

CIVIL SOCIETY, POLITICAL CAPITAL, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

IN CENTRAL AMERICA

by

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Prepared for presentation at the XXI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997.

Abstract

Robert Putnam argues that civil society -- citizen activity in organizations -- contributes to successful governance and democracy, which may be very important in the peaceful reconstruction of Central America. Putnam does not, however, specify in detail how civil society might shape government performance. We spell out how citizens' participation in groups might impinge upon the state through both political participation and democratic norms. We consider Putnam's category of "social capital" and add to it new "political capital" variables. We first explore the relationships among two civil society measures (formal group activism and community self help activism) and social and political capital, employing survey data from six Central American countries. We then investigate the effects of civil society and social and political capital upon levels of democracy in Central America. We find that while higher levels of formal group membership and several political capital measures are associated with higher levels of democracy, social capital does not have the relationship Putnam predicts. We conclude that political rather than social capital links formal group activism to democracy in Central America.

Civil Society, Political Capital, and Democratization in Central America

Robert Putnam draws from de Tocqueville to argue that civil society -- citizen participation in formal organizations -- influences the success of democracy. In his study of Italy (1993), he observes that regions with higher levels of associational activity also have greater social capital and thus, he claims, more successful regional governments. He draws from Coleman (1988) to argue that membership in groups creates "social capital," or "networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1995:67). In this very influential 1995 piece Putnam uses the metaphor of "bowling alone" to express his concern that a decline of formal associational activity (such as bowling in leagues) erodes social capital and may thus be undermining democracy in the United States.

We concur with Putnam that civil society may contribute to democratization by mediating between citizen and state, conveying citizens' interests to government, constraining government behavior by stimulating citizen activism, and inculcating democratic values. Indeed, many scholars have similarly argued that citizen involvement in organizations contributes directly or indirectly to political participation (Nagel 1987, Conway 1991,) (Verba and Nie 1972, Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), democratic values (Booth and Richard 1996), democratization (Bratton, 1986, Cohen and Rogers 1992, Diamond 1992, Blaney and Pasha 1993, Blair 1994), and economic development (Esman and Uphoff 1984, Hirschman 1984 Clark 1991, Carroll 1992). Assuming, therefore, that civil society may affect the process of democratization in developing areas, and that it may be particularly important in areas emerging from violent political conflict, we test some of these ideas with data from six Central American nations.

Theory

Putnam's ideas, though much cited and praised, have also provoked a growing body of criticism. Foley and Edwards (1997) contend that Putnam misinterprets de Tocqueville, who believed that civil society not only reinforced civility but also generated political conflict. Foley and Edwards posit two opposed effects of civil society: their "civil society I" corresponds to Putnam's view, holding that associational life and the habits it inspires "foster patterns of civility in the actions of citizens" (1996:39). In contrast, their "civil society II" sees some group actions as "capable... of energizing resistance to a tyrannical regime" (1996:39). Thus, citizens' group participation can contribute to both social comity and discord.

Tarrow (1996) also takes issue with Putnam, faulting him for errors in historical inference and interpretation of Italian history. In particular, Tarrow suggests that Putnam has the causal sequence backwards -- rather than civil society shaping government performance, as Putnam contends, the state (and such institutions as political parties) has the capacity to stimulate high levels of organizational activity. Tarrow faults Putnam for paying too little attention to how the sociopolitical context may shape civil society.

Foley and Edwards (1996:44-47) focus on freedom of association as a critical aspect of

political context that has particular resonance in Central America, where repression has been intense in some countries for much of their histories, and particularly so in recent decades. For instance, Foley (1996) contends that political repression in El Salvador in the 1970s forced associational activity into the conflictive, antityrannical mode (civil society II).¹ Indeed, we would extend this argument further still, proposing “civil society III” (or, perhaps better still, “uncivil society”), a violent and confrontational but not necessarily antityrannical form of associational activism. Examples include the Ku Klux Klan and some of the militias in the the United States, and the numerous ideological extremist groups, paramilitaries, and death squads of Central America in recent decades.²

We have an additional concern about the inadequate explication of the civil society equation suggested by Putnam. We have argued elsewhere (Booth and Richard 1997) that Putnam fails to specify how civil society impinges upon government. He holds that citizens' participation in groups gives rise to networks of civic interaction. These networks "pervasively influence public life" insofar as they "facilitate coordination and communication," reduce incentives for opportunism, and enhance "the participants' 'taste' for collective benefits" (Putnam 1995:67). However, not only are these connections obscure or murky in their interrelationships, they do not actually reach governmental institutions or their decisions. Putnam never elucidates how group involvement affects citizen behavior or attitudes so as to influence government performance or enhance the prospects for democracy.

