Untangling Social Capital in Latin American Democracies

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Civil society and social capital moved to the center stage of social science research during the 1990s. Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000) in particular stimulated interest in these ideas among both scholars[1] and the popular media. He contended that civil society, or participation in organizations, creates social capital that helps develop and maintain democracy. As Rotberg (2001:1) states the argument: "Societies work best, and have always worked best, where citizens trust their fellow citizens, work cooperatively with them for common goals, and thus share a civic culture. Moreover, Gibson (2001: 51) finds a consensus that "civil society seems to be an essential condition for successful democratization."

Such claims raise the question of how civil society and social capital affect Latin America's developing and relatively young democracies. Does civic engagement contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the region? Might social capital and its component civil society contribute to a habituation of its citizens to democratic institutions, practices and attitudes – in short, to democracy's entrenchment in national political culture and behavior (Rustow 1970; Diamond 1999)? If social capital contributes to the development and survival of democracy, it would have special importance in newly formed democracies.

Much empirical research on social capital (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Inglehart 1997:203-205; Putnam 1993, 2000; Knack 2002;) has been conducted in established democracies (the United States and Western European countries), although new or re-emerging democracies (Eastern

[1]See, for instance, Booth and Richard (1998a, 1998b), Cox, Rosenbluth, and Theis (1998), Eastis (1998), Edwards and Foley (1996, 1997, 1998), Field 2003, Fine and Rai (1997), Fiorina (1999), Foley (1996), Foley and Edwards (1997, 1998), Gibson (2001), Grew (2001), Inglehart (1997), Kaase (1999), Knack (2002), Lin 2001, Muller and Seligson (1994), Paxton (1999), Portes (1998), Richard and Booth (2000), Rosenband (2001), Mishler and Rose (1999) Rotberg (2001a, 2001b), Skocpol and Fiorina (1999a, 1999b), Stolle and Rochon (1998), Tarrow (1996), Varshney (2001), Warr (1999), Wuthnow (1999).

Europe, Russia, and newly independent countries once part of the former Soviet Union, e.g. Gibson 2001; Mishler and Rose 1997; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998) have been the focus of some studies. Scholars have paid less attention to social capital in Latin America, and existing studies have usually examined the macropolitical level of social movements and resistance to repressive governments rather than on the micropolitical or individual level (e.g., Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998; Foley 1996; Foley and Edwards 1996). We begin to address this lacuna by exploring how micro-level social capital (involvement in civil society and community networks) might matter for the prospects for democracy in Latin America.

Discussion

Influential though they have been, recent arguments about civil society and social capital have also raised important questions. Field 2003, Lin 2001, Skocpol and Fiorina 1999b, McLean, Schultz, and Steger 2002, for example, have found the social capital literature theoretically muddled, and unclear even as to what constitutes social capital itself. Others find an excessively optimistic view of the effects of citizen involvement in organizations.[2] Critics further aver that social capital theory leaves unclear whether social trust is a form of social capital or is a byproduct of it. Finally, some argue that the theory fails to consider whether social capital might be the product of macro-level contextual and institutional factors rather than a principal factor shaping institutions.

In short, taken together these claims suggest that the social capital literature presents more of a cluster of concepts than a clearly specified model. We review these concerns, and suggest that a conceptualization of the social capital model built around the idea of **political capital**, which we believe provides the critical linkage between social capital as usually conceptualized and the political system. We test our model using an eight-nation public opinion data set from Latin America.

Social capital. Pierre Bourdieu, the founder of social capital theory, defined the phenomenon as a capital of social relationships: "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu 1985: 248). He argued that through organizational involvement and other webs of human contact, social capital (as distinct from human capital, cultural capital, or financial capital) could benefit individuals and social systems by facilitating cooperation. Building on Bourdieu, James S. Coleman defined social capital as "the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization" (1994: 300), and as "norms, the social networks, and the relationships" (1990: 334) that "facilitate certain actions of individuals" (1994:302). Coleman thus significantly broadened the definition, adding civil society *organizations* and other durable connections among individuals) social trust and perhaps other attitudes (Field 2003:25). Putnam drew upon Coleman and defined social capital to include

[2]For critiques of the generalized optimism about civil society in this approach, grounded especially in civil society theory's roots in de Tocqueville and elsewhere, see Cohen and Arato (1992), Foley and Edwards (1997) and Fine (1997).

"networks, *norms and trust* [emphasis added]… that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (1996: 56). Higher levels of social capital, especially higher levels of citizen engagement in civil society and interpersonal trust, Putnam contended, contribute to higher levels of economic development and better government performance (Putnam 1993, 2000).

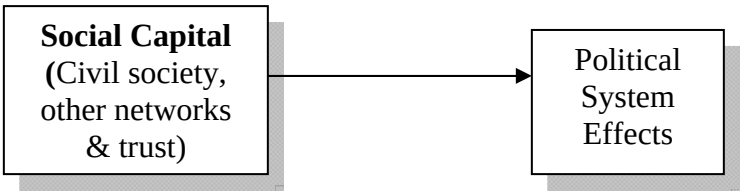
Problems with the concept of social capital. Field (2003: 38-40) identifies two significant problems: a lack of theoretical precision and circular causal reasoning about the complex micro-macro linkages between social capital and enhanced social well-being and political performance; and a romanticizing of social capital as a sociopolitical cure-all with unrequited benefits. Others have argued that social capital may be more of an effect of the sociopolitical context than its cause (Tarrow 1996, Booth and Richard 1998a, Maloney, Smith and Stokes 2001, Rose 2001, Alex-Assensoh 2002, Jackman and Miller 2005). We share these concerns and will discuss them in greater detail in order to propose a clearer conceptualization of a social capital model that avoids some of these difficulties.

