmaterialist	1.16	1.33	<b>1.63</b>	<b>1.63</b>	<b>2.17</b>	1.23	1.52	1.29	2.03	0.89	2.43
Mixed postmaterialist/ materialist	1.10	1.05	1.26	0.98	0.89	0.94	1.03	1.04	1.31	1.02	1.22
<b><i>Social capital</i></b>											
People can be trusted	<b>1.35</b>	1.46	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.51</b>	<b>1.70</b>	1.20	0.72	0.62	1.16	0.73	0.97
Networking—spend time weekly socializing with . . .											



Table 5 (continued)

Friends	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.83</b>	0.97	0.94	1.39	0.98	1.11	1.64	1.32	0.72	0.89
Work colleagues	0.91	0.90	1.21	1.25	1.63	<b>1.61</b>	1.25	1.52	1.14	1.49	1.51
Church members	0.98	0.80	<b>0.71</b>	0.95	0.65	0.65	0.83	0.74	1.29	1.02	1.34
Club members	0.79	1.20	1.20	<b>1.54</b>	1.47	0.80	<b>1.59</b>	0.89	0.97	1.50	0.62
Volunteer for . . .											
Labor unions	0.94	1.12	1.25	1.10	0.89	<b>2.02</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>2.15</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>2.60</b>
Church	<b>1.78</b>	0.89	<b>1.40</b>	1.21	1.39	1.20	<b>1.98</b>	<b>4.98</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>2.72</b>
Cultural/educational groups	<b>1.60</b>	1.25	<b>3.36</b>	0.96	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>3.27</b>	0.97	1.98	1.87	1.84
Professional association	0.86	1.49	1.02	0.40	0.33	1.53	<b>3.31</b>	<b>5.53</b>	1.79	1.14	<b>4.30</b>
Youth groups	0.96	1.52	1.45	1.40	1.27	1.82	<b>2.16</b>	1.37	1.26	1.55	<b>3.55</b>
Sport/recreation organizations	1.04	0.92	0.93	1.14	0.56	1.70	1.50	2.15	1.21	<b>3.47</b>	2.06
Health organizations	1.32	1.45	1.11	1.18	1.77	<b>2.23</b>	<b>2.49</b>	<b>5.92</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>1.89</b>	<b>5.94</b>
Social welfare organizations	1.17	0.91	1.41	1.46	1.40	<b>3.07</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>2.54</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>3.13</b>
N	3679	3611	3719	3710	3699	3848	3848	3848	3848	3848	3848
$\chi^2$	290.97	149.23	372.22	191.30	137.85	229.34	221.64	175.58	130.30	285.21	208.21
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.12	0.13	0.17	0.14	0.18	0.23	0.20	0.35	0.16	0.27	0.36

Coefficients shown are the partial odds ratios— $\exp(B)$ —from binary logit regressions. Those in **bold** are statistically significant at the .05 level. Constants and country dummies have been omitted.

the second half. I report the partial odds ratios and indicate in bold the statistically significant variables.

For the five forms of conventional and unconventional political activity, a leftist political orientation was a strong predictor of each, and either political interest or a sense that politics is important was a significant indicator in all forms.<sup>15</sup> Interpersonal trust also proved to be a significant explanatory variable for all of these modes of participation except joining a boycott. The latter form of political activism relies much less on person-to-person cooperative behavior, of course, so this finding is not surprising. Postmaterialists were more likely to engage in the more confrontational of these five activities—attending a demonstration, participating in an illegal strike, and occupying a building—than materialists. Those with higher education tended to undertake all of these activities at greater rates than those of lower educational levels. Interestingly, voluntary work for nonpolitical organizations did not seem to affect respondents' likelihood of engaging in unconventional political activism, except that those who contributed unpaid work for church organizations were more likely to sign petitions and attend demonstrations while those volunteering in cultural and educational groups (which includes parent-school organizations like PTAs) also signed petitions, attended demonstrations, and even occupied buildings more frequently than those not offering their time to such organizations.

In contrast, voluntary work for political organizations is strongly associated with voluntary work for nonpolitical organizations. Except for political party work, the basic political values do not explain why people contribute voluntary labor in political activities (leftists do volunteer for human rights groups and the peace movement), nor do the basic socioeconomic and demographic variables consistently predict political voluntarism. However, some interesting and expected relationships do emerge: women volunteer more for women's and human rights (or development) organizations (odds ratios much less than 1.0) while men are more likely to volunteer for political parties and environmental groups (odds ratios well above 1.0).