We thus seek to clarify and then test how associational activity might affect the relationship of citizens to the state. In contemporary Central America, with its civil wars now formally ended, it is of paramount importance to determine which type of civil society (civility building, antityrannical, or repressive -- types I, II, or III, respectively) may be present and what its effects may be. We contend that, in order to have political significance, associational activism must foster attitudes and behaviors that actually influence regimes in some way.³ We label such state-impinging attitudes and activities "political capital." Of what would such political capital consist? For civil society I (the civility reinforcing sort Putnam praises) rather than the conflict generating types II or III, political capital should include attitudes supportive of democracy (democratic norms), and behavior that would engage citizens with the state and each other in channeled, orderly ways. Both seem likely to influence government performance: democratic attitudes limit or motivate regime actions; citizen participation conveys interests, preferences, and demands to the regime (Booth and Richard 1997).

We test here the relationships between civil society and the development of both social capital (derived from Putnam), and political capital, and between all of the former and democracy, using contemporary data from six Central American countries. First we examine the extent to which associational activity contributes to two measures of social capital (interpersonal trust and political information) and to four measures of political capital (democratic norms, voting, campaign activism, and contacting public officials). Second we test for relationships between citizens' civil society activism, their social and political capital, and levels of democracy in Central America.

Hypotheses

This discussion suggests five basic hypotheses. H_1 and H_2 state the anticipated positive relationships between civil society and social and political capital. H_3 - H_5 present the expected effects of civil society, social capital, and political capital upon national levels of democracy.

H_1 : Higher levels of civil society activism will contribute to higher levels of social capital formation.

H_2 : Higher levels of civil society activism will contribute to higher levels of political capital formation.

H_3 : Higher levels of civil society will associate with higher levels of regime democracy.

H_4 : Higher levels of social capital will associate with higher levels of regime democracy.

H_5 : Higher levels of political capital will associate with higher levels of regime democracy.

Central America

Contemporary Central America provides an ideal setting in which to explore the links among civil society, the formation of political and social capital, and levels of democracy. The region experienced dramatic economic growth that began in the 1960s, faltered with the oil price shock of the mid 1970s, and ended catastrophically in the late 1970s with the civil wars and depression of the 1980s. Turmoil was widespread. A Marxist led movement overthrew Nicaragua's Somoza dynasty and implemented a revolutionary transformation of the polity and society. Lengthy national rebellions by Marxist revolutionaries in Guatemala and El Salvador were eventually settled in the late 1980s and early 1990s after tens of thousands of deaths. The United States invaded Panama in 1989 to oust dictator Manuel Noriega. This violence and political turbulence has subsided in the 1990s as all the region's nations have implemented formal democracy (Bulmer-Thomas 1987; Seligson and Booth 1995, Booth and Walker 1993, Williams 1994).

This record of protracted political tumult and the recency of the region's return to political stability and civilian, constitutional rule makes it particularly appropriate for the study of links between civil society and political and social capital, as well as the links between all three and democracy. There is considerable similarity among Central American nations in many regards,⁴ yet great variation among them in their recent levels of both turmoil, repression, and democracy. They thus provide an ideal most similar systems setting in which to examine civil society. This suggests several key questions: What is the status of civil society in Central American nations? Do organizations through their influence upon citizens contribute to the formation of social capital or political capital? Does civil society promote democratization by contributing to increased political civility in the form of interpersonal trust, democratic norms, or political participation? Does political repression affect civil society, the formation of social and political capital, or democratization?