First, theoretical vagueness about *what social capital is and what the relationships are among social capital, civil society, and social trust?* The three influential definitions cited above agree that social capital consists of individuals' formal and informal connections with each other (in non-governmental organizations, networks, families, clans, for example) and, at the aggregate level, the level and nature of organizational life and such networks within a society. Thus social capital includes, at a minimum, formal non-state organizations (generally equated with *civil society*), and informal networks and connections. Depending on which definition of social capital one uses, social trust and other attitudes may also fall within the social capital rubric. Figure 1-A illustrates a basic model of social capital and its political effects that may be derived from the literature. Social capital, consisting of civil society engagement, networks and trust, has effects on political systems.

When one focuses on social trust, clarity diminishes. Trust may be a part of social capital (Coleman and Putnam) or not (Bourdieu). Stolle (1998) demonstrated that membership in voluntary associations increases levels of trust among their members, a finding that supports the argument that trust is distinct from social capital, which is a concept rooted primarily in interpersonal linkages and is therefore more usefully conceptualized as a product of social capital (Field 2003 62-65; Lin 2001: 148-149; Rose 1999; Woolcock 2001).

Figure 1-B illustrates the social capital model with trust separate from social capital. In this conceptualization of social capital, more attuned to Bordieu's definition, trust is a product of social capital and serves as an intervening variable between social capital and its assumed system-level effects. Social capital, especially civil society, retains a direct influence upon the political system by means not spelled out.

A



B

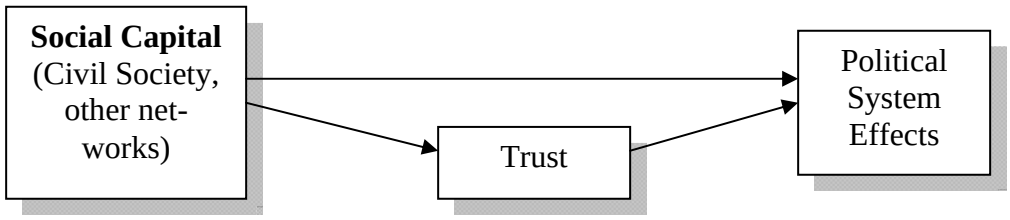


Figure 1. Alternative models of social capital's effects on political systems

Toward a clearer conceptualization. Given the theoretical vagueness of the social capital model and its under-emphasis of political phenomena, we clarify the model by proposing a set of several *specifically political variables* -- *political capital* -- that can link citizens to or orient them toward the political system (Booth and Richard 1998a, 1998b; Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; Gibson 2001; Booth 2008). We begin by accepting the broadly conceived vision of social capital (of Putnam and Coleman) as including social connections, trust and other norms that might affect cooperation. In order to more effectively spell out social capital's potential to shape government performance and the institutional rules of the political game, we contend that one must explore additional attitudes and behaviors that come between social capital and the political system and affect the political system more directly. These linkage mechanisms that affect or impinge upon the polity we call "**political capital.**" (see Figure 2)

Political capital consists of citizen attitudes and behaviors that influence or constrain the political system, the state, incumbents in government, social groups, and citizens. Voting, campaigning, and contacting officials may hold elected representatives and bureaucrats accountable through elections and demand making. System support (trust in institutions) may reduce the cost of enforcing public policy, maintaining order, and collecting taxes. Democratic norms of support for participation rights, tolerance, and support for civil liberties may promote civic virtue by setting limits on the behavior of government and encouraging attention to the collective good. Support for or involvement in protest may convey ignored demands to inattentive rulers or even serve as an alternative means to oust unsatisfactory leaders. Political capital affects the political system by influencing citizens' compliance with the law, cooperation with governmental institutions, and participation politically within or outside of officially sanctioned channels.

Political capital may arise from aspects of social capital such as organizational involvement and trust. For example, when a mother becomes involved in a parent-teacher organization in pursuit of better school facilities for her own children, this may lead her to contact a legislator or ministry official demanding reallocation of resources, or to vote for a political candidate who promises improved education. A trusting citizen might be more likely to hold democratic norms and to support national institutions. Political capital may also arise from the political, economic, or institutional context. (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987, 1992; Cohen and Dawson 1993; Alex-Assensoh 2002; Crothers 2002).

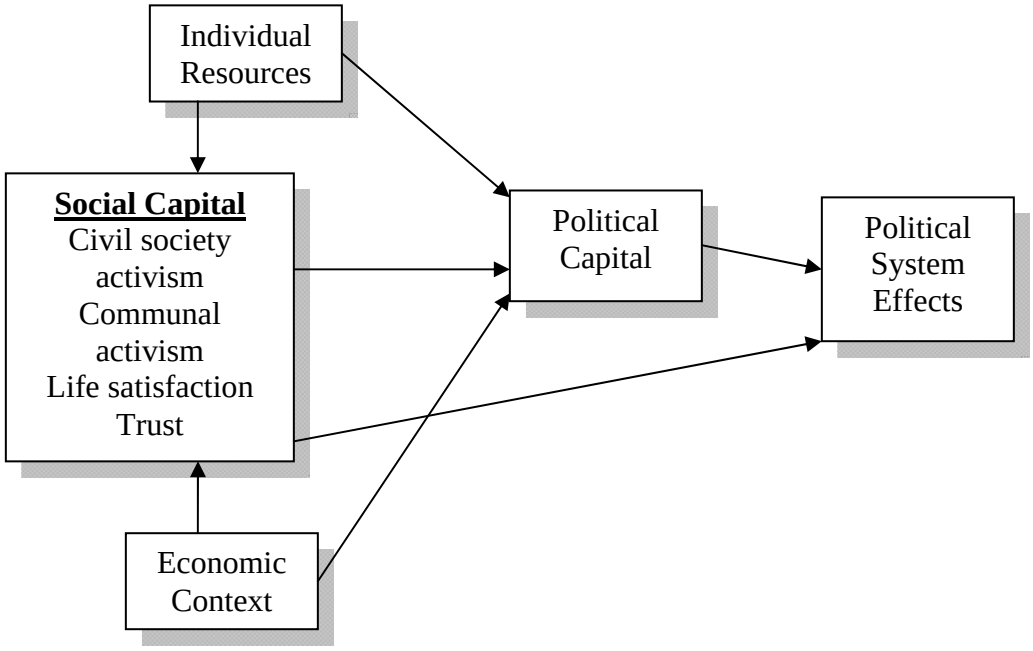


Figure 2. A Model of Social Capital, Political Capital, and Political System Effects

