

Inequality and Democracy in Latin America: Individual and Contextual Effects of Wealth on Political Participation

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Individual and Contextual Effects of Wealth on Political Participation¹

In *Political Man* Seymour Martin Lipset (Lipset 1961; 1981) made the classic statement on the linkage between wealth in democracy. In that work he found that “most countries which lack an enduring tradition of political democracy lie in the underdeveloped sections of the world” (28).² And, “The more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy” (31). With respect to Latin America, the region of the world on which we focus in this paper, Lipset used numerous indicators of national wealth that led him to characterize Latin American nations as economically underdeveloped, and -- not surprisingly given his theory -- he found that economic underdevelopment was associated with either unstable democratic government or dictatorship. He classified two thirds of Latin American nations as stable dictatorships at the time of his study. A special drag upon democracy, he argued, was

¹ This study draws on the continuing series of surveys collected by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University, a project of the Center for the Americas at Vanderbilt. The 2004 series of surveys used in this paper were funded with the generous support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Margaret Sarles, Bruce Kay and Eric Kite in the “Office of Democracy and Governance” of USAID, supported by Maria Barrón in the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, secured the funding. Critical to the project’s success was the cooperation of the many individuals and institutions in the countries studied. These include, for Mexico, Jorge Buendía and Alejandro Moreno, Departamento de Ciencia Política, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM); for Guatemala, Dinorah Azpuru and Juan Pablo Pira, Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES); for El Salvador and Honduras, Ricardo Córdova, Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo (FUNDAUNGO), José Miguel Cruz, Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUDOP) de la Universidad Centroamericana, UCA, and Siddhartha Baviskar, University of Pittsburgh; for Nicaragua, Luis Serra and Pedro López Ruiz, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA); for Costa Rica, Luis Rosero-Bixby, Universidad de Costa Rica and Jorge Vargas, Programa Estado de la Nación; for Panamá, Marco A. Gandásegui hijo, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos (CELA) and Orlando J. Pérez, Central Michigan University; for Colombia, Carlos Lemoine, Centro Nacional de Consultoría (CNC), and Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Raga, University of Pittsburgh. Polibio Córdova, CEDATOS/Gallup, Ecuador, provided excellent guidance on sample design for all of the teams. We thank the graduate assistants at the University of Pittsburgh who were responsible for auditing the quality of the data that we received from each country team: Miguel García, Sawa Omori, and Rosario Queirolo. At Vanderbilt University, Dinorah Azpuru, Abby Córdova and Daniel Moreno were responsible for cleaning the merged database. Miguel Gómez, formerly of the Universidad de Costa Rica, provided excellent advice on the questionnaire design. Finally, we wish to thank the 12,401 individuals in these eight countries who took time away from their busy lives to answer our questions. Without their cooperation, this study would not have been possible.

² Lipset also notes the following caveat: “to the extent that the political subsystem of a society operates autonomously, a political form may persist under conditions adverse to the *emergence* of that form. Or a political form may develop because of a syndrome of unique historical factors even though the society’s major characteristics favor another form.” (Lipset 1981:28)

insufficient education. The effects of inadequate levels of education, he argued, play out at the micro or individual level, rather than at the level of nations themselves (Lipset 1981: 39-40). Lipset and others revisited this study (Lipset, Seong and Torres 1993) and reconfirmed its basic findings of a strong economic development-democracy link, as have others (Coppedge 1997; Diamond 1992; 1999; Huntington, Samuel 1991; Lewis-Beck and Burkhart 1994; Muller 1988; 1997).

More recent work (Przeworski, et al. 1996; 2000) has at least partially refuted the relationship that Lipset uncovered, finding no impact of economic development on the probability of the inauguration of democracy. Nonetheless, that research did find that economic development does matter as it appears to be a *sine qua non* for the survival of democracy (Przeworski, et al. 2000). According to that research, democracies do not break down once they have surpassed a certain minimum economic threshold. Moreover, among countries that have not surpassed a minimum level of economic development, breakdown is more likely when economic growth falters.

Today, however, we encounter scenarios that make the development-democracy association worth revisiting. First, despite their relative poverty, most Latin American countries, in a transformation widely noted, have become -- at least formally -- electoral democracies (Huntington, Samuel 1991; Peeler 1998; Smith 2005; Vanhanen 1997). Thirteen of the region's nations are now classified as "free," and eight "partly free," with only Cuba and Haiti remaining "not free" (Freedom House 2005), although, as we note below, the recent concentration of executive power in Venezuela makes that country a questionable case. As Robert Pinkney (2003) argues, "When Lipset was writing in 1959... it seemed plausible to believe that only a few wealthy countries possessed the necessary qualifications for membership in the democratic club... Yet the transitions we have witnessed since the 1980s indicate that some of the world's poorest countries can gate-crash the club." And, as Peter Smith (2005) contends: "Over time, the

association between economic development and political democracy lost its empirical force” (52). One potential explanation of that weakening is the impact of external powers. The United States, for example, once seen as a supporter (even promoter) of Latin American dictatorships (Schoultz 1987), has been a strong advocate of formal, electoral democracy in the region at least since the early 1990s. Jean Grugel (2002), suggests that Central American democratization was largely the result of imposition by outside forces, thus relegating economic development or underdevelopment to that of a spurious explanatory variable for democracy. Indeed, scholars now attribute democratization in developing countries to a wide range of forces other than economic development and individual wealth: income inequality, including social structure and class relations; civil society; political culture; elite interactions and leadership processes; and external actors – or to a combination of some or all of these.³

On the other hand, the contrasting case of Venezuela comes to mind, a country that had far surpassed the Przeworski threshold for democracy long before President Hugo Chávez’s ascension to power there. Its relative wealth notwithstanding, the sharp reversals of most elements that define democracy in that country force one to wonder whether the impact of crossing the economic development threshold for democracy determined by Przeworski and his colleagues is quite so irreversible as they had argued. Indeed, if one agrees with Przeworski’s classic definition (as we do) that democracy is the “institutionalization of uncertainty,” it would appear that Venezuela is no longer a democracy. More generally, while nearly all Latin American nations have progressed economically since the 1960s (Nicaragua and Haiti being two key exceptions), many remain poor by the standard of the advanced industrial democracies, having GNPs per capita of only one-tenth or less than those rich nations.

