

THE RATIONALITY OF POLITICAL CULTURE
Voter Turnout and Social Capital

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DRAFT VERSION FOR READERS' COMMENTS

Revision dated August 4, 1999

Prepared for delivery at the
1999 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association,
Atlanta Marriott Marquis and Atlanta Hilton and Towers,
September 2-5, 1999.

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Abstract

Social capital is a concept that can facilitate a friendly merger between sociological and economic theories of political behavior. Rational-choice theories emphasize resources and constraints, and political-cultural theories focus on normative rules and habitual behavior; social capital integrates both. Mutual obligations instituted among members of society function as “credit slips” which are both derived from preexisting cultural norms and subject to cost-benefit analysis by the individual. Previous research has suggested that elections constitute one such institution, composed of widely diffused mutual obligations. The decision to turn out is reanalyzed here in light of this approach, focusing on the respondent’s exposure to normative contexts that foster mutual obligations. Respondents act rationally upon the information represented by their political-cultural attitudes toward self, government, and regime. Nonvoters who are alienated and excluded from the political community, particularly the racial and ethnic minorities, can be distinguished from satisfied or apathetic nonvoters when these contextual controls are included. Civic engagement (membership in voluntary associations) is demonstrated to be a significant predictor of turnout in the 1996 presidential election. The methodology includes a correction for over-reported turnout in 1996 using a proxy for likely actual voters derived from National Election Studies “validated vote” data for 1978-1990, and confirmatory factor analysis is employed to generate improved measures of key concepts, including internal and external political efficacy and regime support.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to John Brehm and Wendy Rahn for providing the basis for this paper and to the entire Duke political science community for support and stimulation. Thanks in advance to all who will provide constructive criticism as this early draft is improved. Data used in this paper can be retrieved from the National Election Studies (NES) website (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes>) and the Federal Election Commission (FEC) (<http://www.fec.gov>). Supportive documentation, including code for SAS and Stata software, will be available on the author’s home page (<http://www.duke.edu/~nec/ps>). This material is based upon work supported under a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Fellowship. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF, the NES or the FEC.

TWO BATTLEFIELDS: ALIENATION VS. SATISFACTION, SOCIOLOGY VS. ECONOMICS

Abstention from voting in national elections is an important action with ambiguous meaning, a problem which evokes two longstanding debates. The first is primarily empirical, while the second is theoretical.

The Empirical Problem: Are Nonvoters Satisfied?

Is the nonvoter apathetic and happily so – a satisfied customer – or is she alienated from the political system? These two possibilities are not entirely mutually exclusive, and there are others. A third option is implied by Verba and Nie (1972, chapter 7), who point out that voting is but one of many opportunities for political participation, and the bluntest of the available instruments at that. Nonvoters may be dissatisfied, yet confident enough in their ability to influence government in more direct ways that they abstain from voting.

The empirical question is complicated by the problem of misreporting; many survey respondents tell interviewers they voted, when in fact they did not. The American National Election Studies' (NES) "validated vote" projects address this by checking reported turnout against local election records. Using this data, Abramson and Claggett (1991, among many others) have shown that blacks in particular are significantly less likely to vote, even after controls for education, income and region; but they do not control for the unlikely but genuine possibility that minority abstention actually reflects apathy and satisfaction. Ragsdale and Rusk (1993) show that dissatisfaction with candidates characterizes many nonvoters, but do not include minority status in their work. Here I correct for misreported turnout and include several measures of satisfaction with both regime and government alongside minority status. Borrowing Easton's (1957) categories of "system support," I distinguish dissatisfaction from alienation. Dissatisfaction with the regime is not alienation; alienation is *de facto* exclusion from the political community. The results are complex, but essentially show that people dissatisfied with government (the "externally inefficacious") are *more* likely to vote, while racial and ethnic minorities remain less likely to vote and are very probably "alienated."

A further rival scenario contends that nonvoting is nothing more than the outcome of potential voters' rational calculations of the instrumental value of turning out, based on the probability of a close election and the cost of going to the polls. This image of the voter contrasts sharply with the picture of a noninstrumental voter who, regardless of personal feelings of alienation or futility, votes out of a socialized, habitual sense of duty or responsibility.

The Theoretical Problem: Whose Explanation?

Thus the second, complementary debate is wholly theoretical, involving the perennial competition between sociological or "cultural" explanations and economic or "rational-choice" analyses. Sociology historically emphasizes normative and habitual voting behaviors

involuntarily acquired from the social environment, while economics emphasizes voluntary individual analysis of the costs and benefits of voting. A useful chronicle of the early years of this struggle in modern political science is found in Brian Barry's *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy* (1970). Barry's book pits political economists Downs (1957), Olson (1965), and Riker and Ordeshook (1968) against political sociologists Almond and Verba (1963/1989), Eckstein (1966) and Lipset (1959 and others), and delivers critiques of both that remain relevant.

The "political culture" approach taken by the political sociologists contended that stable democratic institutions are generally a product of "civic" attitudes of internal efficacy (political self-confidence or "subjective competence") and external efficacy (trust in government responsiveness), both of which are ostensibly the slow-moving products of socialization. For example, in Almond and Verba's comparative study, British and American respondents were more likely than Germans, Italians or Mexicans both to express trust in political leadership, police and other authorities and to express self-confidence in political matters. This "judicious mix of respect for authority and sturdy independence" (Barry 1970: 48) is the "civic culture" that undergirds democracy. Barry challenged that Almond and Verba's causal argument was probably exactly backward – democratic institutions probably produce civic culture (1970: 49ff), a critique echoed by critics of the well-known work of Putnam (1993; see Tarrow 1996, for example).

Meanwhile, the economic method advanced by Downs and company begs the question of the origin of "preferences," the individual characteristics that define "utility." As Barry wrote and many have since echoed, "It is no trick to restate all behaviour in terms of 'rewards' and 'costs'; it may for some purposes be a useful conceptual device, but it does not in itself provide anything more than a set of empty boxes waiting to be filled." (1970: 15) Barry adroitly connected the competing schools with their historical ideological roots; the economic school is rooted in Bentham's liberal utilitarianism, while the sociological school is founded on the conservative elitism of Hegel and Coleridge; Barry identifies these positions with Enlightenment and Reaction, respectively. Where Bentham advocated pursuing political stability through tangible rewards and punishments that channel innate human desires for power and influence, his critics, horrified by the destructive mass individualism of the French Revolution, advocated the inculcation of common value systems represented by "irrational" cultural traits like religion and "national character."

Elitism vs. Reformism

These two major debates intersected when scholars such as Dahl (1954, 1961) and Berelson (1954) promoted the "elitist" theory of democracy, which implied that nonvoting is a healthy sign of satisfaction with the political system and preferable to high rates of participation, which would likely reflect polarization and extremism. The elitist position holds much in common with the sociological school. Dahl even went so far as to dismiss the Constitution and its Madisonian logic as irrelevant to the success of democracy; rather, "in so far as there is any

general protection in human society against the deprivation by one group of the freedom desired by another, it is probably not to be found in constitutional forms. It is to be discovered, rather, in extra-constitutional factors," for example, the democratic values or egalitarian norms held by the citizenry (1954: 134). Dahl's elitism is very much in conformity with Almond and Verba's civic culture: political institutions are emergent properties of political cultures – which Dahl called "social prerequisites" – and not the reverse. Many scholars have pursued this line of thinking, from both optimistic and pessimistic perspectives. Edelman (1964, 1971) is one of the best-known pessimists, arguing that elites use political culture and "symbolism" to subdue masses and deceive them into "quiescence." For Edelman, the institution of the vote is a fiction that distracts the masses from the real base of power. Walker (1966), in a passionate defense of classical democratic theory, was an optimist about the future potential of democracy but, like Edelman, a pessimist about his present-day, arguing that blacks in particular were excluded and alienated, not satisfied and apathetic. For Walker, widespread abstention from voting threatened democracy rather than preserved it.