Data

To test these hypotheses we analyze public opinion surveys conducted in the early 1990s among comparable cross sections of the urban citizens of six nations -- Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.⁵ Items included in the surveys investigated political participation, political attitudes and values, and democratic values. The participation and democratic values items have been widely validated and field tested in various cultural settings (Booth and Seligson 1984; Muller et al. 1987; Seligson and Gómez 1989; Seligson and Booth 1993).

Civil society measures. Responses to questions concerning activity in several types of organizations provided the basis for our indices of civil society (see notes to Table 1). Factor analysis of variables measuring citizens' participation in groups and associations detected two distinctive civil society activity modes. We label the first formal group activism (it includes membership in unions, civic associations, cooperatives, and professional groups). We call the second communal activism (it involves self-help groups and activities at the local level). Table 1 displays the average civil society activity level for the urban populations of our six Central American countries. The results reveal marked differences among the nations in the levels of formal group activism, and lesser differences in communal activism.

Social capital measures. We were able to operationalize two of the indicators of social capital suggested by Putnam, each developed from multiple items. They are a measure of political knowledge or information and a measure of interpersonal trust (see Table 1 for details on item construction). Means for the social capital variables appear in Table 1; they reveal substantial variation among nations.

Political capital measures. We have developed four political capital variables: The first is a measure of citizen commitment to democratic norms. It incorporates the two main approaches to measuring democratic political culture. The approach based upon the civic culture and polyarchy literature taps respondents' willingness to extend participation rights to others. The approach based upon political tolerance considers respondents' willingness to grant political rights to disliked groups. Fourteen items from the two approaches have been combined into an overall democratic norms measure.⁶ Table 1 reports the mean scores by country for democratic norms. All six nations' citizens average in the prodemocracy end of the scale.

The remaining three political capital variables measure citizens' participation in politics. A factor analysis of eight separate items identified three citizen activity factors,⁷ each of which we have converted into an index: voting behavior, campaign activism, and contacting various types of public officials (see Table 1 for details on index construction).

Contextual and demographic measures. Because certain demographic traits of citizens are known to influence their behavior and attitudes and thus affect the relationships we are examining, we employ measures of respondents' living standard, education, and sex as control variables. Furthermore, given Foley and Edwards' and Tarrow's admonitions about the importance of context upon the formation of civil society, we employ two measures to permit us to assess the impact of sociopolitical context. The first is the national level of economic development, measured as GDP per capita. Our second contextual measure treats repression as a systemic constraint upon individuals at the polity level. It includes two equally weighted

components: one measuring repression at the time of the survey, and another the history of repression in the decade before the survey. The resulting measure (the mean of the two) provides a repression score for each country that we assign to each respondent by nation of residence.⁸

Analysis⁹

We employ multiple regression techniques to test H_1 and H_2 , which predict that higher levels of civil society activism (both in formal groups and at the communal level) raise respondents' levels of social and political capital. Table 2 examines these questions, leaving aside for the moment possible demographic and contextual influences upon these relationships.

For social capital, the results in Table 2 show that the formal group activism measure contributes significantly and positively to political information (beta = .253) and interpersonal trust (beta = .054). Communal level activism, on the other hand, contributes negatively to political information (-.097), but positively to interpersonal trust (.059). The negative beta for communalism's contribution to political information suggests that national-level political knowledge, as we measure it, may have no relevance for community self-help activism. The overall explanatory power of civil society for political information levels is fairly strong (R^2 of .25), or a quarter of its variance. In contrast, civil society activism accounts for very little of the variance (less than 1 percent) of interpersonal trust.¹⁰ These first results provide some support for Putnam's theoretical argument concerning civil society and social capital as applied to urban Central America. Three of four beta coefficients behave as predicted by H_3 .

Turning to the political capital variables, Table 2 reveals that the formal group activism civil society measure behaves as hypothesized -- the beta coefficients are positive and significant for democratic norms and each of the participation variables. The results for communal activism are mixed. Participation in communal activism contributes to lower (rather than higher) levels of democratic norms and campaign activism, has no significant association with voting, and contributes positively to contacting public officials.