The dramatic expansion of democracy world-wide, and particularly in Latin America, and the various challenges to Lipset’s research, raise the key question we examine here: Are

³ See useful reviews of the literature in Vanhanen (1997), Sorensen (1993), Pinkney (2003), and Grugel (2002).

economic development and democracy linked, as Lipset argued? Or, at least in the case of Latin America, are development-democracy links largely if not entirely absent, as Smith has concluded? More specifically, is there any evidence that wealth drives democracy or is related to democratic development in Latin America today? Our aim in this paper is to revisit the question of the impact of wealth/poverty upon democracy by examining eight Latin American nations at both the micro and macro levels. We do so in ways different from most prior research. We seek to untangle the macro effects of wealth/poverty at the national or contextual level and at the micro level of individual wealth/poverty in shaping the political involvement of citizens.

Prior studies have focused heavily on system-level democracy, and examined system-level wealth as the key predictor. Among those who look at democratic behavior at the individual level, however, system-level or macro variables have been almost always ignored. Indeed, most individual-level studies have been either single-country studies, in which system level variables (such as economic development) are therefore a constant, or multi-nation studies in which individual characteristics have been aggregated, thus erasing the link between system-level characteristics and individual-level behavior (Seligson 2002). To move beyond prior research and simultaneously capture systemic and individual-level variables, we use data from an eight-nation survey of Latin American nations that on their face confirm Lipset's macro-level finding – that system-level democracy (both recently and over time) is stronger in wealthier nations and in countries that have had more long term economic growth over last 50 years (see Table 1). There is also evidence from surveys in those eight nations (Table 1) that the wealth and educational level of *individuals* is linked both to higher level systemic democracy scores over the very long run (1900-1989) and to the current level of democracy. Because we have recent identical survey data from eight adjacent and quite varied Latin American nations, we can examine some of the questions raised by Lipset's observations and by the political and economic evolution of the

region. Indeed, our linked and identically designed⁴ surveys allow us to explore the question in more detail than Lipset was able to, having to rely as he did upon disparate contextual measures and little survey data.

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations with System-Level Democracy Measures

	Mean Vanhanen Index of Democracy for 1900-1989	Freedom House Combined Index for 2003 (polarity reversed) ^a
Macro-level measures		
PPP Income 2002	.490	.565
GDP Growth 1950-2000	.316	.475
Micro-level measures		
Wealth of Individuals	.307**	.303**
Individual educational attainment	.151**	.151**
^a Freedom House (2004) combined scores, with polarity reversed so that greater freedom is indicated by a higher score. ** Relationship significant at the .01 level.		

Lipset’s main focus is on system-level democracy, but he also emphasizes individual participation in politics. To have argued otherwise would have meant that Lipset believed that the micro-level results were merely spurious (Seligson 2002), a position he explicitly rejects. He contends, instead, that the wealth-democracy relationship is indeed the same as at the system level – that more wealth enables more and better citizen participation and therefore helps insure democracy: “From Aristotle down to the present, men have argued that only in a wealthy society in which relatively few citizens lived at the level of real poverty could there be a situation in which the mass of the population intelligently participate in politics and develop the self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the appeals of irresponsible demagogues” (Lipset 1981) (31). This view, one skeptical of the prospects for democracy in poor countries, is grounded in

⁴ While the sample and questionnaire designs for all eight countries were identical, question modules covering country-specific issues (e.g., post conflict concerns in Guatemala and violence in Colombia) were included in the surveys. Those country-specific modules are not analyzed here.

evidence Lipset cites from various countries indicating that working class individuals tend to be more authoritarian and to vote for antidemocratic parties. On the other hand, there are other scholars who have argued that there is much less to fear in the participation of the poor. Indeed, Krishna and his co-authors have found a wide variety of highly *democratic* forms of participation among the poorest members of society (Krishna 2002; Krishna, Uphoff and Esman 1997).

A strong case can be made that individual participation, including working class participation, is the essence of democracy, a term that literally means citizen participation in rule (Cohen 1973; Pateman 1970). One of the most finely argued studies supporting that view is that of Rueschemeyer, Stevens and Stevens (1992), who show that the emergence of autonomous working class forces, especially unions, in Latin America was essential to the development of democracy in the region. Sorensen goes farther still, arguing that it was economic crisis and the failure the authoritarian economic development model in the 1980s that led to the citizen participation that contributed to the collapse of authoritarian regimes (Sorensen 1993). Booth, Wade and Walker (2006) attribute the democratic transitions in Central America in the 1980s and 1990s to the collapse of the region's growth boom in the mid and late 1970s, which then mobilized working and middle class forces and civil society against authoritarian regimes. So, at the macro level, economic growth may create non-elite forces or social sectors that can challenge antidemocratic elites, while subsequent economic slowdown may challenge the regime with political crises that can lead to greater democracy.