The primary concern in all of the sociological works has been with discovering the relationship between political participation and mass attitudes, or "orientations toward political objects," as Almond and Verba (1963/1989) defined political culture. Working largely from bi- and trivariate crosstabulations of survey responses, Almond and Verba arrived at the conclusion:

The self-confident citizen appears to be the democratic citizen. Not only does he think he can participate, he thinks that others ought to participate as well. Furthermore, he does not merely think he can take a part in politics; he is likely to *be* more active. (1963/1989: 207)

Self-confidence (or "internal political efficacy"), in the understanding of *The Civic Culture* and its heirs, encourages political participation by means of affective and cognitive processes. Almond and Verba also found a positive relationship between participation and satisfaction with the political system in the abstract. This paper capitalizes on their findings by including several of these attitudinal variables in a single multivariate analysis and demonstrating that the sociological variables, *ceteris paribus*, perform in a manner that is compatible with an economic calculus.

The economic school, on the other hand, has focused on solving the "paradox of not voting" (Ferejohn and Fiorina 1974), which was introduced by Downs and formalized by Tullock (1967). Potential voters are alleged to undertake a simple calculation:

$$E(U) = (P * B) - C$$

where $E(U)$ represents the expected utility of voting; P is the probability that the individual's vote will actually affect the outcome (without knowledge of the size of factions, this is equal to $1/N$, where N is the total number of voters); B is the expected benefit of the preferred candidate winning the election (for example pork-barrel funds or policy outcomes); and C is the cost of

voting (for example the effort to become informed and to get to the polls). The extremely small probability of casting the deciding vote in national elections severely diminishes the already indirect benefits of the outcomes over which voters are choosing, meaning that even the small costs of traveling to a polling place should be more than enough to discourage a rational person from voting.¹ But millions do vote. Why?

Numerous attempts to resolve the nonvoting dilemma are nicely summarized by Niemi and Weisberg (1993: 13-23); one of the most enduring innovations was proposed by Riker and Ordeshook (1968), who introduced the concept of the “D term”:

$$E(U) = (P * B) - C + D$$

where *D* is the intrinsic benefit of the act of voting, which may be a variety of types of purely psychological satisfaction (for example, fulfilling one’s civic duty) or may itself be instrumental, as Downs suggested, for the long-term maintenance of democracy. Unlike *B*, the *D* term is not affected by the probability *P* and so can easily exceed *C* and produce positive turnout. But Barry’s critique of this adaptation remains telling: narrow rational-choice analysis is unable to explain within its own framework why some people have larger *D* terms than others. This question is more appropriate to the civic culture scholarship than to rational choice.

Some efforts (for example, Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978, Cox and Munger 1989, Aldrich 1993) have shifted the focus from individual-level parameters of the utility function to institutional constraints (such as registration laws and polling hours) and elite mobilization efforts (party contacting, campaign spending, etc.). These external conditions can alter the balance of the individual’s calculus of voting by providing increased selective benefits (part of the *D* term), by radically reducing the costs *C* of voting, and by increasing the perception of *P* through more competitive elections.

Thus an “alienated” nonvoter in the economic approach would generally be defined not by attitudes but by concrete exclusion from the political system—a definition I accept and support below. Where Dahl (1954) discredited the causal value of “constitutional forms,” the political economists exalt them; campaign laws and more inclusive registration laws and polling hours, not civic morale-boosting, are the favored solution to low turnout.

¹I am speaking strictly of a very narrow or *procedural* rationality, as opposed to a Weberian *substantive* rationality; see Jackman 1993 for this particular distinction. In other words, rationality is defined by calculation as a means, not by the selection of a particular end. A “Barney in 2000” voter may be substantively irrational in the choice of candidates but procedurally rational in making the decision to vote. See *Hypotheses* below for more about self-interest as an end.

IS A MERGER IN PROGRESS? SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

In his conclusion, Barry (1970) wryly appealed for compromise and synergy between the two schools of thought: "It is hard to imagine that political scientists will continue indefinitely, like French politicians, to fight out the battle between the Enlightenment and the Reaction." (1970: 183) We may finally be closing the gap, by virtue of movements in both fields: in sociology, the concept of "social capital," and in political economy, the no-longer-so-new "new institutionalism."

About Social Capital

Social capital has a complex and controversial history as a concept (see Portes 1998 for a review). The concept itself, however, is fairly simple – sometimes obvious – and revolutionary only because it tends to resolve the longstanding debate. I adhere to James Coleman's (1990) influential treatment, which is lucid and analytic. The integration pursued here is precisely what Coleman intended. Coleman welded together the Durkheimian observation that society is more than the sum of its parts with the economic assumptions of individual rationality. "Social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production" (1990: 302). Yet:

[An] obligation can be conceived of as a 'credit slip' held by A to be redeemed by some performance by B. If A holds a large number of these credit slips from a number of persons with whom he has relations, then the analogy to financial capital is direct: The credit slips constitute a large body of credit on which A can draw if necessary--unless, of course, the placement of trust has been unwise, and the slips represent bad debts that will not be repaid. (306)

Social capital is thus accurately named; it is a property of collective social relations that functions analogously to currency or physical capital. Individuals cannot easily carry social capital with them from one context to another; it is not "fungible" but derived from the norms and practices of a specific community, however large. However, individuals can decide rationally how to employ it for their own ends, whether selfish or public. "Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence." (302) Social capital also has the characteristics of a public good, subject to the "free rider" or collective action problem (Olson 1965); community members can enjoy the benefits of high stocks of social capital without contributing to its production. (Coleman 1990: 315-318)

In fact, social capital, despite its more recent origins in scholarship, is clearly a more primordial concept than financial capital, since real currency itself depends upon a network of norms, albeit highly diffused, regarding the acceptability and worth of various forms of money. No "rational choice" about any kind of utility can be made independent of the social context

which defines concepts of utility. Here the intersection with the “new institutionalism” is apparent. Rational choice scholars (for example: Shepsle 1979, Shepsle and Weingast 1981, North 1990, Hinich and Munger 1994, 1997) have called attention to the decisive importance of institutional contexts in the explanation of political choices. These institutions can be very “sticky” and resistant to short-term manipulation, just as the sociological approach demands. Hinich and Munger argue, following Downs (1957), that it is rational for assessments of political objects to become simplified and apparently habitual, as ideologies and other normative practices often are; “Ideologies are a means of solving problems of uncertainty and lack of information.” (1997: 193) In many cases, these institutions simply *are* social capital, “norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement,” in Putnam’s (1993: 167) widely quoted summation. For example, the U.S. congressional committees that provide Shepsle’s “structure-induced equilibrium” are institutions based on mutual agreements and highly contextual forms of trust among representatives which facilitate decision making.