The results so far only modestly support Putnam's theory and our extension of it that civil society activism will increase levels of social and political capital. Formal group activism positively correlates with all six social and political capital variables, tending to confirm both H_1 and H_2 . Communal civil society activity, in contrast, increases political and social capital as measured here only for interpersonal trust and contacting. It depresses levels of democratic norms, campaigning, and political information. This raises the intriguing possibility that communal level civil society activism -- which is more prevalent in Central America's more repressive nations -- is generating some of what Foley and Edwards call Civil Society II, the more confrontational variety, and attendant (alienated) political capital. We consider below whether the communalists of more repressive nations, pursuing their goals by working through local groups, are indeed less engaged in elections and campaigns and less prone to support democracy.

So far we have reported on civil society-social/political capital without taking into account how various demographic traits of respondents and national contexts might affect these relationships. Characteristics such as sex, education, and living standard almost certainly affect group behavior, political participation, and attitudes to some degree. Two contextual effects,

levels of economic development and political repression, may also be very important in Central America (Booth and Richard, 1996).

Table 3 provides evidence about civil society activity's impact upon social and political capital, controlling for key demographic and contextual variables. The regression findings clearly indicate the importance of evaluating the intervening impact of contextual and demographic variables. One of the contextual variables, level of repression, depresses both social capital variables (information and trust) and sharply reduces all four political capital variables (democratic norms, voting, contacting, and campaigning). This strongly suggests that political context shapes civil society and the formation of social and political capital.

On the other hand, while we expected one of the other context variables, GDP per capita, to correlate positively with social and political capital, Table 3 demonstrates that it does not. When other factors are controlled, lower levels of political information, democratic norms, and campaigning in Central American nations are associated with higher economic development levels.¹¹

Demographic factors have mixed effects. Table 3 indicates that, although sex does not affect interpersonal trust, women have significantly less political information than men (even controlling for education and living standards) and lower levels of political capital. Educational attainment and standards of living tend to enhance social and political capital. The former positively affects political information levels and three of four political capital variables. The latter positively affects both social capital variables, as well as voting and campaigning.

Turning to the independent effect of the civil society variables in Table 3, other factors controlled, we see that group activism retains a positive effect on political information, although much weaker than shown in Table 2. In contrast, group activism's independent effect upon interpersonal trust disappears entirely in Table 3. Communal activism's significantly negative effect on political information (Table 2) becomes insignificant in Table 3. In contrast, communalism's positive impact upon interpersonal trust increases slightly with demographic and contextual influences controlled.

The independent effect of group activism upon political capital, controlling for context and demographics, changes little. The positive independent association of group activism with each of the political capital variables remains, albeit with betas somewhat diminished by the controls introduced. Communal activism's apparently negative links to political capital (Table 2) have vanished with the introduction of demographic and contextual controls (Table 3). Communalism now reveals a direct, positive link to voting and contacting as predicted by H_2 , and the significant, negative betas for democratic norms and campaigning have disappeared.

In sum, Table 3 provides further and more convincing evidence to support positive links between Central Americans' civil society activity and both Putnam's social capital variables (H_1) and our political capital variables (H_2). Controlling for demographics, repression, and development levels, group activism increases political information levels but not interpersonal trust, while communal activism does just the opposite. Group activism independently boosts all four political capital variables, and communalism increases two of four -- voting and contacting. Civil society activism's effects on political capital thus appear somewhat more robust and consistent than upon its effects on social capital.

The regression results in Table 3 support our argument in H₂ that civil society activism through participation in community organizations augments political capital. The independent variables in Table 3 account for between 7.9 percent (voting) and 15.2 percent (campaigning) of the variation of the political capital variables. The independent and powerfully depressing effect of repression upon social and political capital also stands out sharply. This finding underlines the importance of considering relevant political contextual factors, like repression, when evaluating civil society comparatively, especially in situations of rapid political change. This makes sense because repression's purpose is to curtail citizen activity, organization, and demands upon government. Repression thus directly affects the likelihood that citizens will form or join associations and their further development of social and political capital.