In considering micro-level forces, research by the authors of this paper nearly three decades ago found fragmentary evidence that suggested that the conventional wisdom, based on the advanced industrial democracies, that associated wealth with more citizen political participation was not supported by evidence from several Latin American nations (Booth and Seligson 1978b; Seligson and Booth 1979). We reported then that, in contrast to better-off urban dwellers, Costa Rican peasants participated significantly *more* in organizations and community

projects. Other studies in that research project and other evidence from the era also reported significant and complex political participation among the poor and working classes of Latin America, including peasants, urban workers, and rural women (Booth 1978; 1979; Booth and Seligson 1978a; Bourque and Warren 1979; Cornelius 1974; Fishel 1979; Landsberger and Gierisch 1979; Moore 1979; Seligson 1978). One finding, based on a study of peasant involvement in politics, was striking: “At the level of participation as an individual phenomenon, one outstanding finding has been, quite simply, its high quantitative level. There is no hint here of the passive, apathetic peasant” (Landsberger and Gierisch 1979)(95). These studies suggested that even the rural poor in Latin America harbored considerable capacity to act in democratic ways, and thus to contribute positively to democracy or the democratization process. At the same time, however, those studies systematically suggested that elites were likely not heeding the demands of the poor, a situation that would ultimately lead to challenges of political legitimacy and potential unrest (Adams 1979). This paper attempts to take a fresh look at the issues of the economic development-democracy linkage by carrying out a comparative eight-nation analysis. We look at seven different dimensions of participation in those eight nations, and use both individual-level and system-level characteristics to test the Lipset thesis. We find mixed evidence to support it, suggesting that economic development is far less powerfully linked to participation than Lipset had suggested. On the other hand, we conclude the paper wondering about the implications of this participation for democratic consolidation.

Methodology

Cases

We are fortunate to have in our study a sample of countries on which key system-level variables vary considerably; we can also control for major historical/cultural variables. All of the countries in our sample were former colonial dependencies of Spain, all went through long periods of dictatorship/military rule, and all emerged as democracies at some point in the twentieth century.⁵ In each of the countries, Catholicism has been the dominant religion, although in recent years evangelical Christian groups have made substantial inroads in some of the cases, especially Guatemala. Finally, the economies of these countries were long dependent on agricultural export commodities, although over the past few decades there have been important shifts into a more diversified, modern economy.

The data in Table 2 demonstrate the similarities and differences in our set of eight Latin American nations. In terms of the national level of democracy, represented by combining Freedom House's two basic measures (reversed so that a higher score indicates greater democracy – see the Appendix), the countries range from a high of 11 in Costa Rica and Panama to a low of 6 in Guatemala and Colombia. In terms of gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the second half of the twentieth century, the countries range from a high of 202 percent in Panama to a *negative* 18 percent in Nicaragua. Per capita income ranges from a high of nearly \$6,000 in Mexico to a low of \$710 in Nicaragua. Finally, the level of infant mortality, a good negative measure of national social development, varies sharply from its low levels in Costa Rica (where it approximates U.S. infant mortality rates) to a rate four times as high in Guatemala. In short, at the macro-level, these countries present wide variation in levels of development and democracy.

⁵ There is a myth that Costa Rica has always been democratic, but, as Booth (1998) and Lehoucq and Molina (2002) clearly show, that is not true.

Table 2. Inter-Country Variation on Key Economic and Democratic System-Level Variables*

Country	Freedom House Combined Index, 2003, reversed	Cumulative Percent GDP Growth from 1950-2000 from Penn World Tables	Gross National Income per capita, 2002	Infant mortality per 1,000
Mexico	10	192	\$5,920	24
Guatemala	6	82	\$1,760	36
El Salvador	9	57	\$2,110	33
Honduras	8	14	\$930	32
Nicaragua	8	-18	\$710	32
Costa Rica	11	138	\$4,070	9
Panama	11	202	\$4,020	19
Colombia	6	144	\$1,820	19
Sample mean	8.63	101.38	\$2,668	25.50

*See the Appendix for sources.

Sample Design

A study of the impact of inequality on democratic participation must gather data on the values of *all* citizens, not just the active ones, the politically “important” ones, or those who live in major towns and cities. Surprisingly, however, many studies carried out in Latin America that claim to represent the views of the nation, are often based on samples that systematically under represent certain sectors of the population (Seligson 2005).

The database for this paper was designed to be fully representative of the voting-age population of each of the countries included in the study. The target group of countries was eight contiguous nations of northern Latin America nations as shown in the map below (Figure 1). In this study we determined that a sample of 1,500 respondents per country would satisfy our objectives, and still remain feasible from a cost point of view. Below the level of the nation, each stage of selection was done following Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) criteria so that the probability of any one unit being selected was in direct proportion to the most recent population estimates. At the level of the individual country, the confidence interval would be

about ± 2.5 percent, while for the pooled sample, which is what we use for this analysis, the confidence level is less than 1 percent.



Figure 1. Sample countries

The sample design involved multi-stage stratification. The overall sample was thus first stratified by country, and then substratified within each country by major geographic region in order to increase the precision of the results. We divided each country into a minimum of five regional strata, representing the major geographic divisions of the countries. In that way, we could ensure that all of the major regions of the country would be represented. We were careful not to exclude remote regions; in Honduras, for example, we developed an English version of the questionnaire for use on the Bay Islands so as not to exclude that population from the survey.

Similarly, we developed translations of the questionnaire in five Mayan languages for Guatemala.