One of Coleman’s most useful observations on the social capital concept is the “purposive creation of obligations”:

Although the motives for freeing oneself from obligations may be readily understood (especially if the existence of obligations consumes one’s attention), the motives for creating obligations toward oneself are less transparent. If there is a nonzero chance that the obligation will not be repaid, it would appear that rational persons would extend such credit only if they expect to receive something greater in return—just as a bank makes a loan only at sufficient interest to realize a profit after allowing for risk. The question then becomes whether there is anything about social obligations to make a rational person interested in establishing and maintaining such obligations on the part of others toward himself. (309)

Common examples involve the conspicuous generosity of neighbors in traditional societies; Coleman cites the intentional referral of customers in the Cairo bazaar and the potlatch rituals of the Kwakiutl tribe of the Pacific Northwest. Elsewhere (Rahn, Brehm and Carlson 1999), my colleagues and I have argued that national elections are an example of this rational creation of obligations on a grand scale. At election time, politicians and citizens are engaged in a Durkheimian “ritual of solidarity” that confirms the basis for trust and recommitments everyone to democratic norms of conduct. By so doing, politicians incur obligations on the part of citizens and other politicians, and citizens incur obligations from politicians and other citizens. These obligations may be direct (in the form of client-patron relationships or logrolling), but in modern mass society they are increasingly likely to be highly impersonal, abstract and diffuse; voting may imply mutual commitment to democratic ideals, civil rights, and national defense, all of which are capable of interpretation as obligations traded by politicians and voters. As in the Cairo market where “what goes around comes around,” people contribute to creation of the public good of social capital by voting.

A Social Capital-Aware Theory of Turnout

Whether one votes or not should vary with the individual's position in social networks and on the perception of the trustworthiness of politicians and of the democratic system. If voting can be used to incur obligations, this implies the following two principles, P1 and P2. *Turnout thus depends partly on:*

- P1 *the apparent utility of the vote as a means to incur obligations;*
and
P2 *the utility to the prospective voter of acquiring more such obligations.*

I operationalize P1 below in terms of stated regime support (how much are democratic obligations "worth"?) and P2 in terms of external efficacy (how many "credit slips" drawing on government am I holding now?). Political-cultural indicators are thus analogous to the various indexes of consumer confidence employed by economists; they represent appraisals of the worth of the social capital "currency" in circulation in specific settings (P1) and the respondent's utility gained by investing time and resources in acquiring more of it (P2).

It is important not to lose sight of the integrative goal; if economic terminology comes to pervade this discussion, it is for its analytic capacity, not because I embrace its unfortunate connotations of purely self-interested or purely calculating human nature, nor because I think it invalid to use other vocabularies to explain these phenomena. The "currency" we are considering still consists of *obligations*, themselves normative rules and principles, many of which take such intangible forms as duty, self-sacrifice and altruism; the habituating and emotional nature of these norms is not in question. As Jackman (1993) insists, *procedural* rationality (calculation of costs and benefits) does not preclude a selfless *substantive* rationality (the goals that define utility). As I shall contend below, specific normative contexts (religious commitment, marriage, civic engagement) represent "stocks of social capital" that influence the calculus of voting, sometimes simply by calling attention to one's duty to others and reinforcing the perceived worth of the social capital "currency." They may function directly as ideologies, as described by Hinich and Munger (1994, 1997).

Aldrich offers a fairly definitive analysis of the problem of rationality and voter turnout: "the turnout decision is a marginal decision with low costs and low expected benefits for many people, most of the time." (1993: 274) In other words, rational-choice theory is neither disqualified nor diminished by its inability to predict the turnout decision parsimoniously, simply because the decision is by nature of small importance to most people – and rationally so – and can be easily influenced by a multitude of forces. The decision to vote is always vulnerable to minor changes in the individual's attitudes, beliefs, context and elite actions, although a multitude of such small influences may be necessary to affect the actual decision.

The model presented below capitalizes on this observation and demonstrates the statistical significance of a wide range and number of distinct influences.

A further helpful development in rational-choice thinking comes from Grafstein (1991, 1995), whose endorsement of “evidential decision theory” – as opposed to “causal decision theory” – has unfortunately generated little published response. Brutally simplified, Grafstein’s argument is as follows: much has already been made of the fact that the P term in the calculus of voting renders the problem game theoretic, rather than merely decision theoretic (Aldrich 1993, for example). That is, the decision to vote depends on the decisions of other prospective voters, especially those who favor the subject’s preferred candidate. But the best information or “diagnostic” the subject has about other people is her own decision; if the subject decides to vote, this is a powerful indicator that others like her will also do so. Even though the subject cannot with any certainty *cause* her preferred candidate to win, her decision to vote raises the “conditional expected utility” of voting by indicating both a higher probability that her vote will be decisive, that the preferred candidate will win and hence that $P * B > C$. “Free-riding” on the votes of others is fruitless, since the decision to abstain provides strong evidence that other group members will also abstain, resulting in a less preferred outcome. Costs remain significant and can still result in a decision to abstain, but the subject’s estimate of the ratio of costs to benefits is also conditional on the group perception of costs, which is also best diagnosed by the individual’s own decision. I refer the reader to the article for further clarification; suffice it to say, Grafstein’s approach implies that it is appropriate to consider aggregate “social facts” like group membership in models of turnout, not simply as indicators of a vague psychological state of solidarity, but as important factors in the individual’s rational decision-making calculus. Thus Grafstein’s purely formal approach takes a step toward integrating sociological and economic analysis. I pursue this further, examining the possibility that other political-cultural attitudes are an integral part of the calculus as well.

This paper, then, attempts to follow Coleman’s lead and reconcile sociology and economics at a negotiating table sponsored by political science. Turning out to vote is a rational decision taken in an institutional, normative context by people acting under conditions of uncertainty. Attitudinal responses to political-cultural survey questions about political efficacy, regime support, and civic engagement are indicators of the rational actor’s perception of institutional context; that is, a reflection of the respondent’s perceived stock of social capital. They are not – necessarily – purely reflexive, irrational, emotional states which motivate action only through habit, although they certainly can be such for that minority of the population who are simply politically irrational.

My argument differs somewhat from the compromise proposed by Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995), whose praiseworthy Civic Voluntarism Model draws on similar thinking in attempting to reconcile what they term the “SES” (socioeconomic status) and rational-choice models. Verba *et al* focus on “resources” and distinguish the “human capital” of “civic skills” acquired by members of groups from the effects of the institutional contexts themselves. Their

findings are robust and generally unassailable. But human capital, unlike social capital, is portable across social contexts, since it inheres in the individual and not in relationships. I am proposing that social capital, the “resources” represented by normatively-defined social relationships, is *also* important, even when human capital is held constant. Unfortunately, the NES data I employ here does not facilitate a pure distinction between skills acquired in organizational settings and the institutional effects themselves. But Verba *et al* found relationships neither between civic skills and turnout nor associational membership and turnout (1995: 358). Their finding may be a false negative, as I will discuss below.

HYPOTHESES

Rahn *et al* (1999) demonstrated that respondents’ levels of trust in government and political efficacy rose over the period of the 1996 American National Election Study (NES) pre- and post-election surveys. We argued that these survey items are individual-level indicators of the presence of social capital; trust is associated with “norms of reciprocity” and mutual obligation (Putnam 1993, Fukuyama 1995). While our model showed that reported turnout had a positive (that is, efficacious) and significant effect on the survey item “People like me have don’t have any say about what the government does,” it was surely not large enough to account for all of the change toward efficacious and trusting responses. Rather, the trust-inducing effect of the electoral ritual appears to have been available to everyone, whether voter or not – consistent with the “public good” nature of social capital.

In fact, those respondents who became more trusting in government over the election period should actually be *less* likely to vote, since the marginal utility of incurring more obligations where many are already perceived to exist is decreasing,² and the incentive to “free ride” on others’ provision of social capital is increasing. I test this hypothesis under the rubric of “external efficacy / government support,” operationalized through a measurement model discussed below. While Abramson and Aldrich (1982) and Finkel (1985) found a positive relationship between external efficacy and turnout, the controlled relationship is probably negative.