Social capital theory does not clearly spell out how citizens holding higher levels of social trust or participating in organizations might directly affect government and politics. In contrast, how such effects on government might occur is evident with the intervening political capital variables – political participation and attitudes supportive of or opposed to democracy, political institutions and the regime. Without claiming that these exhaust the potential behaviors and attitudes that impinge upon the state and polity, we analyze seven political capital variables that we believe affect the state and its performance – voting, partisan activism, campaign participation, protest, support for democracy, support for political institutions, and support for confrontational political tactics. We believe that adding political capital to the model specification as intervening variables between social capital and effects on the political system has greater potential utility than social capital alone in explaining the micro-level effects of civil society upon the polity.

We also consider a set of variables constituting individual resources (education, sex, age, and standard of living), and several contextual factors that may influence political capital. A structuralist-institutionalist critique of civil society marshals evidence that political institutions and socioeconomic conditions have more effect on social capital than do organizations. Tarrow (1996criticizes Putnam's study of Italy, argueing that social context probably had greater influence on social capital than the reverse. As Boix and Posner (1998:689) put it, "whether or not co-operation takes root will depend on the pre-existing set of social and political relations in the community and on the degree of inequality and polarization suffered by society – issues that are almost invisible … in most theoretical accounts of evolution of social cooperation." Jackman and Miller (2005) present extensive evidence that the institutional features of societies shape political culture artifacts rather than theopposite. A number of studies give evidence of the power of context over social capital formation, whether conceptualizing social capital at the collective or the individual level.

Comparing 27 nations, Muller and Seligson (1994) demonstrate that the national level of democracy contributed more strongly to one aspect of social capital formation, citizens' levels of interpersonal trust, than trust contributed to the level of democracy. Indeed, lengthy periods of repression or authoritarian rule produce persistent antidemocratic norms among citizens of new democracies (Booth and Richard 1996; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998; Shin 1999). Levels of regime repression, formal democracy, and economic development influence both levels of civil society activism and political capital, including political participation and political attitudes in Central America and adjacent Latin American nations (Booth and Richard 1998a, 1998b; Booth and Seligson 2009). We therefore hypothesize that the sociopolitical context can also shape political capital and include both individual resources and sociopolitical context in our model. We examine their effects on political capital formation.

We thus propose to clarify the social capital model by specifying the relationships that we believe prevail for which Figure 2 above lays out a simplified scheme. We test mainly the micropolitical portions of our model – that is, the effect of social capital, context, and sociodemographic characteristics on political capital. However, we also return to the macropolitical

to show that for our eight nations levels of political capital appear to have more impact on regime dynamics than social capital.

The Latin American Cases and Data Set

As noted, much empirical research on social capital has been conducted in established democracies (the United States and Western European countries) and in some new or re-emerging democracies (Eastern Europe, Russia, and newly independent countries once part of the former Soviet Union). We build upon the findings of this body of research by examining social capital formation using 2004 survey data from eight Latin American nations, seven of which are emerging or young democracies. The Latin American cases are interesting because they offer the opportunity to examine political capital in incipient democracies, rather than established ones. The links between context, social capital and political capital in regimes just making their way as democracies may shed critical light on the mechanisms by which democracies operate and consolidate.

The Latin American cases. At the time of our surveys in 2004, all eight countries had formally democratic civilian governments. As recently as the early 1980s, however, seven of them had undemocratic governments, and four were snarled in horrific civil wars. Honduras democratized by military liberalization in the 1980s, and subsequently held multiple elections with peaceful transfers of power. In Panama massive electoral fraud and an uprising in 1989 prompted the U.S. invasion that toppled the Noriega regime and installed in power a civilian government. Nicaragua's Sandinista revolution and the contra war ended definitively with the 1990 election, ushering in a series turnovers of presidential power to opposition parties. In the 1990s El Salvador and Guatemala emerged from civil wars and protracted military rule through peace accords that put in place formal electoral democracies. Mexico accomplished a transition to electoral democracy after electoral reforms of the late 1990s allowed its congress (in 1997) and the presidency (in 2000) to pass from the control of the Institutional Revolutionary Party after seven decades of one-party rule. Colombia, still struggling with a leftist insurgency and a powerful rightist paramilitary movement, nevertheless has held competitive elections since the 1980s.

By 2004 five of these countries had experienced at least one (and some several) national elections in which ruling power passed peacefully from an incumbent ruler to a victorious electoral opponent. There were two notable exceptions: In El Salvador the National Republican Alliance continued to dominate the presidency. Mexico had had only had only its first democratic presidential election by the time of our survey. In contrast to these seven nations so marked by political turmoil and authoritarian rule, Costa Rica's stable democratic regime provided a valuable, well-established contrast to these newer democracies. Having democratized in the early 1950s, Costa Rica was Latin America's oldest continuously democratic government.

The eight nations' political and economic circumstances also varied sharply, as indicated in Table 1. Their 2003 gross domestic products (GDP) per capita in purchasing power parity ranged from Honduras' $2,665 to Costa Rica's $9,606 and Mexico's $9,168. In terms of the dynamics of economic performance over time from 1984 to 2003 – the two decades prior to the survey -- Panama had exceeded all the others with a 69 percent increase in GDP per capita. Colombia and

Costa Rica followed with 29 and 20 percent improvements. The worst performers economically were the virtually economically stagnant Honduras (-2 percent) and Guatemala (-3 percent). Nicaragua's economy experienced a decline of 37 percent during those two decades. One would reasonably expect such economic performance differences to affect citizens' personal socioeconomic conditions, and their reactions to them in the form of social and political capital.