To further increase the precision of the samples, we subdivided each of the country-level strata into urban and rural. We know that many other similar samples in Latin America largely exclude rural areas because of their inaccessibility, but we did not want to do that, especially because the inclusion of the rural poor was essential to testing the economic development/participation thesis. We relied upon census definitions of urban and rural, and divided our within-country regional strata so that each one would faithfully represent the urban/rural breakdowns within them.⁶

The sample design also considered the prospect that some selected households could be empty (“blanks”) or that selected respondents might refuse to cooperate leaving us with a smaller sample size than we had planned. As a result, in each country an estimate of non-coverage was included. The final samples are shown in Table 3 below. As can be seen in the table, the total pooled sample N was 12,401. In the analysis section we explain how we produced results taking into account this complex sample design.

⁶ At the level of the nation, as noted, we used samples of the same size (*circa* 1,500) so that each nation would have an equal weight in the overall results. Since the actual sample N at the country level deviated somewhat from 1,500, we have introduced a post hoc weighting factor to correct for this small variation. The next stage in the sample design involved determining the neighborhoods in which the interviews would take place. We referred to these as “primary sampling units,” or PSUs. We obtained census maps from each country’s respective census bureaus and, using population data segments, randomly selected the maps from within each stratum, and then randomly selected the segments in which the interviews would be carried out. In that way, voting-aged adults in each country had an equal and known probability of being selected. Thus, respondents living in sparsely populated rural villages had the same probability of being selected as respondents in large cities.

The final stages of selection involved a systematic selection of housing units within a PSU (using the census maps and locally updated information). We set a cluster size of eight interviews in each urban PSU and 12 in each rural PSU. We allowed larger clusters in rural areas than in urban areas because of the far lower housing density in the former, and the increased travel time smaller clusters would imply. Once the household was selected, we determined that random selection of the respondent within the household was far too costly since it would have required multiple callbacks, and thus we decided to use a quota sampling methodology at the level of the household. The quotas were established for age and sex, again based on the most recent census data for each country.

Table 3. Sample size per country

Country	Sample size	Percent of entire sample
Mexico	1,556	10.1
Guatemala	1,708	11.1
El Salvador	1,589	10.3
Honduras	1,500	9.7
Nicaragua	1,430	9.3
Costa Rica	1,500	9.7
Panama	1,639	10.6
Colombia	1,479	9.6
Total	12,401	100.0

Dependent variables

We conceptualize political participation broadly, taking our cue from Lipset's argument that those who may take part more broadly and more effectively may avoid the pitfalls of demagoguery. In conceiving participation broadly we draw on theoretical arguments that participation must be more broadly conceived than voting (Cohen 1973; Pateman 1970) and the precedent of research demonstrating that participation is multidimensional (Booth and Seligson 2005; Verba, Sidney and Nie 1972; Verba, Sidney, Nie and Kim 1971). There is also strong evidence that political participation in Latin America is multidimensional (Biles 1978; Booth 1976; 1979; Booth and Seligson 1978b; 1979; 2005), and we wanted to capture that dimensionality .

Our political participation variables are as follows: reporting having **voted in the last presidential election, contacted a legislator, contacted a local public official, intensity of political party activity, community improvement activity, intensity of engagement in civil society, and protest participation.** (See Appendix A for operationalization and data index construction details.)

Independent variables

We employ two indicators of an individual's personal poverty/wealth. One is **personal wealth** as measured by the respondent's standard of living. The measure we use is an index reflecting the possession of artifacts of wealth in the respondent's household, including indoor plumbing, various electrical appliances, computers, automobiles, and so on.⁷ We also include the number of years of **education** completed. Education, a critical resource for individuals, is a crucial item in Lipset's analysis, and has been shown to correlate significantly with political participation variables in almost every circumstance. (See Appendix A for details of index construction.)

We employ three contextual variables indicative of the wealth and resources existing within the larger politico-economic context. Our first system poverty/wealth variable is a measure of the overall economic activity per capita, **gross national income per capita (PPP)** in the year 2002 (World Bank 2002). The second – and negative -- measure of system wealth is **infant mortality** per 1,000 live births at the time of the survey, which is indicative of the extent to which the national government invests or fails to invest in health care for its citizens.

A third contextual resource measure is an ordinal indicator of the relative size and degree of urbanization of the community of residence of the respondent, which we call **size of respondent's place of residence**, which captures the degree of urbanization. Throughout Latin America, urban areas are systematically wealthier than rural areas,⁸ but there are aspects of

⁷ We could have used respondent monthly income as a measure of personal wealth and resources, but decided not to for two reasons. One is that about 10.5% of the respondents declined to answer this question, giving us missing data problems. The measure of personal wealth (as personal artifacts), in contrast, has no missing data. The second reason is that income is not distributed the same way as personal wealth. Heads of households tend to be principal income earners. Their spouses and dependents may largely derive their standard of living from the income of the principal income earner without earning much income of their own. Nevertheless, these dependents enjoy the benefits of personal wealth, and thus are likely to have attitudes and behaviors that correspond to the income category of the household's principal income earner. The Pearson's bivariate correlation between monthly income and personal wealth in our sample is .632. In order to avoid potential collinearity problems in our regression models and to avoid lost cases, we opted to use wealth rather than income.