H1 *External efficacy should depress turnout, all else equal.*

Trust in government is not the whole picture, and has often been criticized for its central role in the civic culture literature. Many have pointed out, correctly, that mistrust for

²It may be objected that “more is always better,” since the marginal utility of money does not decline. In this case, the analogy to currency may not be the best one. Social capital may better be described as analogous to physical capital, such as industrial machinery or private autos, which require costly maintenance. If money were still all metal instead of paper, plastic, or digital bits, the same problem might apply. Voting is not costless, so utility should decline at the margin.

government is often a healthy sign, even in democracies; misplaced trust can lead to an authoritarian disaster. Easton (1957) distinguished three forms of “system support,” of which support for the government is only one:

. . . supportive behavior may involve not external observable acts, but those internal forms of behavior we call orientations or states of mind. As I use the phrase, a supportive state of mind is a deep-seated set of attitudes or predispositions, or a readiness to act on behalf of some other person. It exists when we say that a man is loyal to his party, attached to democracy, or infused with patriotism. . . . Support is fed into the political system in relation to three objects: the community, the regime, and the government. (1957: 390-1)

Regime support is support for “the so-called rules of the game, in the light of which actions by members of the system are legitimated and accepted by the bulk of the members as authoritative.” (392) Almond and Verba (1963/1989) termed this “allegiant political culture.” The term “regime” is more commonly used in comparative studies to distinguish monarchies, democracies and dictatorships and their subtypes. In this case, I use it to refer to expressions of confidence in democracy and elections in the United States, as distinguished from confidence in politicians.

To put these concepts in perspective: the external efficacy or government support discussed above relates to principle P2, regarding the marginal utility of incurring further obligations; regime support relates to principle P1, the overall reliability and value of the “currency” of voting. Where we have supposed that high levels of trust in government should produce diminishing marginal utility from voting, high levels of confidence in the democratic regime should enhance the value of the social capital “currency” and promote voting.

H2 *Regime support should increase voter turnout.*

Easton’s third concept, community support, regards the boundaries for the political community, before regime and government are constituted. For instance, Easton suggested that France survived very low levels of regime and government support in the mid-twentieth century by virtue of high levels of community support or national identity (1957: 394).³ No attitudes of alienation are explicitly measurable in the NES data set; but attitudes are not the issue. Instead, we may infer that social groups whose propensity to vote is significantly lower than that of other groups, even after controlling both for attitudes of satisfaction or apathy and for a wide range of human and social capital “resources” and costs of voting, are excluded or withdrawn from the political community – that is, “alienated.” Dissatisfied, even nihilistic people may remain members of the political community; satisfied people may still be excluded

³Easton thus echoes Dahl’s confidence in “non-constitutional forms.”

as aliens. Following Walker (1966), I expect more than thirty years of civil rights efforts to have improved but not eradicated exclusion of racial and ethnic minorities.

Abramson and Claggett (1991 etc.) have repeatedly documented the propensity for minority groups to over-report voter turnout after controlling for socioeconomic status. A “likely turnout” proxy for the validated vote (see Appendix A) compensates for this. I have included another ostensibly marginalized group, those who “feel close to the poor” (as opposed to the poor by income). In each case, the mechanism is that proposed by Grafstein (1991, 1995): members of marginalized groups face low probabilities of electoral success and higher costs of voting, and these barriers are self-reinforcing, since each individual’s awareness of high costs and small benefits is reinforced by the realization that other members of the group face the same obstacles.

H3 *Ethnic minorities and other groups on the margins of the political community will be less likely to vote.*

A fourth concept parallel to but missing from Easton’s triad is “self support” or “internal efficacy” – Almond and Verba’s “subjective competence.” Where external efficacy regards responsiveness and trustworthiness of government and its personnel, internal efficacy reflects the survey respondent’s impression of his own internal capacity to understand and influence politics. The concept is clearly in the category of human capital, not social capital; like training on a particular type of machine, it is a sense of competence specific to politics.

Internal efficacy is conceptually crucial to political participation in general; individuals who perceive themselves as inherently powerless are unlikely to act on their own behalf. However, in specific political contexts like voting, where participation is costly and benefits are relatively small, rationally efficacious prospective voters should be more likely to *abstain*. Just as a powerful nation-state can afford to forego minor opportunities to exercise influence, so a self-confident individual may see voting as an unnecessary act when more direct actions, in situations chosen by the citizen rather than the normal political calendar, are more productive. Verba and Nie (1972) identified and measured several of these alternative channels of participation and typed citizens by their “specialization” in various types. Only 21% of their sample “specialized” in voting, and 22% were inactive. The rest were engaged in multiple political acts, including voting; with a menu of channels to exercise influence, it stands to reason that a rational decision maker on a limited “budget” might, other things being equal, demote the blunt instrument of voting in favor of letter writing or personal contacting. Again, this hypothesis contrasts with the findings of Abramson and Aldrich (1982) and Finkel (1985).

H4 *All else equal, internal efficacy should depress turnout*

The key concept in much social capital scholarship has been “civic engagement,” measured by Putnam (1993, 1995a, 1995b), Brehm and Rahn (1997) and Rahn *et al* (1999) as reported memberships in voluntary associations. Drawing on a tradition as old as Tocqueville and Durkheim, these scholars argue that the face-to-face contact with others in cooperative settings not only builds personal skills, as Verba *et al* (1995) contend, but forge networks of trust and a sense of solidarity that has tremendously important effects; Putnam, as well as Fukuyama (1995), contend that civic engagement precedes economic development. Their numerous critics have questioned the rigorousness of the basic hypothesis; why should voluntary association necessarily generate such optimistic outcomes; aren’t warring camps of cynical bigots also conceivable outcomes?

The answer is, frankly, yes: social capital itself is fundamentally a neutral technology which can facilitate hostility as well as cooperation. But the analogy to market economics remains strong; a wider market makes mutual obligations more valuable, and the attractions of cooperation (Axelrod 1984) and “free trade” can be found to exceed the benefits of what amounts to social-capital protectionism. Like regime support, civic engagement is a multiplier of the value of the currency; the wider the respondent’s trading network, the greater the value of new “credit slips,” in Coleman’s terms. Civic engagement indicates the survey respondent’s degree of exposure to social networks where mutual obligations are traded and enforced under sets of acknowledged rules. It is important to remember the normative content of involvement in organizations, especially of the types we will use for measurement here: charitable and youth organizations, religious associations, service organizations and professional groups all have ethical codes, rules of order and informal codes of conduct that tie the individual to others and, generally, emphasize interdependence.⁴

Civic engagement is just one of three “normative contexts” I test here; religious commitment and marriage are the others. More than just attendance or church membership, the religious commitment measure includes respondents’ reports of the importance of religion, frequency of prayer, reading of the Bible and belief in its authority. Marriage, defined by exchanged vows and high levels of interdependence, is similarly normative in character. Both promote the sense of civic duty praised by civic culture scholars and included in the *D* term by Riker and Ordeshook (1968).

H5 *Exposure to normative contexts (religious commitment, marriage, and civic engagement) increases turnout.*

⁴The character of civic engagement is necessarily endogenous, and it is certainly conceivable that democratic political culture imparts a unique ethos to organizational membership; these same ethical codes and rules of order could be malevolent if built on a fascist or tribalist political culture, for example. But that is a topic for another investigation.