We turn now to H₃-H₅, which predict positive associations between levels of civil society, social and political capital and levels of democracy. Here we address Putnam's contention that civil society, acting through social capital, contributes to democracy in the Central American milieu. We have added to the social capital argument by identifying political capital variables (democratic norms and political participation impinging upon the state) that we posit promote higher levels of democracy.

We employ Vanhanen's (1990:32-35) index of democracy to group the Central American countries by level of democracy. This index combines measures of voter turnout and the competitiveness of national elections and yields scores that indicate three distinct levels of democracy among the six nations (see Table 4 for details). We consequently assign El Salvador and Guatemala to the lower level, Panama and Nicaragua to the intermediate level, and Costa Rica and Honduras to the higher level of democracy groups.¹²

We employ differences of means and analysis of variance to test the hypothesized relationships between civil society, social and political capital, and systemic democracy. Table 4 presents the mean levels of each group of variables by levels of democracy in Central America.¹³ Because systemic repression and certain demographic traits influence the civil society and social and political capital variables, controls for systemic repression, sex, living standard, and education were introduced into an analysis of variance between the independent variables and the dependent variable, level of democracy.

Table 4 demonstrates that higher levels of formal group activism associate positively and significantly with higher levels of democracy, partially validating H₃. However, the connection between communal level civil society activity and democracy is in the reverse of the hypothesized direction, though not statistically significant.

The social capital variables relate in a complex fashion to democracy levels. While higher means of both political information and interpersonal trust are found in the higher-level democracy countries than in the lowest-level democracy countries, both peak in the intermediate-level democracy countries. The analyses of variance reveal these differences to be statistically significant, but the means in Table 4 do not perform as expected (thus not fully confirming H₄'s prediction that social capital serves as the mediating mechanism between civil society activity and democracy.)

As regards the political capital-democracy link predicted in H₅, Table 4 strongly confirms our expectations. Progressively higher levels of all three participation variables associate significantly with successively higher democracy levels. Democratic norms are sharply lower in

the lower-level democracies than in the intermediate- and higher-level democracies (whose citizens share virtually identical levels of democratic norms). Political capital variables -- attitudes favoring democracy and citizen behavior that engages the state through elections and contacting -- thus appear directly and positively related to levels of democracy in Central America.

In sum, we have found evidence that higher levels of citizen activity in formal associations contribute directly to higher levels of democracy in Central America, even controlling for political repression and individual characteristics. However, no similar direct effect occurs through citizens' engagement in community level groups. The analysis strongly suggests that political capital variables may indeed play the role we predicted, that of mediating between civil society activism and democracy. Putnam's social capital variables appear to have a less clear and probably nonlinear relationship to levels of political democracy, although in general terms the citizens of intermediate and higher level democracy countries have higher mean levels of social capital than those of the less-democratic countries.

Conclusions

Our findings confirm that among urban Central Americans, civil society activism helps form both social and political capital. The apparent anomalous finding that communal level civil society activity actually lowered electoral involvement and support for democratic norms disappeared when controls for the intervening effects of repression and demographic characteristics were included. The contribution of communal level participation (of the sort suggested by Putnam's bowling metaphor) to the formation of social and political capital is a bit weaker than that of formal group activity, but generally operates as predicted.

The most distinctive political capital forming effect of communal level activism is that it contributes strongly to contacting public officials (Table 3). Citizens who work together at the communal level thus manifest a strong tendency to convey their demands to government. In contrast, the other type of civil society participation -- formal group activism -- contributes to higher levels of all the political capital variables, with especially marked effects upon campaigning and contacting public officials.

We have shown that more intense civil society behavior and higher levels of political capital of urban Central Americans associate with higher levels of democracy. This supports the argument that civil society may influence the state while it refines Putnam's notion of how that influence is actually exercised. The attitudes and behaviors stimulated by organizational membership that most clearly shape state performance (in this case the level of democracy) are those with an explicit political referent or impact. Those who are organizationally active are more likely to have strong democratic norms, to vote, to campaign and electioneer, and to contact public officials. In contrast, participation in civil society contributes to urban Central Americans' political information somewhat, but increases their interpersonal trust not at all. Moreover, citizens' interpersonal trust and political information bears less clearly and directly upon levels of democracy than the political capital variables do.