Table 1 also indicates something of the political situations and dynamics of the eight countries at the time of the study. A democracy index constructed from the combined Freedom House's civil liberties and political liberties measures, with a scoring range of zero (lowest) to 12 (highest), allows instructive comparisons. Colombia and Guatemala rated as the weakest democracies in 2003 (each scored 6) while Costa Rica and Panama scored 11 of a possible 12. Colombia and Guatemala's low scores owe mainly to ongoing political violence from continuing civil war (Colombia) and dismal internal security performances (both). As an indicator of the dynamics of the nature of the regimes in the recent past, Table 1 presents the Polity IV democracy/autocracy index from 2003, and the net change in the Polity IV from 1993 to 2003 for these eight nations. Costa Rica had the least change (conserving its highest possible polity score of 10 points) while El Salvador changed the most (13 points) by moving from – 6 to a positive 7. Mexico changed from a score of zero to positive 8 on the Polity IV scale. Again, we expect that such political system performance variation will affect citizens' social and political capital.

Table 1. The Political-Economic Context of Eight Latin American Countries

Country	GDP/capita 2003 (PPP in US $)	Percent Change in GDP/capita 1984-2003	Freedom House Democracy Index (2003)	Polity IV Democ. Level 2003, (change 93-'03)
Mexico	9,168	15	10	8 (8)
Guatemala	4,148	-3	6	8 (5)
El Salvador	4,781	10	9	7 (13)
Honduras	2,665	-2	8	7 (1)
Nicaragua	3,262	-37	8	8 (2)
Costa Rica	9,606	20	11	10 (0)
Panama	6,854	69	11	9 (1)
Colombia	6,702	29	6	8 (-2)

Sources: Freedom House (2004), Heston, Summers and Aten (2006), Marshall and Jaggers (2003).

With respect to civil society, our survey data allow us to calculate a mean number of civil society group memberships per respondent in a total of four types – church-related, school-related, community improvement, and professional. The national means for membership in these organizations range from a low of 1.15 (Salvadorans) to 1.84 (Hondurans).

The data. We base our empirical analysis on surveys conducted in 2004 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project consisting of national samples of citizens of the eight nations. These surveys collected cross-nationally comparable data on a broad array of attributes, including civil society activism and identical social capital and political capital items for all countries.[3]

The variables. The terms "social capital" and "civil society" have often been poorly defined, leading to confusion in the research on these phenomena (Boix and Posner 1998, Knack 2002, Portes 1998, Paxton 1999:89). We confine ourselves here to **social capital** as manifested at the individual level, and define it as does Putnam: "networks, norms and trust …that enable participants act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (1996: 56). We interpret this definition to include civil society -- citizen involvement in formal organizations and in other social networks. We have in our dataset several variables that capture the civil society aspect of social capital. We asked respondents the frequency of their involvement in four types of voluntary associations – church-related groups, school-related groups, community groups, and professional associations. We assume that the higher the frequency of participation in an organization's functions, the greater will be the socializing and the likelihood of shaping political capital. We also simply count the number of group memberships in these four organizations within which a respondent reports activity, and employ this number as a proxy measure for the overall level of civil society engagement. (See the Appendix for details on the variables and index construction.)

A second form of social capital is communal activism. Our survey asked whether respondents had been involved in trying to solve a communal problem, and if so what sorts of participation they had within it – donation of time, money, materials, labor or an effort to build an organization to address the problem (see the Appendix for index construction details). We view this as a surrogate for networking, and indeed it may even be superior to measurement of merely having contacts or links to others because it involves activity designed to solve community problems.

Two additional social capital variables are interpersonal trust and life satisfaction, which Inglehart (1997) and others claim may shape engagement with and attitudes toward the state. (See the Appendix for details.)

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[3] The 2004 survey data were collected by Latin American Public Opinion Project teams from six Central American countries, Colombia, and Mexico in April 2004. Mitchell A. Seligson of Vanderbilt University led the project, which the U.S. Agency for International Development funded. In each country a stratified (by socioeconomic level) cluster sample of dwelling units was drawn from the sample frame of national sampling units. Interviewees were chosen using randomizing procedures and following sex and age quotas. The results closely approximate national probability samples of at least 1,500 respondents from each nation, for a total of 12,403 respondents. In the data reported here each national sample size is weighted to 1,500 respondents, for a total sample of 12,000. Respondents were of voting age and citizens of the country in which the interviews were conducted. The authors sincerely thank LAPOP for these data.

We have argued above that **political capital** provides the critical linkage between social capital and the political system by leading citizens to comply with the law, cooperate with governmental institutions, and participate politically within or outside of officially sanctioned channels. Voting, campaigning, contacting officials, and protest may hold elected representatives and bureaucrats accountable through elections and directly or indirectly convey citizens' demands. Support for political institutions may reduce the cost of operating the state by augmenting compliance with policy. Democratic norms may promote civic virtue by setting limits on the behavior of government and encouraging attention to the collective good. Support for confrontational political tactics indicates citizens' approval for demonstrating, blocking public thoroughfares, and occupying property and public buildings. (See the Appendix.)