MEASUREMENT MATTERS

Two important steps improve measurement in the models below; first, I have developed a proxy to correct for misreported turnout; second, I have used confirmatory factor analysis to score ten related latent variables.

Validated Vote Proxy

Details of the corrected vote proxy can be found in Appendix A. Many studies have been concerned with incorrect models of voter turnout due to high rates of over-reporting, especially with regard to race and ethnicity (for example, Abramson and Claggett 1991). Several of the items we want to use are not available before 1996, but misreporting is clearly a problem in the 1996 NES data; 76.6% of the 1996 NES respondents reported voting, but Federal Election Commission data says that only 74.4% of the voting age population (VAP) was even registered to vote in 1996 and only 66% of registered voters turned out, for a total of 49.1% of the VAP. The respondents are fibbing, or forgetting, at a profound rate. The accuracy of our predictions is further challenged by the propensity for nonvoters to refuse the postelection survey at higher rates than voters.

The proxy uses the NES “validated vote” studies for six national elections from 1978 to 1990, excepting 1982 when the validated vote was not implemented. In those years, NES staff checked voter registration and turnout records to determine if respondents actually voted, and also indicated their confidence in the records. The model uses every significant variable possible found in the 1948-1996 cumulative NES data file in an effort to improve the fit while maximizing the number of observations. A probit model (found in Appendix A) for the validated vote is estimated from 7,451 pooled observations; the predicted values are approximately normally distributed and correlate with the actual vote at 0.48. By itself, this instrument is not a great improvement; reported turnout alone correlates with the validated vote at 0.73 for the same observations. The proxy model does not include reported turnout; while the same model fits well with reported turnout included, and all of the other variables remain significant, the resulting probability distribution is so dominated by reported turnout that the predicted values are almost entirely the same as reported turnout alone.

Given this problem, there are several ways to implement the proxy, all of them problematic. The 1996 data was coded to match the 1978-1990 variables used in the proxy, and a set of predicted probabilities of voting were generated by calculating the cumulative normal density function for the proxy’s probit coefficients (dropping variables used to control for systematic errors in the 1978-1990 validated vote dependent variable). The resulting 1996 probability distribution correlates with the 1996 reported vote at 0.40, and yields the following results:

Table 1 Reported vs. Likely Turnout, 1996 NES

1978-90 Turnout Proxy with 1996 data (<i>probability</i>)	1996 Reported Turnout				Total
	No	Score	Yes	Score	
No (Pr ≤ 50%)	157 (12.3%)	0	230 (17.9%)	0.5	387 (30.2%)
Yes (Pr > 50%)	79 (6.2%)	0.5	815 (63.6%)	1	894 (69.8%)
Total	236 (18.4%)		1045 (81.6%)		1281 (100.0%)

Percentages are cell percentages (percent of table total)

The probit-generated proxy simply isn't powerful or reliable enough to justify using it alone as a dependent variable; we would risk losing important information provided by the 1996 respondents' reported vote. Moreover, to do so would exaggerate the effects of the variables used to create the proxy, whose effects we still want to test. Using the proxy as an independent variable to "cleanse" the reported vote of imprecision fails to have much impact in practice; again, the instrument is too feeble to accomplish the aim by itself.

I have used a simple, if not unimpeachable solution. The cells of **Table 1** are simply assigned a weak ordinal priority: Yes / Yes is scored 1 and No / No is scored 0. The off-diagonals, Yes / No and No / Yes, are both assigned an arbitrary "Maybe" value of 0.5.

The resulting dependent variable has its problems; it is no longer binary and cannot be estimated with probit, neither is it continuous and unbounded as required for the assumptions of linear regression. However, it accomplishes the immediate goal if we are suitably cautious about the conclusions we draw. Using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to estimate a model of this "likely turnout" construct is not a pure linear probability model, but the discrete "trinary" nature of the dependent variable approximates it. While the whole model is somewhat suspect, the results will *understate* coefficients and *overestimate* standard errors, since the OLS assumption of unbounded distribution will fit a more shallowly sloping line than is appropriate. It is not clear that the S-shaped functional form of a probit or logit function would be accurate, either, since the 0.5 score for the middle "maybe" category merely represents ambiguity, not a 50% probability of voting. Further comments on the use of the estimator with this dependent variable are below.

Confirmatory Factor-Analytic Measurement Model

Complete details, including a table of factor loadings, appear in Appendix B. The measurement model draws on previous efforts by Brehm and Rahn (1997) and Rahn *et al* (1999). I borrow unchanged the latter article's latent variable constructions for interpersonal trust, civic engagement, and behavioral and psychological engagement in the campaign. Of

these I use the last three here: civic engagement is constructed from the number of respondents' reported memberships in seventeen types of voluntary organizations (thanks to Baumgartner and Walker 1988); the factor loadings reflect the relative "civicness" of these various types. "Behavioral engagement" is indicated by political *actions*: wearing campaign buttons, attending political meetings, working for a political party, and giving money to candidates, parties or political groups. Psychological engagement reflects four indicators of interest in the campaign and attention to news about the campaign.

The new measurement model adds constructs for internal and external political efficacy, regime support, retrospective sociotropic economic evaluations, religious commitment, and moral traditionalism. I use four of these here which merit brief commentary.

The first problem is with measuring efficacy, both internal (i.e. "self-support") and external ("government support"). In Rahn *et al* (1999), we did not distinguish separate internal and external dimensions of efficacy, and used a single survey item, "people like me don't have any say about what the government does." We further distinguished this item from a separate item for trust in government. The new model here shows that external efficacy and trust in government are capable of interpretation as a single concept; this observation corresponds to Niemi, Craig and Mattei's (1991) finding that political trust and external efficacy (using identical or similar indicator items) were correlated at 0.71.

The validity of specific efficacy survey items has been in dispute in literature by Acock, Clarke and Stewart (1985), Finkel (1985), and Niemi *et al* (1991). Unfortunately, the excellent internal efficacy items from the 1988 NES championed by Niemi *et al* have not been replicated. Instead, I have followed the earlier writers' advice and developed a model which shares ambiguous indicators between both concepts. For example, the item mentioned above can be interpreted both as a judgment about the respondent's qualities as a person and about the government's responsiveness to anyone like the respondent. My findings confirm that this indicator loads on both internal and external efficacy (but more strongly on the former) as expected by Acock *et al* (1985: 1070).

In summary, external efficacy is indicated by trust in Washington D.C. government and low perceptions of crookedness, waste and service of "big interests," along with two ambiguous items, "People like me don't have any say" and "Public officials don't care much what people like me think." Internal efficacy is indicated by the latter two and by "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on." To confirm that the internal efficacy factor represents the political self-confidence we want to measure, I included the interviewer's assessment of the respondent's apparent intelligence; rather than a pure measure of intelligence, this is surely a reasonable

behavioral indicator of the respondent's confidence with the survey material. Including or excluding this item makes little difference in the loadings, so it is retained as a diagnostic.⁵

Regime support is indicated here by three items:

1. "On the whole, are you satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States?"
2. "Thinking of the last election in the United States, where would you place it on this scale of one to five where 1 means that the last election was conducted fairly and 5 means that the last election was conducted unfairly?"
3. "How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what the people think – a good deal, some, or not much?"

These items are skewed toward satisfaction, as one might expect, but not so dramatically that they aren't useful: more than 19% of the sample were not satisfied with democracy, almost 10% ranked the 1992 election as unfair (a 4 or 5), and 14.5% answered "not much" to the third item. These items help us to capture the abstract value of the institutional social capital in the American political regime.