A final issue warrants consideration here -- that of the direction of causality of among civil society, social/political capital, and government performance. Putnam contends that civil

society shapes government performance. Tarrow, Foley and Edwards, however, note that sociopolitical context constructs and constrains civil society activism and social capital formation. They raise questions about how the freedom to participate affects citizens propensity and willingness to organize, and how the behavior of the state itself stimulates organizations and various attitudes.¹⁴ Our analyses here and elsewhere (Booth and Richard 1996, 1997, Richard and Booth 1994) confirm that repression affects associational activism, various kinds of political participation, and democratic norms, while actions of regimes can contribute to erasing sex differences for participation. The causal sequence, while not definitively established, appears interactional, not linear.

We believe it not only possible but likely that system-level democracy promotes civil society activism. We suspect that system level democracy and associational activity have reciprocal effects. For example, less democratic polities may stimulate Foley and Edwards' type II civil society -- the antityrannical sort -- which in turn may lead over time to higher levels of systemic democracy. At the same time, more democratic, and therefore less repressive, polities may foster higher levels of the civility-reinforcing type I civil society, which in turn should produce the political capital that reinforces regime democracy. Since these reciprocal causations are political processes that unfold over time, testing these conjectures and resolving the direction-of-causality questions requires more cases and different types of data and analyses than we have available. Yet for these Central American nations, five of which have passed from authoritarian to democratic rule since 1981 and four of which have had violent civil conflicts, resolving such longitudinal issues about context-civil society interaction processes over time may be the most interesting questions of all.

Notes

1 . Similar arguments have been made about how repression altered the behavior of Nicaraguan and Guatemalan associations during the same era (Jonas, 1991, Booth 1991, Booth and Walker 1993).

2 . On such groups in Central America see Aguilera Peralta and Romero Imery (1981), McClintock {1985a, 1985b), Gould (1991), and Montgomery (1992),.

3 . Seligson (1996) provides an example when she demonstrates that membership in communal organizations in Central America correlates positively with demands on government.

4 . All but Panama have shared much political and economic history (membership in the same Spanish colony, the Central American Federation of the 1820s and 1830s, and membership in the Central American Common Market since 1960). All six are adjacent on the Mesoamerican isthmus, former Spanish colonies, small, relatively poor, predominantly Catholic, and culturally and linguistically similar.

5 . We gratefully acknowledge data collection support from the North-South Center of the University of Miami, the Howard Heinz Endowment-Center for Latin American Studies of the University of Pittsburgh Research Grants on Current Latin American Issues, University of North Texas Faculty Development Grants and Faculty Research Programs, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Tinker Foundation, the Heinz Foundation, and the University of Pittsburgh. The project was designed and much of the data were collected by a team including Mitchell A. Seligson of the University of Pittsburgh and John A. Booth of the University of North Texas. Team members who also directed field work were Ricardo Córdova, Andrew Stein, Annabelle Conroy, Orlando Pérez, and Cynthia Chalker. Guatemala field work was conducted by the Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES). Valuable collaboration was provided by the following: In Costa Rica: Consejo Superior Universitaria (CSUCA), Departments of Statistics and Political Science of the University of Costa Rica; in Nicaragua: Instituto de Estudios Internacionales (IEI) of the Universidad Centroamericana; in Honduras: Centro de Estudio y Promoción del Desarrollo (CEPROD) and Centro de Documentación de Honduras; in Panama: Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos "Justo Arosemena" (CELA); and in El Salvador: Centro de Investigación y Acción Social (CINAS) and the Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos (IDELA).

Methodology: Surveys were conducted in mid 1991 among the urban, voting-age populations of El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. In 1992 a similar survey was conducted in Guatemala. The Costa Rica survey was conducted in 1995. In each a stratified (by socioeconomic level) cluster sample of dwelling units was drawn from the national capital and other major urban centers. Interviewees were selected using randomizing procedures and sex and age quotas. We collected 4,089 face to face interviews region wide, with national samples ranging from 500 to 900. To prevent large country Ns from distorting findings in this analysis, the country samples have been weighted equally to approximately 700 each (weighted N=4,198). We generalize only to major urban areas, roughly half the region's populace.