A basic conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that those who are prone to join organizations and devote their time to collective endeavors will do so across many types of collective effort. Joiners and volunteers are joiners and volunteers. This seemingly trite point is important, though, because it indicates that where there are more joiners and volunteers, they will involve themselves in both political and nonpolitical activities. This, of course, is the crux of Putnam's hypothesis—to promote

15. When the logit regression coefficient is positive, the odds ratio is greater than 1.0. Negative or inverse relationships (where the regression coefficient is negative) produce odds ratios less than 1.0.

political participation, we should be advocating all forms of social capital formation, especially organizational membership and volunteer activities. This holds true in Latin America and for a wide variety of collective efforts in the region just as it does in other nations around the world.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

The models reported in table 4 mask country-by-country differences in the role of these explanatory variables in predicting political activity. Does social capital play the same role in promoting political participation in all of the Latin American countries included in this study? Table 6 would suggest not.

In table 6, the model from table 4 in which nonpolitical voluntarism has been disaggregated is applied to each of the four Latin American countries featured in this study. Two findings from the global Latin American model apply across all of the individual countries (or nearly so): political interest is a powerful predictor of a number of political activities in which an individual engages, and education is the consistent socioeconomic resource predictor of participation (except in the case of Chile). In Chile, in contrast, lower income is a significant predictor of *decreased* political activity, whereas it is not significant in the other three cases. From among the particular forms of organizational voluntarism, doing unpaid work for cultural and educational organizations predicts political activity more strongly and consistently across nations than any other type of nonpolitical voluntary activity, although voluntarism for labor unions and for organizations that provide social welfare services and health services predicts political activity in three of the four countries.

Interesting contextual differences surface from the analysis shown in table 6. For example, both Argentina's and Chile's profiles parallel what our hypotheses would lead us to expect in most ways: the better educated (Argentina) or those with higher incomes (Chile) participate more, those on the left participate more, postmaterialists are more active, and, of course, those who are more interested in politics are more politically active. That is, some of the main social, demographic, and attitudinal variables are statistically significant and the signs are in the hypothesized direction. The explanatory power of the models is also reasonably good—although better for Argentina than for Chile. The social capital variables provide additional explanatory power. The more trusting participate more and labor union and cultural/educational organization voluntarism matters in both societies. Thereafter, the impact on political activism of which social voluntary activities one engages in differs from country to country—volunteering in sports and recreation organizations matters much in Argentina, while for Chileans working with social welfare oriented organizations and those focused on youth

Table 6 Multivariate Model of Political Activism in Four Latin American Nations

<i>Explanatory Variables</i>	<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Chile</i>	<i>Mexico</i>	<i>Peru</i>
<b>Resources</b>				
Male	1.22	0.83	0.92	1.08
Ages 15-29	0.81	0.71	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.64</b>
Ages 50 and above	1.20	1.06	0.78	<b>1.34</b>
Primary education only	<b>0.44</b>	1.22	1.20	0.71
Higher education	<b>2.14</b>	1.04	<b>2.18</b>	<b>1.65</b>
Lower income	0.89	<b>0.64</b>	0.78	1.09
Upper income	0.98	1.11	0.89	1.15
<b>Attitudes</b>				
Interested in politics	<b>2.86</b>	<b>1.78</b>	<b>1.48</b>	<b>1.55</b>
Politics is important	1.22	1.24	1.14	<b>1.29</b>
Left ideology	<b>1.76</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>1.85</b>	1.24
Right ideology	0.82	1.26	1.39	1.02
Postmaterialist	<b>2.84</b>	<b>1.83</b>	0.82	1.00
Mixed postmaterialist/materialist	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.12</b>	0.94	1.19
<b>Social capital</b>				
People can be trusted	<b>2.27</b>	<b>1.74</b>	0.78	1.15
Networking—spend time weekly socializing with . . .				
Friends	1.12	<b>1.94</b>	1.23	0.93
Work colleagues	0.73	<b>1.82</b>	1.05	1.17
Church members	1.08	<b>0.46</b>	0.74	1.14
Club members	1.15	0.87	1.53	0.85
Volunteer for . . .				
Labor unions	<b>1.75</b>	<b>1.88</b>	<b>2.39</b>	0.98
Church	1.60	1.34	<b>3.53</b>	<b>1.82</b>
Cultural/educational groups	<b>16.16</b>	<b>4.52</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>2.53</b>
Professional association	1.02	1.64	<b>3.14</b>	1.61
Youth groups	0.64	<b>3.84</b>	1.29	1.45
Sport/recreation organizations	<b>4.47</b>	0.85	1.04	1.14
Health organizations	<b>2.81</b>	1.42	<b>3.02</b>	<b>3.58</b>
Social welfare organizations	1.25	3.19	2.79	2.40
N	743	846	680	1112
$\chi^2$	205.82	193.35	143.32	143.50
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.28	0.23	0.23	0.14

Coefficients shown are the partial odds ratios— $\exp(B)$ —from ordered logit regressions. Those in **bold** are statistically significant at the .05 level. Constants have been omitted.

seems to promote political participation. Also, for Chileans, spending time weekly with friends or work colleagues outside the work context promotes political activism, while spending time weekly with acquaintances from church dampens it.