⁸ Indeed, for this pooled sample, there is a strong positive correlation between the size of the community and the level of wealth, the personal income, and the education of respondents. Means for each of these are significantly higher for each successively larger size of community.

urbanization that are not picked up directly in the other variables we have included for analysis. We have in mind the density of urban services, including health, telecommunications, transportation, the media and the like that provide a level of resources to urban residents that can far surpass those of rural areas. There are, of course, costs of living in urban areas (crime, pollution) that might depress participation. Indeed, fear of crime, as Putnam (2000) has noted, could help explain depressed participation in the larger cities of the United States. Thus, we include as a further means to test the Lipset thesis, this measure of urbanization as an index of wealth and development represented by proximity and access to these key resources. It is coded to reflect the relative size of the place in which the interview was conducted.

In general, governmental personnel and resources tend to concentrate in larger communities. We believe this should be an asset to the residents of cities by making public officials easier to communicate with than it might be for rural and small-town dwellers. In contrast, some research indicates that the effect of community size on political participation works in the opposite way (Verba, Sidney and Nie 1972). Participation may be easier rather than harder in smaller, more clearly bounded communities than in sprawling urban areas or large cities. We suspect, based on our previous research in Latin America, that residents of poor rural and smaller communities will have greater need to cooperate and seek the assistance of public officials, and will therefore be more politically active than their urban counterparts.

Control variables

Our research and that of others (Booth and Seligson 2005; Dalton 1999; 2004; Easton 1965; 1975; Norris 1999a; 1999b) has shown that political legitimacy norms likely mediate citizen engagement in politics, so we include legitimacy norms in our model of citizen engagement as control variables. As noted above, we wanted to be sure that we could control for legitimacy attitudes so that we could know whether the participation we were measuring was

motivated by support or frustration with the political system. We have previously identified multiple distinct legitimacy dimensions among Latin American citizens, based on their evaluation of various points of reference in the political system ranging from the abstract to the very concrete (Booth and Seligson 2005; Booth, Seligson and Gómez Barrantes 2005). Confirmatory factor analysis on multiple legitimacy items included in our 2004 surveys reveals six distinct dimensions of political legitimacy (political support): **political community, support for core regime principles, evaluation of regime performance, support for political institutions, support for local government, and support for political actors.**⁹

We also include as a control variable the **mean level of democracy from 1900 to 1989** according to the index computed by Vanhanen (1997). This is a measure of democratic performance over the very long term – in effect a measure of the prior history with democracy. Our rationale for this control is twofold. First, prior experience with democracy has been shown to influence a political system’s chances for democratization. Second, the experience of democracy over the long term may well influence the political culture of nations by shaping the types of participation engaged in by citizens. Thus, in order to truly assess the independent effect of wealth both systemic and individual on participation in these nations, we need to account for the country’s prior experience with democracy.

Finally we also include three demographic variables as controls: respondent’s **sex, age, and age squared**. The age-squared variable is aimed at accounting for the frequently encountered curvilinear relationship between age and participation, whereby the very young (for lack of interest and stake in the community) and the very old engage less in politics (due to shrinking capacity to participate).

⁹ Once identified by confirmatory factor analysis, we used exploratory factor analysis of the variables that made up each legitimacy dimension to extract factor scores for each dimension. For purposes of this analysis, we converted the factor scores into a standardized measure ranging from 0 to 100. We then imputed missing data on the six dimensions using EM (expected maximization using maximum-likelihood estimation) method. See the appendix for details on the indexes and items from which they were constructed.

Analysis

Regression techniques

We faced some complex choices in deciding on the method of analysis to employ on this database. Our first instinct was to use hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) because our data set contains data at two levels, that of the individual and that of the national units. We decided against it, however, because our second-level units were limited to eight, and in our experience, HLM does not work effectively with such a small number of units. On the other hand, had we turned to conventional regression analysis to model our results, multi-level nature of our stratified sample would have been lost. So we decided to use the STATA Surveyset regression programs (both for ordinary least squares – OLS --and logistic analyses) by first stratifying the samples by country, and then introducing a second level of stratification for the within-country stratifications in our sample design. We then also took into consideration the cluster size of the samples for each sampling point (as noted, generally 12 households in rural areas, 8 in urban) in order to modify the confidence intervals to take into account the impact of intra-class correlation on our results. The statistical results we produced, therefore, are considerably more precise than those that would have emerged from regression estimates based on simple random sampling (SRS), since they include both the increased precision produced by stratification and the decreased precision produced by clustering.

We divide the analysis of the impact of these independent and control variables on political participation in our eight countries into two sections based on the method of regression analysis employed. The first three participation variables (Table 4) are dichotomous, requiring logistic regression. The fourth through seventh participation variables are interval in nature, permitting the use of OLS regression (Table 5). In these tables, relationships with statistically significant results are highlighted by presenting them in **boldface type**.

Findings

Lipset's general hypothesis may be restated as follows: *Economic development/wealth should correlate positively with citizens' political participation.* Or, expressed in the thematic terms of this conference, *underdevelopment/poverty should associate negatively with citizens' political participation.* We have five measures of poverty/wealth; two are individual (personal wealth/standard of living and personal educational attainment), and three are systemic (GNI per capita, infant mortality, and size of place of residence).

Turning first to the citizen's personal wealth, if Lipset is correct it should correlate positively with political participation. Tables 4 and 5 reveal that the individual wealth variable, however, is not significantly positively associated with voting, contacting legislative or local officials, party activism, or protest participation. Indeed, contrary to expectations personal wealth is significantly *negatively* associated with partisan activism – the poor are more active in political parties.

Lipset's hypothesis fares far better when the measure of individual resources employed is that of education. Educational attainment shows a significant positive relationship to all the participation variables except civil society involvement. Lipset, then, was correct that education is a powerful resource for participation, a point supported by Vanhanen (1997).