6 . See Seligson and Booth (1993) for a discussion and citations of these approaches, and Booth and Richard (1996) for details on index construction.

7 . This technique was developed by Verba and Nie (1972) and Verba, Nie and Kim (1978), and has been employed with similar results to Central American participation data by Booth and Seligson (1979) and Booth and Richard (1996).

8 . We include a historical component (estimated intensity of regime repression over the decade before each nation's survey) on the assumption that the effect of repression on citizens will decay gradually even after actually repression has subsided. The immediate repression context also matters, so we estimate repression within each country at the survey date. See Booth and Richard (1996) for further details on construction and validation of this measure.

9 . Portions of the following analysis concerning H_1 and H_2 are drawn from Booth and Richard (1997).

10 . This likely stems from the fact that interpersonal trust levels are quite low and vary little throughout Central America.

11 . This somewhat counterintuitive finding may merely be an artifact of conditions specific to Central America. Table 1, for instance, reveals that Honduras and Nicaragua, the region's poorest nations, have above average levels of group activism and democratic norms.

12 . We considered employing Vanhanen's raw scores to produce an ordinal ranking of the countries, but prior analysis revealed substantial collinearity between the system-level repression measure and Vanhanen's democracy rankings. Because repression has proved so important, we preferred not to drop it from the analysis as a control variable. Grouping nations into three categories by democracy levels and employing analysis of variance as the analytical technique eliminated this collinearity problem.

13 . Analysis of variance measures association between a nominal category and a continuous variable. The direction of association and linearity across nominal categories must be ascertained from inspection of means. Significance tests refer to the likelihood of differences in variance explained among categories (not to direction or linearity of association). The particular utility of analysis of variance as the analytical technique here is that it permits the introduction of multiple control variables in order to filter out the effect of intervening effects between the dependent and independent variables.

14 . Along this line, Muller and Seligson (1994) have shown that rather than high levels of interpersonal trust causing democracy, as some argue, the causality is the opposite: democratic regimes promote interpersonal trust.

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Table 1. Civil Society, Social Capital and Political Capital Scores, by Country.

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Honduras</u>	<u>Costa Rica</u>	<u>Panama</u>	<u>Guatemala</u>	<u>El Salvador</u>	<u>Nicaragua</u>	<u>Significance^a</u>
CIVIL SOCIETY							
Group activism ^b	1.05	.47	.84	.66	.33	.43	****
Communal activism ^c	1.04	1.01	1.03	1.31	1.24	1.17	****
SOCIAL CAPITAL							
Information level ^d	1.43	.83	1.37	.62	1.25	1.03	****
Interpersonal trust ^e	.87	.82	1.12	.74	.78	.74	****
POLITICAL CAPITAL							
Democratic norms ^f	6.98	6.77	7.33	5.51	5.57	6.42	****
Voting behavior ^g	1.86	1.91	1.72	1.51	1.39	1.62	****
Contacting public officials ^h	.77	.56	.56	.41	.32	.17	****
Campaign activism ⁱ	1.08	.87	.84	.25	.17	.47	****

^a Significance levels: * = $\leq .05$, ** = $\leq .01$, *** = $\leq .001$, **** = $\leq .0001$, (NS) = not significant.

^b At least sometimes attend union, civic association, cooperative or professional association; yes=1, no=0 for each; range=0-4.

- ^c Involvement in 5 community self-help group activities; 1= yes, 0=no for each; range = 0-5.
- ^d Index of political information based upon correctly naming U.S. Secretary of State, Russian President, and number of seats in national legislature; range 0 - 3.
- ^e Index of interpersonal trust (based on 3 trust orientation items); range 0-3; higher value = greater trust in others.

Table 1 (continued)

- ^f Overall support for democratic liberties (mean of 14 items expressing support for participatory rights); range 1 - 10.
- ^g Registered to vote plus voted in last election; yes = 1, no=0 for each; range 0-2.
- ^h Ever contacted president, legislative deputy, city council member, or national government agency; yes=1, no=0; range = 0-4.
- ⁱ Attempted to persuade others how to vote or worked on campaign in last or prior election; 1=yes, 0=no for each; range = 0-3.