In contrast, Mexico and Peru do not seem to match the standard profile so closely. The usual social and demographic variables do not predict political activity, except for education and age, with the young not participating as much as other age groups. Nor do the attitudinal variables other than political interest and the sense of the importance of politics (in the Peruvian case only) matter. In Mexico, associational voluntarism in almost all manner of nonpolitical organizations encourages political participation—all except youth groups and sports and recreation clubs. To some extent these associational memberships may have provided a counterweight to the official party (the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI) as a mobilizer of political participation in the 1990s. Voluntarism matters in Peru, too, but less so than in Mexico (fewer of the forms of associational voluntarism are significant, and the overall explanatory power of the model is lower).

Context seems to matter in predicting which Latin Americans will be more inclined to political activism. By the time of this wave of the WVS, both Chile and Argentina had experienced more than a decade of democratic politics—not necessarily a time of normalcy, but not a period in which citizens were being mobilized to counter dictatorship. In such a setting, the standard model of political participation seems to work better than in situations in which the population's attention has been focused on regime change, such as Mexico at the time during which this wave of the survey was administered (2000). In Mexico, the focus on bringing about change may well have promoted a variety of forms of associational activism, including political voluntarism.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis reported in this paper supports the argument made by Putnam and other scholars that social capital is an important factor in encouraging the higher levels of political participation that we generally associate with a richer, fuller democratic experience. In Latin America, interpersonal trust and organizational involvement outside the political sphere that involves voluntary contributions of time do push individuals to be more *politically active*. Voluntarism for many kinds of organizations is effective in promoting participation, with labor unions, arts/music/education associations, social service, and health-related organizations especially important in promoting political activity. The kind of networking that takes place when work colleagues, fellow parishioners, or sports and recreation club members meet *does not* seem to promote civic activism

in Latin America in ways that Putnam's arguments would suggest they should, however. Moreover, in global terms, Latin America has moderate levels of nonpolitical organizational involvement and voluntarism and low levels of interpersonal trust.

Many scholars and political activists have bemoaned the quality of Latin America's new democracies. Guillermo O'Donnell (1994) argued that democracy had become "delegative," as strong presidents have become largely unaccountable, ruling above parties and with little input from intermediary organizations. As Kurt Weyland (2004) has summarized the situation, weakened intermediary organizations—from political parties through interest groups to the range of political and nonpolitical associations discussed in this study—permit presidents to act as neopopulists, accountable only electorally and able to manipulate public policy and political structures to permit their continued exercise of power. One contributing factor to weakened intermediary organizations in the region is the impact of neoliberal economic reforms on communities. As Philip Mauceri (2003, 35) argues in a study of the Andean region,

Increased alienation and atomization make it more difficult to convince people that their interests are tied to others, inhibiting sustained collective action. As individuals seek personal gains or privileged access over social solidarity and civic engagement, the responsibilities of democratic citizenship are undermined. At the same time, political appeals to individual self-interest instead of to notions of the public good, lay the basis for demagoguery and scapegoating. . . . Reduced social capital tears apart and weakens civil society, and with fewer citizens engaged in civil society associations, democratization is ultimately threatened.

The evidence used in this article does not permit us to document the *decline* of social capital and intermediary organizations, but it does show that stocks of social capital and rate of political participation are now relatively low in Latin America. Thus, it contributes further evidence about the relatively low quality of democracy discussed by several authors in the past decade.

Mitchell Seligson (2005) has recently argued that most studies of social capital tend to take a society's stock of social capital as a given and then use social capital as an independent variable to explain a society's achievement (or lack thereof) of economic development. This article follows a parallel path in explaining nonelectoral political activism based on an individual's attributes, including his or her social capital (and other characteristics). The need, of course, is to promote social capital if we deem high quality democracies to be essential for Latin American political development. Fortunately, as Seligson shows in that same study, social capital can be built by paying close attention to development program design at the local level that stresses participation by the expected beneficiaries of the programs. Krishna's study of India (2002) leads us to similar conclusions.