Finally, religious commitment expands the analysis beyond simple church attendance by looking behind it as just one indicator of a truly religious person. Four additional indicators used here include the respondent's judgment of the importance of religion, the frequency of prayer and Bible study, and the authority of Scripture, with prayer having the highest loading. This factor confirms that the respondent's religious involvement is greater than simple exploitation of the social resources available to church attenders, distinguishing it clearly from the civic engagement factor, which includes a church item.

The model allows covariance among all the latent variables and their error terms, so the scores for each respondent reflect not only variation on the indicator items but also covariation with the other latent factors. The result is a nearly continuous sample distribution of the scores for each latent variable, improving the efficiency of estimation in comparison with their discrete indicators.

⁵Astute observers will note that most of these indicators are from the post-election wave of the NES, throwing the causal priority of attitudes into question, especially given that Rahn *et al* (1999) have already shown that attitudes changed significantly between waves. Voters and non-voters may subconsciously adjust their reported attitudes to rationalize their decision whether to turnout. But which direction rationalization might take is arbitrary, and tests of these models with available pre-election single items have the same sign as the post-election latent variables. In the model below, substituting the difference between the post- and pre- government trust items also has the predicted sign; those who were becoming more trusting were less likely to vote. As noted, the results of Rahn *et al* do not require that the election have actually taken place for social-capital generating effects to occur, so it is at least plausible that changes in attitude took place before or concurrent with the decision to vote.

RESULTS: A MODEL OF VOTER TURNOUT INCLUDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

The simply “psychocultural” explanation of the original civic culture theory (Almond and Verba 1963/1989) expects both positive attitudes toward regime and government as well as high self-confidence to produce positive attitudes toward participation, which in turn encourage participatory behavior itself. Raw correlations with reported turnout support this expectation, although weakly; external efficacy’s correlation coefficient is 0.10 and internal efficacy’s is 0.24. The hypothesis based on social capital theory put forward here implies that the expectation is only partly correct; regime support, as an expression of confidence in the social “currency” of democracy, should increase voter turnout, while government support (“external efficacy”), an indication of surplus currency in the respondent’s account, should depress it.

Table 2 documents four very simple models of uncorrected reported turnout for the 1996 NES, using the probit estimator appropriate to the binary dependent variable. As expected, the bivariate model (1) including only external efficacy yields a positive and significant coefficient; but its explanatory power is very small, as shown by the very small “pseudo R-squared” figure.⁶ The chi-square for each model is very large, so the fit is quite poor, but at this point I am interested only in documenting basic relationships.

Table 2 Probit Models of Reported Turnout

<i>Model Number:</i>	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	Coefficient	P> z	Coefficient	P> z	Coefficient	P> z	Coefficient	P> z
Constant	0.777	0.000	0.002	0.988	0.142	0.192	2.731	0.000
External Efficacy / Government Support	0.374	0.000	0.003	0.978	-0.986	0.000	-0.980	0.000
Internal Efficacy			1.874	0.000	0.985	0.000	-1.432	0.000
Regime Support					1.407	0.000	1.565	0.000
Civic Engagement (logged)							1.053	0.000
<i>N</i>	1321		1321		1321		1321	
<i>Pseudo R</i> ²	0.010		0.056		0.086		0.162	

Adding internal efficacy to model 2 washes out external efficacy and produces a much larger and still positive coefficient; it would be easy to conclude that these relationships are inherently positive. Not until regime support is included (model 3) does external efficacy’s sign change and coefficient become substantive; the value -0.986 indicates that a one unit change in external efficacy decreases the probability of turnout by nearly one standard deviation after the effects

⁶“Pseudo R-squared” is output by Stata software and is calculated as $(1 - L1 / L0)$, where L1 is the log likelihood of the model and L0 is the log likelihood of a constant-only model. This simulates the meaning of R-squared for regressions. The resulting number is highly correlated with the squared correlation of the predicted and actual values of the dependent variable.

of other variables are taken into account.⁷ The relationship holds throughout the further addition of a multitude of controls, in spite of the high correlation (0.71) between external efficacy and regime support. In this case, the interference caused by multicollinearity is constructive rather than destructive. The high correlation may also account for the difference between these findings and those of Abramson and Aldrich (1982); when regime support is not explicitly included in a model, external efficacy may represent much of its effects.

Model 4 introduces civic engagement and similarly changes the sign and size of the internal efficacy coefficient. The probable explanation is similar to the above paragraph; internal efficacy is correlated at 0.58 with logged civic engagement. (Logging the scale significantly improves the fit, reflecting the fact that, as with income and education, most respondents cluster in lower to middle levels of the indicator, with a smaller group distributed in a long tail at the high end). When civic engagement is introduced, it controls for the extent to which internal efficacy correlates with confidence derived from generic sociability and restricts it to its primary, political meaning. Internal efficacy is a specifically *political* kind of *resource*. It is not social capital but human capital, like the civic skills and other resources emphasized by Verba *et al* (1995). Where resources like education and income are likely to enable all sorts of political activity, broadly, internal political efficacy represents the respondent's perception of specifically political personal resources. As noted earlier, voting is a blunt instrument that is probably less preferred by those confident enough to use more demanding methods of activism such as personal contacting and letter writing.

To test the hypotheses in full, **Table 3** presents two models of turnout; model 5 is a probit analysis of the binary reported vote variable, like those in **Table 2**. Model 6 tests the same specification of independent variables against the tripartite likely turnout proxy introduced above; because the variable is not binary, I use an ordinary least squares regression (OLS) to estimate the model.⁸ For an interesting additional comparison, Model 7 regresses behavioral engagement in the campaign on the same set of independent variables, except where likely turnout takes its place in the list. Of course, coefficients cannot be compared across models both because the estimators differ and the dependent variables differ. But the magnitude of coefficients is of little importance here; the primary purpose of this side-by-side comparison is

⁷External efficacy and regime support are scaled from -1 to 1; internal efficacy and civic engagement (before logging) are both scaled from 0 to 1. All coding of variables is made explicit in the full model below; scaling procedures are explained in Appendix B.

⁸Because the dependent variable is bounded and discrete, OLS produces unbiased but inefficient estimates due to heteroskedasticity (Hanushek and Jackson 1977: 181 fn 2). However, weighted least squares, ordered probit, and multinomial logit, all more appropriate to the dependent variable, all produce estimates whose sign, significance and general magnitude are consistent with those presented here. To keep the explanation of an already complex model as simple as possible, I present the OLS results, relying on the probit analysis of the reported turnout variable in model 5 to illustrate the validity of the most important results.

to compare the sign and significance of each variable. Neither is the long list of variables impeachable as an attempt to inflate the R-squared; I am interested here in the independent variables' influence on turnout, not so much in explaining turnout. Indeed, the findings comport with Aldrich's (1993) observation that turnout is sensitive to small changes in costs and benefits of many kinds. The relatively low R-squared figures for so many variables are symptomatic of the omission of a multitude of campaign characteristics, as well as costs imposed by registration laws, polling hours, weather on election day, etc.