We also include five measures of the sociopolitical context (Table 1): National gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in 2003 indicates overall national economic performance per head. The change in GDP per capita between 1984 and 2003 provides a measure of the direction and rate of economic growth. We use a measure of the history of democracy as compiled by Vanhanen (1997) to capture past institutional and cultural experience that might have shaped contemporary political capital. It consists of his mean annual index of democracy from 1900 to 1989. In order to capture the recent political dynamics of regime change that have affected several of our sampled countries, we have calculated the change in the Polity IV democracy/ autocracy score for each country between 1993 and 2003. Because there are concerns about using national-level contextual variables in OLS regression analysis, we take two steps to avoid some of these problems. First we have examined these four national-level context variables for multicollinearity and find none (the highest bivariate correlation between any two is .59). Second, we conduct an additional analysis of context by substituting national-level fixed effects (country dummies) for these context measures to determine whether this alters the findings.

The fifth context variable is measured not at the national but at the individual level. It is an ordinal measure for the **size** of the community of residence of each respondent. Because of their concentration of public agencies and better infrastructures, larger cities generally have more of certain resources for participation (information, communications media, accessibility of officials) than small towns or rural areas. In contrast, in smaller communities the proximity of one's neighbors and smaller populations might advantage interpersonal knowledge and networks.

Finally we include four sociodemographic variables that reflect individual resources and that are known to be related to both social and political capital: sex, age, standard of living, and education. Age-squared is also included to capture a widely reported fall-off of political participation among older persons. These measures of the individual respondent's position within society will allow us to control for important effects that might shape political capital.

Analysis

We analyze these data on using ordinary least squares multiple regression techniques. Table 2 presents the basic analysis of our model, assessing the impact of social capital, context, and

individual resources on seven political capital variables. (Statistically significant relationships in the table are indicated by table boxes shaded in grey.)

Social capital's effects. Models 1 through 7 show that social capital in the form of involvement in organizations (civil society) enhances all four political participation variables. Communal activism (working with neighbors on common problems) significantly increases partisan and campaign activism, protest, and especially contacting public officials. Communal networking for problem solving, then, influences citizens to engage the political system in electioneering, expressing demands and protesting to call attention to unresolved concerns. Both associative types of social capital also slightly increase support for confrontational political tactics, but neither enhance support for democracy or for national political institutions. In sum, formal and informal networks, as predicted, mobilize civic engagement, but neither strengthen democratic values institutional support as predicted by social capital theory.

Models 1 to 7 also reveal that interpersonal trust has mixed and mainly weak effects on political capital. Other influences held equal, trust has no significant effect on voting, party and campaign activism, protest, or support for confrontational tactics, and its impact on contacting public officials is weakly negative. Trust contributes positively, though weakly, to democratic norms. In contrast, trust contributes strongly to support for national political institutions. Citizens of our eight Latin American nations did not vote, campaign or protest based on higher trust. Indeed a lack of trust, rather than its presence, contributed to contacting officials. This suggests that interpersonal trust's potential contribution to democratic consolidation in Latin America, if any, likely derives building support for national political institutions.

Life satisfaction demobilized participation while enhancing system support. Those who are more content with their lives campaign less, contact officials less, and protest less than the more dissatisfied. In contrast, the life-satisfied citizen opposes confrontational political tactics and expresses greater satisfaction with national institutions. Governments able to foster a generalized contentment among their citizens, we surmise, may enjoy a modest reservoir of popular support for national institutions that could improve their prospects for survival.

Not all of these political capital effectsare the "civility-enhancing" ones sometimes assumed by social capital theorists. Mobilization through diverse types of organizations boosted protest and demonstration participation as well as support for protest and confrontational tactics. These Latin American democracies in 2004 had much less of the systematic violent repression of participation than prevailed in them in previous decades. Under these new circumstances of relative freedom, their citizens had thus embraced not only within-channels political methods like voting and campaigning for candidates, but also demonstrating and protesting about public issues.

Table 2. Social Capital and Contextual Effects on Political Capital (coefficients are betas; significant coefficients in greytone shaded cells).							
Model number	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Variables	**Voting**	**Party-campaign activism**	**Contact public officals**	**Protest**	**Support confr. tactics**	**Demo-cratic norms**	**Support political instits.**
Civil society activism	.059	.145	.141	.096	.034	.008	.014
Communal activism	.015	.135	.229	.090	.021	.013	.019
Interpersonal trust	.000	-.011	-.023	-.018	.006	.023	.130
Life Satisfaction	.003	-.024	-.029	-.034	-.047	-.037	.045
Size of community	-.040	-.039	-.065	.057	.036	.002	-.090
GDP/cap. PPP 2003	.042	-.067	.093	-.011	-.004	-.062	.185
GDP Growth 1979-2003	-.067	.055	-.069	.007	.084	.068	-.016
History of demo-cracy 1900-1989	.012	.059	.023	.015	-.136	.187	.035
Change in demo-cracy 1983-2003	-.027	-.011	.050	-.047	-.058	.082	-.034
Sex	-.027	-.080	-.027	-.055	.001	-.043	.039
Age	1.354	.074	.197	-.080	-.531	-.060	-.209
Age squared	-1.093	-.042	-.152	.115	.400	.075	.197
Education	.169	.105	.080	.174	-.096	.128	-.084
Standard of living	.008	-.005	-.037	-.030	-.056	.023	.009
R-square	.140	.082	.119	.065	.046	.053	.081
F	133.41	73.92	111.79	55.46	39.99	45.28	74.08
Model significance	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	11,531	11,584	11,564	11,259	11,419	11,447	11,584

We have shown elsewhere, analyzing similar data collected in the mid 1990s in the six Central American countries included here, that different types of civil society groups had somewhat differing effects on political capital formation (Richard and Booth 2000; Booth and Richard 1998b, 2006). In order to evaluate these differential effects here, we performed a separate analysis (not shown to conserve space) operationalizing the social-political capital model differently. In it we tested for the four individual group activism variables instead of the total number of group memberships as in the models in Table 2. This analysis revealed that church-related groups affected political capital the least, with only one significant positive association for contacting public officials. School-related groups mobilized voting, party-campaign activity, and contacting, but not

protest. Professional group activism mobilized voting, contacting and protest, but not partisan-campaign engagement. Finally, community group engagement enhanced both support for confrontational tactics and support for national institutions.