Of course, changing organizational involvement (membership and voluntarism) is not a policy tool easily available to social scientists wishing to promote a more full democratic life in Latin America. Yet, by striving to create new community groups—even when devoted to nonpolitical purposes—and to involve the now uninvolved, community and organizational leaders will not only benefit their own organization but they also can begin to make impacts over the longer term on their societies' stocks of social capital. Democratic leaders at the national level must understand that the health of their democracies also depends on the ability of those community and organization leaders to create venues for participation and they should avoid preempting local action with central government action when the latter is not urgently needed. Changing levels of interpersonal trust is an even more difficult, maybe impossible, endeavor, since it goes to deeply held attitudes about the relationship of the individual to the rest of society. Our hope must be that a long period of stable democracy will build interpersonal trust and encourage the associational activism that we identify with social capital.

## WORKS CITED

- Asher, Herbert B., Bradley M. Richardson, and Herbert F. Weisberg  
1984 *Political Participation*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Bensen, Michelle, and Thomas R. Rochon  
2004 "Interpersonal Trust and the Magnitude of Protest: A Micro and Macro Level Approach." *Comparative Political Studies* 37 (4): 435–57 (May).
- Booth, John A., and Patricia Bayer Richard  
1998 "Civil Society, Political Capital, and Democratization in Central America." *Journal of Politics* 60 (3): 780–800 (August).
- Booth, John A., and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds.  
1978 *Political Participation in Latin America, vol. 1: Citizen and State*. New York: Holmes and Meier.
- Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman  
1995 "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 89 (2): 271–94 (June).
- Chalmers, Douglas, et al., eds.  
1997 *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America: Rethinking Participation and Representation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Craig, Ann L., and Joe Foweraker, eds.  
1990 *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Escobar, Arturo, and Sonia E. Alvarez, eds.  
1992 *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, And Democracy*. Boulder: Westview.
- Inglehart, Ronald  
1997 *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald, et al.  
2002 *World Values Surveys and European Values Surveys, 1999–2001* [computer file], ICPSR version. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research [producer].
- Krishna, Anirudh  
2002 "Enhancing Political Participation in Democracies: What is the Role of Social Capital?" *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 427–60.

- Mauceri, Philip  
 2003 "Globalization, Social Capital and Democracy: The Andean Region In Comparative Perspective." Paper prepared for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, August 28–August 31.
- McDonough, Peter, Doh C. Shin, and José Alvaro Moisés  
 1998 "Democratization and Participation: Comparing Spain, Brazil, and Korea." *Journal of Politics* 60 (4): 919–53 (November).
- Nie, Norman H., G. Bingham Powell, and Kenneth Prewitt  
 1969 "Social Structure and Political Participation: Developmental Relationships." *American Political Science Review* 63: 361–78, 808–32.
- Norris, Pippa  
 2002 *Democratic Phoenix: Political Activism Worldwide*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo A.  
 1994 "Delegative Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 5 (1) (January): 55–69.
- Pattie, Charles, Patrick Seyd, and Paul Whitely  
 2003 "Citizenship and Civic Engagement: Attitudes and Behavior in Britain." *Political Studies* 51: 443–68.
- Power, Timothy J., and Mary A. Clark  
 2001 "Does Trust Matter? Interpersonal Trust and Democratic Values in Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico." In *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Roderic Ai Camp. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press.
- Putnam, Robert D.  
 1993 *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.  
 1995 "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28 (4) (December).  
 2000 *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Putnam, Robert D., ed.  
 2002 *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seligson, Amber  
 1999 "Civic Association and Democratic Participation in Central America: A Test of the Putnam Thesis." *Comparative Political Studies* 32 (3): 342–62 (May).
- Seligson, Mitchell A.  
 2005 "Can Social Capital be Constructed? Decentralization and Social Capital Formation in Latin America." In *Developing Cultures: Essays on Cultural Change*, edited by Lawrence Harrison and Jerome Kegan. New York: Routledge.
- Seligson, Mitchell A., and John A. Booth  
 1979 *Political Participation in Latin America, vol. 2: Politics and the Poor*. New York: Holmes and Meier.
- Skocpol, Theda, and Morris P. Fiorina, eds.  
 1999 *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Washington: Brookings.
- Teorell, Jan  
 2003 "Linking Social Capital to Political Participation: Voluntary Associations and Networks of Recruitment in Sweden." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 26: 49–66.
- Verba, Sidney, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-On Kim  
 1978 *Participation and Political Equality: A Cross-National Comparison*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry E. Brady, and Norman H. Nie  
 1993 "Race, Ethnicity and Political Resources: Participation in the United States." *British Journal of Political Science* 23: 453–97.
- Weyland, Kurt  
 2004 "Neoliberalism and Democracy in Latin America: A Mixed Record." *Latin American Politics and Society* 46 (1): 135–34 (Winter).