Table 3 Political Culture, Reported and Likely Turnout, and Behavioral Engagement in the Campaign

	Model Number: (5)		(6)		(7)	
	Estimator: Probit		Regression		Regression	
Dependent Variable:	Reported Turnout		Likely Turnout		Behavioral Engagement	
Independent Variables (dummies unless noted)	Coefficient	P> z	Coefficient	P> t	Coefficient	P> t
Constant	-3.854	0.000	-0.619	0.000	0.175	0.003
Political-Cultural Attitudes						
Internal Efficacy (<i>latent, 0 to 1</i>) [H4]	-0.931	0.046	-0.245	0.000	-0.065	0.021
External Efficacy / Gov't Support [H1] (<i>latent, -1 to 1</i>)	-0.570	0.014	-0.110	0.002	0.032	0.028
Regime Support (<i>latent, -1 to 1</i>) [H2]	0.578	0.042	0.118	0.008	-0.061	0.001
Normative Contexts [all H5]						
Civic Engagement, logged (<i>latent, 0 to 1</i>)	0.479	0.001	0.121	0.000	0.123	0.000
Married†	0.380	0.000	0.083	0.000	0.009	0.166
Religious Commitment (<i>latent, 0 to 1</i>)†	0.642	0.010	0.185	0.000	-0.065	0.000
Political Characteristics						
Behavioral Engagement in Campaign (<i>latent, 0 to 1</i>)	0.213	0.766	-0.148	0.037	-	-
Likely Turnout (<i>0, 0.5, 1</i>)	-	-	-	-	-0.024	0.037
Psychological Engagement in Campaign† (<i>latent, 0 to 1</i>)	1.994	0.000	0.462	0.000	0.220	0.000
House Candidate and Majority Recall (Political Information)† (<i>0 to 1 by sevenths</i>)	1.538	0.000	0.496	0.000	0.022	0.255
Strength of Partisanship (<i>0 to 1 by thirds</i>)	0.673	0.000	0.095	0.000	0.024	0.018
Race, Ethnicity and Poverty [all H3]						
Black†	-0.209	0.599	-0.221	0.001	-0.022	0.427
Black * Age	0.005	0.540	0.003	0.031	0.000	0.675
Hispanic†	0.082	0.676	0.052	0.105	0.006	0.655
Hispanic * West†	-0.333	0.363	-0.227	0.000	-0.012	0.642
Other Nonwhite Ethnicity†	0.237	0.438	-0.185	0.000	0.014	0.462
Close to Poor	-0.322	0.004	-0.037	0.039	0.004	0.620
Elite Mobilization Efforts / Closeness						
Contacted by Political Party †	0.437	0.000	0.086	0.000	0.031	0.000
House Incumbent's Margin of Victory (-25 to 100)	0.009	0.109	0.002	0.035	-0.0003	0.479
House Incumbent's Margin, squared	-0.00006	0.333	-0.00002	0.058	0.000004	0.346
Presidential Race Perceived Close	0.001	0.989	-0.006	0.701	0.002	0.755
Demographic Controls						
Age in Years (<i>18 to 93</i>)†	0.005	0.194	0.003	0.000	-0.0002	0.340
Years in Residence, logged (<i>0 to 89</i>)†	0.056	0.053	0.028	0.000	0.005	0.006
Family Income, logged (<i>0 to 105k; 37k mean imputed to 87 missing values in model</i>)†	-0.013	0.819	0.010	0.271	-0.0004	0.919
Education in Years, logged (<i>0 to 17</i>)†	0.961	0.000	0.247	0.000	0.023	0.190
Population of Place, logged (<i>0 to 7323k</i>)	0.014	0.492	-0.012	0.000	-0.0004	0.750
"Deep" or Secessionist South †	-0.324	0.005	-0.118	0.000	-0.005	0.512
West †	-0.202	0.162	0.024	0.274	0.006	0.502
N	1241		1240		1240	
Adjusted R ² ["Pseudo R ² " for probit]	0.317		0.544		0.401	

Variables are dummies unless otherwise indicated. Variables marked with † were also used to construct the "likely vote" instrument; see Appendix A. One indicator of each marked latent variable was included in the proxy. One observation, an outlier on the logged civic engagement scale, was purposely dropped.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Political-Cultural Attitudes

If we are correct in considering political-cultural attitudes to be indicators of social capital, it is clear that the public acts rationally on the information they provide. Where Abramson and Aldrich (1982) and Finkel (1985) found efficacy to promote turnout, in both models 5 and 6, regime support predicts turnout, while both kinds of efficacy predict abstention. Respondents who are dissatisfied with democracy and think elections are unfair are, rationally, less likely to vote; the social capital “currency” is of less worth to them. But, all else being equal, those who are short on “credit slips” in this economy of obligations (that is, those whose trust in government or “external efficacy” is *low*) are *more* likely to vote, more likely to attempt to reinforce the fabric of democratic norms of reciprocity. Hypotheses H1 and H2 are supported.

For these variables, model 7 provides a pair of interesting, serendipitous findings. The signs for external efficacy and regime support are reversed from model 6; those who are confident in politicians (efficacious) are more likely to wear buttons, work for campaigns and donate to candidates and parties, while those who are happy with the regime are less likely to do so. Stated in the converse, those who are dissatisfied with the regime (and probably see a need for reform) are more likely to turn to campaign work. External efficacy promotes campaigning behavior; low or negative regime support also predicts it. Put together, there is a certain logic to the findings: who better to reform the broken democratic regime than the politicians you trust? Easton’s (1957) view that these forms of support are each sufficient but not necessary seems to be accurate.

The surprise discovery presents a challenge to the social capital explanation; why should one kind of participatory democratic behavior be different from another? But the actions *are* different, in different institutional contexts. Where turnout is an increasingly anonymous systemic activity, campaigning often involves personal contact, or at least overt association with specific candidates, parties or groups. Behavioral engagement does not appear to generate obligations in the same “social capital” currency as voting at all; instead, there is a sort of two-commodity market. Where confidence in the currency of voting (regime support) is low, actors “change money” into the currency of campaigning, but the more voting currency they have, the more they can do so.

Internal efficacy remains negative and significant in all three models, suggesting strong support for H4; all else equal, politically confident and resourceful individuals can rationally take a wait-and-see approach or invest their abilities in other more efficient modes of participation.

Finkel’s (1985) analysis is arguably more defensible in allowing for reciprocal causation. However, Finkel found only a one-way relationship from internal efficacy to turnout, and three-way reciprocal structural equations models of turnout, external efficacy and regime

support (not reported here) show the same core results. It is the specification of regime support, not the recursive structure, that produces the key negative coefficient on external efficacy. Moreover, the probability of endogeneity among a large number of these variables is so great that a single-equation model is probably as defensible as any other.

Normative Contexts

Civic engagement, marriage and religious commitment are all consistent predictors of turnout, providing evidence for hypothesis H5; each is a setting in which the individual is constantly reminded of responsibilities to others and of the value of mutual obligations and reciprocity. The more normatively rich social relationships a person has, the more value is represented highly fungible obligations such as national democracy. That marriage is the least of these is consistent with its limitation to the smaller community of the family; that civic engagement (when the logarithmic scale is considered) is the largest is similarly unsurprising, since it encompasses church as well as other settings.

Religious commitment in America is a special matter, as the change of sign in model 7 shows; where voting is strongly encouraged by religious commitment, campaign activity is mildly discouraged. The result is consistent with the findings of Verba *et al* (1995: 358), who showed church attendance to promote voting but found negative coefficients for time-based acts, donations and political discussion. The normative environment of America's predominantly Christian religious setting emphasizes duty to fellow citizen while generally objecting to overt political conflict; campaigning makes it difficult to "turn the other cheek." An exception, not displayed here for lack of space, is the significant increase in behavioral engagement among moral traditionalists (see Appendix B for indicators and loadings for this latent variable). Moral traditionalism is highly correlated with religious commitment (0.67), but the two concepts have opposite, offsetting coefficients if they are included together in model 7. While moral traditionalism does not predict voter turnout, the "religious right" in 1996 was clearly an exception to the generally apolitical inclinations of the religiously committed.