Contextual effects. An important critique of the social capital model is that it often fails to consider the extent to which the politico-economic context might itself affect how social capital functions. We control for this possibility by including in our model five controls for context.

Table 2 reveals that the size of one's community of residence has a marked impact on political capital. The larger the community of residence, the lower are voting, campaigning, contacting, and support for national institutions. The bigger one's city or town, the higher is a citizen's likelihood of protesting and supporting confrontational political behavior. In these eight Latin American nations, then, smaller and more intimate communities contribute to higher levels of within-system mobilization and institutional support, while larger cities contribute to protest and support for confrontation. This pattern holds true whether controlling for the other system traits (as in Table 2), or alternatively specifying national fixed effects as dummy variables (a separate analysis not shown). Some have regarded Latin America's rural areas and peasant populations as potential sources of unrest, but what we find here suggests quite the opposite. Smaller and more intimate settings appear to nurture more 'positive" political capital, but larger and less intimate cities engender more protest and less support for institutions.

Economic performance can shape political phenomena, so we examine in Table 2 how GDP per capita in 2003 affects political capital. The coefficients indicate that the richer the country, the more our Latin American citizens vote, contact public functionaries, and support national political institutions. Somewhat paradoxically, greater national prosperity corresponds with less party-campaign activism and lower democratic norms. Cognizant that there is suspicion that using context-level variables might artificially increase the amount of variance explained, we reanalyzed the data substituting fixed effects in the form of national-level dummy variables for the four context-variables in the models in Table 2 (not shown to conserve space). Costa Rica, the region's most stable and oldest democracy provided the excluded reference category. Without going into an extended analysis, we found that the net impact of context variables measured either as national fixed effects (dummy variables) or as the political and economic context measures made little difference in the overall variance explained, giving us confidence that the models in Table 2 do not exaggerate contextual effects.

Economic dynamics over time (change in GDP per capita from 1979 to 2003) tend to work differently than current level of GDP per capita. Other factors controlled, countries with less economic growth have higher voting and contacting levels. Better long-term economic performance corresponds with more support for confrontational political methods, democratic norms, and party and campaign activism.

Testing for the assumption that the long-run political context can subtly shape the way citizens engage in politics and their attitudes, we find that, compared to citizens of countries with less democratic experience from 1900 to 1989, those in countries with greater prior democratic experience support their national institutions more, campaign more, oppose confrontational tactics more, and report much higher commitment to democratic norms. In terms of the recent regime

dynamics, an increase in the amount of democracy from 1983 to 2003 corresponded with lower voting, institutional support, protest, and support for confrontational tactics. Other factors controlled, citizens of countries that had increased their Polity IV democracy scores the most between 1993 and 2003 (Mexico +8, El Salvador +13, and Guatemala +5) contacted public officials more and had higher democratic norms.

Sociodemographic effects. Table 2 shows that, other factors controlled, women participate less (especially in campaigning-party work) and support democratic norms slightly less than men, while also supporting national institutions slightly more. Consistent with research in many nations, older Latin Americans tend to be politically more active than younger ones, and greatly so in voting. But older citizens support confrontational political methods much less than younger ones. The negatively signed age-squared term reveals a significant and very strong decline in voting among older voters, and also a decline their contacting officials. Interestingly, with other factors held constant, older citizens report increases in protest participation, support for confrontation, and support for political institutions. Having more education strongly increases basic democratic norms and all four types of participation political capital -- especially voting and protesting. Yet greater education reduces support for confrontational political methods as well as support for institutions. It is worth emphasizing that more formal education elevates democratic norms while apparently undermining support for national institutions. This suggests that the greater information levels available to those with more education contribute to dissatisfaction with national institutional quality. Finally, paradoxically, one's standard of living has little effect on political capital. The wealthy are somewhat less confrontation-supporting and less likely to protest. This seems reasonable given the prospects that political turmoil might threaten their well-being. Finally, it struck us as counter-intuitive that those who are materially better off engage in significantly less, not more, contacting of officials. One might have imagined that having more at stake would lead to greater engagement with officials in order to protect one's assets. On the other hand, it may be that the poor have far greater need for public largesse, while the wealthy have both fewer needs and more surrogates (lobbyists) to convey their concerns to public officials, thus relieving them of the need to contact them personally.

Social and political capital and the political system. The last step of our model suggests that not only should social capital affect the political system at the macro-level, but also that political capital likely affects it even more by intervening between social capital and the political system. Thus we investigate whether social and political capital factors contributed to improving system-level democracy by examining relationships between the interval-level micro-social variables we measured in 2004 and a macro-social measure of change in political system democracy between 2004 and 2007.

For this analysis we develop a measure of democracy that combines both Freedom House and Polity IV scores into a single system-level democracy score for the years 2004 and 2007. Differencing these two values provides a national measure of *change in democracy 2004-20*07 after our surveys captured the baseline social and political capital in each country. If social and political capital indeed matter for political systems, we should find evidence of their effects on the systems during the years after our surveys. We find the change in democracy 2004-2007 ranges from -.25

for Mexico and Panama, +.25 for El Salvador, +.5 for Costa Rica, +1.25 for Guatemala, to +1.5 for Colombia, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Of these cases, Costa Rica and Panama had little room to improve their already high democracy scores of 9.5.of 10 Mexico was at 8.0 . In contrast, the higher democracy improvement scores came in four nations with more room for improvement (at an average of 5.75 out of 10):[4]

We expected to find several things. First, based on our argument, we anticipated that social capital would have less clearly defined effects on system-level change than political capital. Second, we believed that greater life satisfaction (a demobilizer of participation), higher democratic norms, and greater support for regime institutions would stabilize rather than change system traits, especially in more democratic countries. Finally, we thought that civil society activism, political participation and attitudes favoring political confrontation would evince tangible pressures upon regimes to change in the direction of democracy.