Table 2 The Impact of Civil Society Activism on Social Capital and Political Capital.^a

	SOCIAL CAPITAL		POLITICAL CAPITAL			
	<u>Political Inform.</u>	<u>Interp. Trust</u>	<u>Democr. Norms</u>	<u>Voting</u>	<u>Campaign</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Group activism	.253****	.054***	.192****	.117****	.198****	.191****
Communal Activism	-.097****	.059**	-.091****	-.011	-.066***	.164****
R ²	.250	.008	.037	.013	.038	.078
Standard Error	1.025	.937	1.953	.613	.919	.821
F	127.57	15.14	68.16	23.77	69.47	148.21
Probability of F	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
(N)	(3849)		(3526)			

^a Significance levels: * = $\leq .05$, ** = $\leq .01$, *** = $\leq .001$, **** = $\leq .0001$, (NS) = not significant.

Table 3 The Impact of Civil Society Activism on Social Capital and Political Capital, with Demographic and Contextual Controls.^a

	SOCIAL CAPITAL		POLITICAL CAPITAL			
	Political Inform.	Interp. Trust	Democr. Norms	Voting	Campaign	Contact
Group activism	.080****	.022	.095****	.051**	.118****	.158****
Communal Activism	-.009	.077****	-.013	.048**	.013	.192****
Standard of living ^b	.202****	.082***	.072***	.031	-.059**	-.018
Educational attainment ^c	.307****	.034	.126****	.034	.084****	.043*
Sex (M=1, F=2)	-.200****	.026	-.035*	-.069****	-.121****	-.058***
Repression level ^d	-.037*	-.054**	-.289****	-.240****	-.350****	-.112****
GDP per capita ^e	-.232****	-.016	-.095****	-.016	-.057**	.007
R ²	.284	.023	.146	.079	.152	.094
Standard Error	.896	.929	1.831	.591	.862	.823
F	219.09	13.12	90.89	45.54	95.82	55.16
Probability of F (N)	.0000 (3867)	.0000	.0000	.0000 (3738)	.0000	.0000

^a Significance levels: * = $\leq .05$, ** = $\leq .01$, *** = $\leq .001$, **** = $\leq .0001$, (NS) = insignificant.

^b Living standard measures family wealth based upon owning color televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, telephones, and automobiles; range 0 - 15.

^c Years of formal education completed.

^d Index of systemic repression level for decade prior to and time of survey; range = 1 - 5; higher score = greater repression (Booth and Richard, 1996).

^e Gross domestic product per capita, 1990 (UNDP, 1993, T. 1).

Table 4 Links between Civil Society, Social Capital, and Political Capital and Levels of Democracy, with Controls for Repression and Demographic Factors (Sex, Education, Living Standard).

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Level of Democracy^a</u>			<u>Signif.^b</u>
	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>	
CIVIL SOCIETY				
Group Activism	.50	.60	.76	****
Communal Activism	1.27	1.10	1.02	(NS)
SOCIAL CAPITAL				
Political Inform.	.94	1.20	1.13	****
Interpers. Trust	.76	.94	.85	****
POLITICAL CAPITAL				
Democratic Norms	5.62	6.89	6.87	****
Voting	1.45	1.67	1.89	****
Campaigning	.21	.66	.97	****
Contacting	.36	.37	.66	****

^a Level of democracy obtained by grouping countries based upon national democracy scores in Vanhanen (1990). Mean score for lower democracy group (Guatemala and El Salvador)=7.65, mean score for intermediate group (Nicaragua and Panama)=13.90, mean score for higher democracy group (Costa Rica and Honduras)=20.25.

^bSignificance of main effects for analysis of variance, with controls to remove intervening effects of respondents' sex, education and living standard and national repression scores. Significance levels: * = $\leq .05$, ** = $\leq .01$, *** = $\leq .001$, **** = $\leq .0001$, NS = not significant.