Turning to the macro-level indicators of wealth, we see in Tables 4 and 5 that other factors held constant, gross national income is significantly and positively related to only one of the seven participation variables – local level contacting, and that effect is very small. Most remarkably, the relationships between economic development and civil society, partisan activism, and protest participation are significantly *negative*. In sum, among our eight Latin American countries, lower levels of national economic development associate with more active citizenries in organizational and partisan arenas and in protest. Thus in only one of seven cases

is Lipset's hypothesis even weakly supported by the evidence for system economic development, and in three of seven variables the opposite relationship obtains. Here we find support for the notion that poor economic performance at the system level may actually energize individual citizens.

Because of its polarity as we measure it, lower systemic wealth as indicated by high infant mortality should be negatively linked to participation. But contrary to Lipset's hypothesis, higher infant mortality in our eight countries is significantly *positively* associated with three modes of participation – voting, contacting local officials, and civil society activism. But, infant mortality scores do confirm to Lipset's hypothesis when it comes to party activism, protest participation and legislative contacting. So, this measure of national development produces mixed and contradictory results, with some forms of participation being positively associated with it and others negatively associated with it.

Finally using the size of the respondent's community as a form of wealth or poverty, were Lipset correct we would expect a significant positive relationship between community size and political participation. (As noted above, we suspected that the relationship might actually be the opposite.) The observed relationships mainly show just the opposite of Lipset's wealth-participation hypothesis; they are significantly *negative* for six of seven modes. Only for protest does living in a larger or more urbanized and resource-rich town or city increase citizen involvement.

Table 4. Logistic Regressions of Political Participation Variables on Individual and Systemic Wealth Measures

Independent Variables	Voting			Legislative contacting			Contacting local official		
	B	Odds Ratio	Sig.	B	Odds Ratio	Sig.	B	Odds Ratio	Sig.
Wealth	.011	1.011	.318	-.023	.977	.076	-.008	.991	.402
Education	.061	1.063	<.001	.017	1.017	<.001	.011	1.011	.022
Gross national income, per capita, 2002	.000	1.000	.169	-.000	1.000	.210	.000	1.000	<.001
Infant Mortality per 1,000	.026	1.026	.001	-.034	.966	<.001	.046	1.047	<.001
Size of Place	-.055	.947	.004	-.067	.935	.009	-.146	.864	<.001
Vanhanen Mean Democracy 1900-1989	.046	1.048	.102	-.059	.942	.082	.088	1.092	.006
Political Community	.007	1.007	<.001	-.004	.996	.177	.002	1.002	.373
Regime Principles	.006	1.006	<.001	.010	1.010	<.001	.006	1.006	<.001
Regime Performance	.003	1.003	.057	.006	1.006	.004	.002	1.002	.202
Institutions	.003	1.003	.053	.003	1.003	.169	-.001	.999	.327
Local Government	-.001	0.999	.328	.002	1.002	.331	.016	1.016	<.001
Political Actors	.001	1.001	.199	-.005	.995	.002	.003	1.003	.009
Gender	-.093	.911	.037	-.195	.823	.001	-.251	.778	<.001
Age	.199	1.221	<.001	.055	1.057	<.001	.068	1.071	<.001
Age squared	-.002	.998	<.001	-.000	1.000	<.001	-.001	.999	<.001
Constant Term	-5.88	.003	<.001	-2.752	0.063	<.001	-5.399	.005	<.001
<i>Nagelkerke Pseudo-R²</i>	.172			0.034			.062		
<i>F</i>	78.440			11.560			26.770		
<i>Model Significance</i>	<.001			<.001			<.001		
<i>Number of Observations</i>	11,966			11,966			11,966		

Note: Gray shading on the first five (key independent) variables indicates that Lipset's hypothesis is confirmed; Lipset confirmed in 5 of 15 instances. Coefficients in boldface are statistically significant at .05 or better.

Table 5. Ordinary Least Squares Regressions of Political Participation Variables on Individual and Systemic Wealth Measures

Independent Variables	Communal Activism		Civil Society Activism		Party Activism		Protest Participation	
	beta	Sig.	beta	Sig.	beta	Sig.	beta	Sig.
Wealth	.019	.014	.193	.028	-.256	.006	.260	.084
Education	.025	<.001	.017	.670	.119	.003	.565	<.001
Gross national income, per capita, 2002	-.000	.338	-.001	<.001	-.001	<.001	-.002	<.001
Infant Mortality per 1,000	.008	.172	.268	<.001	-.624	<.001	-.898	<.001
Size of place	-.102	<.001	-.960	<.001	-.650	<.001	.719	.003
Vanhanen Mean Democracy 1900-1989	.016	.450	.498	.072	-2.334	<.001	-2.409	<.001
Political Community	.002	.085	.016	.407	-.036	.051	-.063	.012
Regime Principles	.003	.001	.009	.398	.081	<.001	.185	<.001
Regime Performance	.000	.893	-.031	.018	.066	<.001	-.004	.830
Institutions	.001	.418	-.003	.847	.065	<.001	-.074	<.001
Local Government	.008	<.001	.096	<.001	.029	.051	.079	<.001
Political Actors	-.001	.239	.008	.341	-.071	<.001	-.046	.002
Gender	-.357	<.001	1.81	<.001	-2.673	<.001	-3.853	<.001
Age	.068	<.001	1.233	<.001	.124	.064	.111	.249
Age squared	-.001	<.001	-.013	<.001	-.001	.060	-.001	.530
Constant Term	-1.155	<.001	-10.309	0.009	31.151	<.001	36.695	<.001
R^2	.050		.075		0.031		.057	
F	37.58		49.84		20.95		33.91	
<i>Model Significance</i>	<.001		<.001		<.001		<.001	
<i>Number of Observations</i>	11,965		11,905		11,834		11,609	

Note: Gray shading on the first five (key independent) variables indicates that Lipset's hypothesis is confirmed; Lipset confirmed in 8 of 20 instances. Coefficients in boldface are statistically significant at .05 or better.