Analysis of variance and comparing means provide a test for relationships between nominal and interval-level variables Thus we sorted the eight countries into two groups based on their amount of change in democracy scores from 2004 to 2007. Those with lower scores (-.25 to +.50) included Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica and El Salvador. The countries with the greater change toward democracy (+1.25 to +1.50) were Colombia, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Table 3 compares the mean scores of the two groups on social and political capital variables, and summarizes the results of an analysis of variance between the two groups and their scores with a significance statistic based this analysis .

Table 3 confirms nearly all of our expectations. First, social capital has mixed effects on change toward democracy: communal activism and interpersonal trust have no association; higher civil society activism has a decided association with change toward more democracy; life satisfaction is higher in the countries with less movement toward democracy. This supports our prediction that citizens holding greater life satisfaction would tend to stabilize a regime – or at least put little pressure on it to change -- while citizens taking part in organizations might help push a political system toward greater democracy.

Table 3 shows that five of the seven political capital variables are significantly linked to movement toward democracy. Higher democratic norms and support for institutions occur in countries that changed the least toward democracy (which are also those with already higher national democracy scores). Thus these political capital variables appear to stabilize or help consolidate those systems rather than change them, as does greater life satisfaction. In contrast, more party-campaign activism, more protesting, and more support for confrontational tactics are present in the countries with the greater change toward democracy. These behaviors and attitudes, along with civil society activism, appear to have pushed these four countries in the direction of greater democracy. Voting, however, runs contrary to our expectation. Since voting is highly structured, encouraged by the state, and present in even weak democracies, it may exert little

4 Indeed, confirming that the relationship between democracy level and improvement in democracy is negative, we find a correlation of -.55 between the level of democracy in 2007 and the change of democracy 2004 to 2007.

pressure for improved system democracy. Contacting public functionaries shows no significant difference between lesser and greater democratizing countries.

We regard this exploratory test of the influences of social and political capital on democracy with caution and view it as more suggestive than probative about political capital's effects on political systems, given the limitations of the statistics, the sample of only eight countries, and the modest three-year time lapse between the micro-level and macro-level measurements. Nevertheless, the findings largely conform to our expectations. Political capital's effects -- pushing countries toward more democracy and consolidating their regimes at higher levels of democracy -- are stronger than social capital's and function mostly as we expected. Higher democratic norms and support for institutions appear likely to be consolidating factors for regime type. Election-related activism, protest and support for protest associate with greater movement toward democracy, indicating that they exert the very sort of pressure we anticipated for political capital.

Table 3. Analysis of variance of change toward system-level democracy 2004-2007and social and political capital.

Variables	Low (-.25 to .50) Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador	High (1,25 to 1.5) Colombia Nicaragua Honduras Guatemala	Signficance (analysis of variance)
SOCIAL CAPITAL			
Communal participation	21.45	22.62	N.S.
Civil society activism	1.28	1.67	.000
Interpersonal trust	.43	.43	N.S.
Life Satisfaction	3.31	3.25	.000
POLITICAL CAPITAL			
Voting	84.71	79.38	.000
Partisan - campaign activism	11.70	12.90	.001
Contacting public officials	16.65	15.98	N.S.
Protest	11.41	14.01	.000
Support confrontational tactics	2.58	2.80	.000
Democratic norms	6.92	6.51	.000
Support regime institutions	53.97	47.57	.000

Conclusions

Political capital, we have argued, is the mechanism that conveys demands to government and shapes the attitudinal constraints within which a regime must operate. We believe it supplies a missing link between social capital and political system effects.

We find that social capital as manifest in activity in formal organizations, community networking, interpersonal trust, and life satisfaction indeed have measurable effects on political capital. In these nations, civil society activism and communal problem-solving networking revealed far greater effects on political capital than did trust.

In our eight-nation Latin American context, social trust had relatively few of the virtuous civic effects attributed to it. Other than enhancing institutional support, trust had little influence on political capital. In contrast, Latin Americans' connections to others, whether in formal organizations or collective problem solving, bolstered their political capital. This finding vindicates Bordieu's conception of social capital as inhering to social networks and contacts and, at least for this set of nations, undermines Coleman and Putnam's heavy emphasis on interpersonal trust as the critical element of social capital. In this region where the rule of law is often weak, consumer protection flawed, corruption fairly high, and democratic institutions still young, little trust has developed among citizens. In contrast, social capital in the form of cooperative contacts with others in organizations and community activism constitutes the predominant means of mobilizing both behavioral and attitudinal political capital.

Two types of political capital – protest participation and support for confrontational political tactics – are potentially disruptive of political order. This recalls the caution advanced by some critics of social capital theory that not all social capital products are "positive" or enhance political civility. It is also true that by protesting citizens may provoke unresponsive governments to address their demands , and, among our respondents, protesters hold democratic values. We have indeed shown that protesting and supporting confrontation, like campaign-related activism, actually appear to help move countries toward improving their democratic performance.

The social context also shapes political capital. The most notable contextual effect is that living in smaller and less urban communities contributes to political engagement and greater institutional support. Thus rural areas, small towns and smaller cities emerge, by and large, as a reservoir of positive political capital in Latin America, while bigger cities appear to breed antagonism toward institutions, protest, and increased political incivility. The long-term trend of urbanization may bode ill for positive political capital formation and regime support unless regime performance better meets urbanites' needs

Other contextual effects are present in the results. A long history of greater system-level democracy contributes to micro-level democratic norms, support for national institutions, and disapproval of confrontation. Thus prior experience with democracy contributes to democratic consolidation because it builds loyalty to democratic rules of the game and democratic institutions. Now that all the countries in our study have formal democracy this effect on each should steadily grow. Higher levels of economic performance (GDP per capita) also associate strongly with institutional support among our eight nations.

Finally, our exploratory analysis of the relative importance of micro-level social capital versus political capital for contributing to system-level regime characteristics suggests that political capital indeed behaves as we have argued. It intervenes between social capital and the political system, and affects the polity both more and more directly. Higher democratic norms and support for institutions appear likely to help consolidate already-democratic regimes. Election-related activism, protesting and support for protest, in contrast, promote more rapid movement toward democracy among less-democratic countries. In both cases, these political capital variables exert the very sort of pressure we anticipated.

We believe our findings vindicate our efforts to spell out a model by which social capital affects political systems. We have shown that in eight Latin American nations social capital – and especially communal networking and civil society engagement -- affects political capital in ways that convey messages to government about what citizens expect and demand , about the political tools they are willing to use in their conversation with government, and their support for national political institutions. We believe such messages have clear implications for the prospects for the consolidation of democracy in the region. Democratic rules of the game allow civil society to flourish. As citizens in these countries work together, free of the high levels of institutional repression that once plagued so many of them, they vote, campaign, and protest to convey their demands to governments. Popular democratic norms develop and consolidate, and public institutional support grows.

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Appendix: Variables Used in the Analysis

Social Capital Variables	
Number of civil society group memberships	Respondent's total number of memberships reported in four types of organizations: church-related group, school-related group, communal group, or professional association.
Church-related group	Respondent's reported frequency of attendance at meetings: never=0, once or twice a year = 1, once or twice a month = 2, once a week = 3, mean = 1.58; standard deviation = 1.34.
School-related Group	Respondent's reported frequency of attendance at meetings: never=0, once or twice a year = 1, once or twice a month = 2, once a week = 3; mean = 2.15; standard deviation = .99.
Communal group	Respondent's reported frequency of attendance at meetings: never=0, once or twice a year = 1, once or twice a month = 2, once a week = 3; mean = .2.46; standard deviation = .90.
Professional association	Respondent's reported frequency of attendance at meetings: never=0, once or twice a year = 1, once or twice a month = 2, once a week = 3; mean = 2.78; standard deviation = .639.
Communal col-laboration	Index based on involvement in collective problem solving activity, including contributing time, labor, funds or material and work to establish an organization to solve a community problem; index range 0-1; mean = .22; std. dev. = 34.
Interpersonal trust	Index that combines level of agreement/disagreement about trustworthiness of people in general (0=not at all…3 very), that people worry mainly about themselves instead trying to help others (0=help selves, 3=help others), and that people would take advantage of one if given the opportunity (0=would take advantage, 3 = would not take advantage), range = 0 - 3; mean = 1.30; standard deviation = .93.
Life Satisfaction	"How satisfied would you say you are with your life?" 0 = very unsatisfied, 1 = somewhat unsatisfied, 2 = somewhat satisfied, 3 = very satisfied. Mean = 3.28; std dev = .77.
Politico-Economic Context Variables	
GDP per capita in 2003 in purchasing power parity	Each case assigned the estimated national GDP per capita for respondent's nation for 2003.
GDP per capita change 1989-2004	Each case is assigned the net percentage points of change in GDP per capita between 1989 and 2004.

Democracy level in 2004 (Freedom House)	Each case assigned the democracy index score for 2004 for respondent's nation calculated by combining Freedom House scores on civil liberties and political rights. The two scores are added together and their polarity reversed so that the highest score of 12 represents the highest combined level of civil and political liberties, and the lowest score of zero represents the lowest.
Change in Polity IV level of democracy/ autocracy 1993-'03	Polity IV democracy/autocracy score for 2003 is differenced from that for 1993. Each case is assigned the value of the difference for his/her country.
Size of community	Size of the respondent's community: 0 = rural area, 1= small city, 2 = medium sized city, 3 = large city, 4 = national capital city or metropolitan area.
Socioeconomic Status Variables	
Sex	Male =1 (48 percent), Female =2 (52 percent).
Age	Respondent's age in years; mean = 38.45; standard deviation = 15.73.
Living Standard	Index of respondent living standard based upon household possession of various artifacts including numbers of color and television sets, refrigerator, telephone, automobiles, computers, motorcycle, and washing machine (range 0-14); mean = 4.94; standard deviation =3.35
Education	Total years of formal education completed; mean = 7.65; standard deviation = 4.76.
Political Capital Variables	
Voting	Index: Measure constructed from two items, being registered to vote (no = 0, yes = 1), and having voted in last national election (no = 0, yes = 1), range 0-2; mean = 1.64; standard deviation=.61.
Campaigning- party activism	Index: Measure constructed from two items, having attempted to persuade another person how to vote (no = 0, yes = 1), and having worked for a political party or candidate during an election campaign (no = 0, yes = 1), range = 0-2; mean = .25; standard deviation = .41.
Contacting public officials	Index of contacting public officials, including legislative deputy, government office, or municipal official (for each no=0, yes=1), range 0-3; mean = .49; standard deviation = .72.
Protest	"Have you participated in a demonstration or public protest?" 0 = never; 1= rarely; 2 = a few times; mean = .25; standard deviation =.63.
Support for national institutions	Index of trust in national institutions, constructed from responses on eight items (courts are fair, respect for political institutions in general, basic rights well protected, proud to be a citizen of the country, one should support the system, trust in national electoral

	office, trust in the legislature, trust in the government. Each respondent chose response ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high); index value is mean for all items (range 1-7); mean = 4.25; standard deviation = 1.50.
Democratic norms	Index of support for democratic norms includes four items incorporating respondent support for general participatory rights for all citizens (range 1 to 10.0); mean = 6.78; standard deviation =1.84.
Support for confron-tational political methods	Index of support for civil disobedience and protest behavior (3 items, range 0 to10.0); mean = 2.69; standard deviation = 1.91.