In sum, at the individual level and controlling for the past history of democracy, citizens' legitimacy norms, sex and age, in our eight contemporary Latin American nations *individual wealth (standard of living) either decreases or fails to increase* five kinds of political participation. In one of the seven forms (party activism) there is actually *more* participation by those with fewer economic resources. In sharp contrast to wealth, education functions largely as Lipset predicted, associating with more participation except for civil society engagement. As indicated by the cells with gray shading on Tables 4 and 5, Lipset's hypothesis is confirmed only slightly more than half the time, and then mainly through the effects of education on participation.

And at the macro level and controlling for the past history of democracy, citizens' legitimacy norms, sex and age, Lipset's hypothesis is confirmed in only five of twenty-one instances (also indicated by gray shadings in Tables 4 and 5). Other factors held constant, in our eight Latin American nations *citizens are more likely, rather than less, to be actively engaged* in politics where their economic systems are less developed and when they live in smaller and poorer communities. The pattern is more uneven in the case of levels of political activity as related to stronger social welfare levels reflected in low infant mortality – Lipset's hypothesis is confirmed only three of seven times.

Conclusions

At the micro level we have found a sharp disconnect between the impact of personal poverty/wealth and education on participation in contemporary Latin America. Poverty is far

less clearly a drag on citizen involvement than Lipset believed, and in some cases actually increases participation. Education, in contrast, enhances citizen participation in six of seven participation types. On balance, then, in our eight countries it is not mainly the poor who fail to take part in politics, but the less well educated. One clear implication of this finding is that strengthening access to education should correspondingly increase citizen participation in politics. Such increased citizen participation could, we believe, increase governmental awareness of citizens' needs and responsiveness to their demands. Such increased citizen communication with government – through voting, contacting, group involvement, partisan activism, and even protesting – could also constrain governments to behave responsively and responsibly and thus contribute to democratic consolidation.

At the macro level, other factors held constant, citizens in our eight Latin American nations are more rather than less likely to be actively engaged in politics where their economic systems are less developed, when they live in smaller communities, and in some cases where social services are poor.

These findings, on balance, are quite contrary to Lipset's expectations, and raise some interesting questions. First, for poor countries, especially the poorest countries in our study (Honduras and Nicaragua) what are the implications of having poor citizens who are relatively active political participants? The poor and less well-educated are, indeed, fractionally slightly more authoritarian than those richer and better educated. Is this very minor difference likely to tilt these systems toward authoritarian rule because the poor are active participants? We do not believe so, based on the micro-level political participation reported here and attitudes reported in other studies (Booth and Richard 2006; Booth and Seligson 1984; 2005; Booth, Wade and Walker 2006). Nor does it seem likely that participation by the poor through civil society and

communal improvement activity, in which citizens work for the betterment of their own situations and communities with limited aid from government, would be politically destabilizing or have the capacity to usher in a wave of system-level authoritarianism (Booth 2006 forthcoming; Richard 2006 forthcoming).

A second question is whether the poor, who are politically active and manifestly need more things – more education, better public and social services, and better incomes to mention but a few– represent a special burden on impoverished governments. In essence we ask Samuel Huntington’s (1968) classic question: Does the demand-making of the poor in pursuit of social justice threaten to destabilize their countries – in our cases, all democracies? Will these demands overtax their systems’ capacity to respond and lead to decay? Will demands from the politically active poor challenge the stability and capacity of the formal democracies that have arisen in the region? Our answer here is less optimistic. Latin American nations – poor and rich alike – over the last two decades have embraced neo-liberal economic reforms that have reduced their governments’ capacities to address citizens needs and demands. States have become smaller and reduced their capacities to provide services to citizens under this new economic model.

We anticipate two most likely outcomes. One would be that resource-poor governments might respond with renewed or escalated repression designed to demobilize demands, as they have in the region in the past (Booth, Wade and Walker 2006). Another is that governments might, as has Venezuela under Chávez, move away from the policies of neo-liberalism. But Venezuela is a far more resource-rich nation than most others in the region and its government has oil to support social programs. Whether the poorer states of Latin America, such as Bolivia under the pressure of leftist populism with the recent election of Evo Morales, will have the resources to address such demands remains to be seen. Economic crisis driven by profligate

public spending can be a menace to regime stability in the region. It has contributed to the downfall of governments of left and right and both democratic and authoritarian in Latin America.

Finally, many have noted the link missing between economic development and democracy in Latin America. Except for education, we too have found little connection between systemic economic development or personal wealth and individual political participation. Why is that so? In part, we believe that Lipset may have been wrong about the authoritarian potential of mass participation. But there are other factors that must be considered. The most important of these appears to be the international environment and how external constraints upon Latin America may have contributed to the emergence of formal democracy. Many observers (Booth, Wade and Walker 2006; Grugel 2002; Robinson 1996; 2003) have argued that pressure from the United States, Europe, international organizations, and international or global capital likely have contributed to democratization (or in Robinson's more critical term "polyarchy"). Economic and political crises destabilized authoritarian regimes, providing an opportunity for key external actors to impose overt and subtle pressures to adopt the means of formal democracy. Thus in the end the missing direct link between economic development and democracy in Latin America suggests that great external pressure can override, at least for a time, the widely anticipated internal links between economic system traits on the one hand, and micro-level behavior on the other.

Appendix: Variables Used in the Study

Description of Indexes and Variables		Mean	St.Dev.
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Socio-economic inequality at the individual level			
Standard of Living	An index constructed based on the respondent's report of various articles of wealth: potable drinking water, indoor plumbing, television sets, refrigerator, cell phone, automobiles, washing machine, microwave oven, and computer (range 0-14).	4.95	3.35
Education	Total years of education completed	7.78	5.75
Socio-economic inequality at the local and national level			
Size of community of residence	An ordinal measure of the relative population size/urbanization of the city/town/village in which the interview took place: national capital or metropolitan area (5), large city (4), medium city (3), small city (2), rural area (1).	3.26	1.60
National wealth	Gross National Income, 2002, in U.S. dollars (World Bank 2002)	2,690.61	1,688.99
Welfare	Infant mortality per 1,000 live births, 2002 (World Bank 2002)	25.62	8.73
Level of democracy	Vanhanen 1900-1989. Vanhanen Mean Democracy 1900-1989, scale 0-100. Vanhanen (1997).	3.79	2.05
Legitimacy measures			
Existence of Political Community	To what degree are you proud to be a Costa Rican? (7-point scale: recoded into a great deal =100...not at all =0). To what degree do you agree that in spite of our differences, we Costa Ricans have a lot of things and values that unite us as a country? (7-point scale: , recoded into very much agree=100...very much disagree =0).	67.36	12.30
Support for Core Regime Principles	I am going to read you a list of some actions or things that people can do to achieve their goals and political objectives. Please tell me to what degree do you approve or disapprove of people taking these actions: (10-point scale, 0= strongly disapprove; 10 = strongly approve, transformed to a 0-100 range)... That people participate in a legally permitted demonstration.... That people participate in a group that tries to resolve community problems.... That people work in an election campaign for a party or candidate.	67.66	18.48

Evaluation of Regime Performance	<p>How would you rate, in general, the economic situation of the country? (5-point scale: recoded into very good =100...very poor =0)</p> <p>Do you think that over the next 12 months that the economic situation of the country will be better, the same or worse than it is now. (5-point scale: recoded into much better =100...much worse =0).</p>	44.52	15.27
Support for Regime Institutions	<p>All of the following are on a 7-point scale: 0=none...7= much, transformed into 0-100):</p> <p>How much do you think the courts of Costa Rica guarantee a fair trial?</p> <p>How much do you respect the political institutions of Costa Rica?</p> <p>How much do you think citizens' basic rights are well protected by the Costa Rican political system?</p> <p>How proud do you feel to live under the Costa Rican political system?</p> <p>How much do you think one should support the Costa Rican political system?</p> <p>How much do you trust the Supreme Electoral Tribunal?</p> <p>How much do you trust the Legislative Assembly?</p> <p>How much do you trust the political parties?</p> <p>How much do you trust the Supreme Court?</p>	50.73	17.06
Support for Local Government	<p>How much trust do you have in the Municipality? (7 point scale: 0=none...100= much)</p> <p>Would you say that the services that the municipality is providing the people of your canton (county) are very good (100), good (75), neither good nor bad (50), bad (25), very bad (0)?</p> <p>To what degree to the municipal officials pay attention to the people's wishes in meetings. A lot (100), somewhat (66), little (33), not at all (0)?</p> <p>If you had a complaint about some local problem, and you took it to a member of the municipal council, how much attention would they pay you? A lot (100), somewhat (66), little (33), not at all (0)?</p>	45.58	17.40
Support for Political Actors	<p>All on a 7-point scale (nothing=0... much = 100):</p> <p>Referring to the incumbent government, how much did that government:</p> <p>Fight poverty?</p> <p>Combat government corruption?</p> <p>Promote democratic principles?</p>	48.80	23.18

<i>Dependent Variables: Modes of Political Participation</i>			
Voting	Respondent reported voting in immediate past presidential election. No = 0, Yes = 1.	72.66	44.57
Legislative-level contacting	Respondent reported contacting a legislative deputy. No = 0, Yes = 1.	10.68	30.89
Contacting local official	Respondent reported contacting a local official (mayor, council person, etc.) No = 0, Yes = 1.	22.66	41.86
Communal Activism	Respondent reported helping to solve a community problem within the last year, as well as donating money, contributed work, attended meetings, and organized a new group to solve a problem (Respondent receives one point for responding affirmatively to each item; range = 0 – 5).	1.10	1.69
Civil Society Activism	Combines scores for respondent's intensity of meeting attendance (0 = never, 33 = once or twice a year, 66 = once or twice a month, 100= once a week) in four civil society organizations: religious organization, school, community improvement, professional, business or producers associations. The index value is the sum of these scores divided by 4. Range 0 - 100.	25.36	20.08
Political Party Activism	Attend meetings of a political party (0 = never, 33 = once or twice a year, 66 = once or twice a month, 100= once a week).	8.86	22.07
Protest Participation	Participation in a public protest (0 = never, 50 = almost never, 100 = at times)	12.60	31.54
<i>Demographic Controls</i>			
Sex	Male = 1, Female =2	0.52	0.50
Age	Range: 18 and over, except for Nicaragua where 16 and over.	38.48	15.73
Age squared	Respondent's age is squared to produce the quadratic form of the equation.	1728.35	1417.73

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