Political Characteristics

Most of the findings here are controls which simply confirm previous literature. Those who are "psychologically engaged" in the news and gossip of the political season, and who can recall candidates' names and party affiliations, are much more likely to vote. Partisans of either stripe are more likely to vote than independents.

One interesting indication of the rational use of resources is the partial exclusivity demonstrated between costly political actions in models 6 and 7; those who are involved in campaign behavior are *less* likely to vote, and vice versa. Political actors on a limited resource budget can't do everything, so many choose an area to "specialize" (Verba and Nie 1972). This relationship may fail to emerge in model 5 because involved campaigners are uncomfortable

with the apparent inconsistency of this limitation and therefore claim to have voted when they did not.

A number of ostensibly important variables were found to be consistently immaterial and are omitted from the model. The direction of partisanship, liberal/conservative ideology, feeling thermometers and opinions about the candidates' qualities, and evaluations of the economy certainly influence the choice of candidate, but had no measurable impact on turnout in the 1996 election.

Race, Ethnicity and Poverty

This section provides a strong argument for correcting the reported turnout; without the correction introduced by the proxy for the 1978-1990 validated vote, we would be forced to accept the conclusion implied by model 5 that race and ethnicity are not at all predictors of turnout. Instead, H3 seems to be strongly supported; the key coefficients are significant and quite large in model 6. Nor is it likely that the variables are significant here only because they are also included in creating the proxy correction; in order to move into the "Maybe" category in the likely vote variable, a respondent would have to share a number of characteristics, with race being only one of the weaker movers.

Although we have no direct evidence, the circumstantial evidence for alienation or exclusion from the political community among minorities is strong. Education, income, regime support, efficacy, religion, political information, partisanship, region, and urbanism are all controlled here, and are therefore weak alternative candidates to excuse this systemic flaw. Walker's (1966) eloquent protest is vindicated: silence does *not* imply satisfaction.

This conclusion can be contested, of course; Ragsdale and Rusk (1993: 725 fn 1) "avoid the term 'alienation' " in favor of narrower categories of dissatisfaction and inactivity. For these scholars, alienation constitutes essentially what I have constructed as low regime support. Since regime support is controlled in the model, minority abstentions may appear to be for some other reason. This is a significant argument if only models 5 and 6 are considered; low regime support means less voting. But low regime support means *more* campaign behavior, if model 7's results are to be believed. Easton's tripartite distinction between government, regime and *community* support is crucial. Those respondents with low support for the democratic regime are not necessarily alienated; they may be well-integrated into the political community. I argue that minority abstentions indicate low community support, and therefore alienation and exclusion. In the language of social capital, their community "market for obligations" is poorly connected with the national community's "market."

Statistically, the correct specification of the variables here is important. The coefficient for black respondents is significant but tiny if the interaction with age is not specified; younger blacks are far more alienated than older blacks, whose net difference approaches zero. Whether this is disturbing or encouraging depends on interpretation; if the finding applies to all generations, black youth may be alienated by their own misperceptions, which age and

experience will erase. But if the result represents a present-day trend and this generation's alienation persists into old age, our political community may face yet another overt crisis of race and politics. In either case, more time-series work with validated vote results is indispensable.

Hispanics are not statistically less likely to vote at all unless the interaction with Western residence is included, which may be due to an increased likelihood of recent immigration in the West, differences in regional ethnic political culture, or greater division of the political community between Hispanics and whites in the West. Other non-white ethnicities are also less likely to vote.

Finally, those who express identification with the poor are both less likely to say they voted and less likely actually to vote, although the difference is very small.⁹ Those close to the poor are probably not abstaining because they are satisfied and apathetic nor solely because they are ill-equipped. Rather, as Grafstein's application of evidential decision theory predicts, they evaluate the probability of others voting by their own high costs and low benefits, and rational abstention becomes infectious throughout the group.

Elite Mobilization and Closeness of the Election

I have operationalized elite mobilization here with three items: 1) reported contact by party representatives urging involvement; 2) the closeness of the House election in the respondent's district, as a proxy for campaign expenditures and mass mobilization efforts;¹⁰ 3) the respondent's stated pre-election perception that the presidential race would be close.

Personal contact with a representative of a political party is consistently a small but significant predictor of turnout. The small coefficient suggests that even dramatically increased party activity could do little to affect large-scale change in the size of the electorate. If elite mobilization efforts are really important, personal contacting is not the mechanism; the psychological engagement variable probably picks up much of the effects of advertising and news about campaign appearances.

⁹A probit analysis not presented here shows that this group is significantly poorer (\$25,000 mean income as opposed to a \$41,000 sample mean), more rural, much more black and Hispanic (24% and 12% respectively, as opposed to 11% and 8% of the sample), much more religious, and more liberal Democratic than the sample average. They are also much less likely to be married or civically engaged.

¹⁰The closeness variable is the House incumbent's margin of victory in the respondent's district, ranging from 100 (unopposed races) down to -25 (a heavy loss). Where the seat is open, the candidate from the outgoing incumbent's party is treated as the incumbent. I experimented with various operationalizations of campaign spending, all of which flirt with significance but are not as consistent as the closeness variable. It is a worthy substitution; incumbent's margin of victory correlates at -0.58 with total expenditures by incumbent and challenger. Including the square of the variable in the equation partly mimics the model used by Cox and Munger (1989) in working with aggregate data, although they object to the use of the percentage margin and prefer the raw vote margin and do not distinguish whether the margin favors the incumbent or the challenger.

The closeness of the percentage vote margin in House elections is significant in model 6, and its square is nearly significant at the 95% confidence level, but the signs are the opposite of the expectation created by Cox and Munger (1989); this tendency persists with this data to the point that it is difficult to consider it a fluke, and campaign spending results have similarly counterintuitive signs. Increasing incumbent margins of victory seem to *stimulate* turnout, not discourage it, regardless of the controls introduced; the same results obtain, though with less significance (between 90-95%), when absolute margin for either candidate is used (that is, no “negative margin” when incumbents lose).

The perceived closeness of the presidential race is not significant here, but including it maintains the fit of the House race margin variables as other controls are added in this large model.

Demographic Controls

Most of these variables can be interpreted to represent human capital resources of various kinds. Older voters and voters who have lived in the same town for long periods are more experienced and better able to acquire information about voting. Income does not predict turnout or campaign behavior in any of these models.¹¹

Education remains a powerful predictor, especially when it is logged; the curve is quite steep in the early grades and then becomes more gradual for additional years in high school and college. Educated persons are also better equipped to understand politics. Of course, education may also represent a “normative context” like religion and marriage, but it is not, for most respondents, currently salient, but only remembered.

The larger the population of the respondent’s immediate location, the less likely she is to turn out. People may perceive a lower probability of affecting election outcomes in large cities, or small town norms of voting may be stronger, or both.

Finally, the Deep South (the states that seceded in the Civil War period) continues to demonstrate uniquely depressed turnout, both reported and corrected. This is probably due largely to the differences in registration and polling procedures documented by Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978). But future work that controls for these differences may show a long-term, residual alienation of the South from the national political community, as I have argued the race and ethnicity results do.

¹¹A belated discovery shows that behavioral engagement, like civic engagement, performs better when logged, since most respondents cluster in the low ranges. Income is a predictor of the logged variable, which stands to reason given the inclusion of indicators involving campaign contributions. The core results remain stable in the logged version of model 7.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to contribute to discussion on two disputes; first, whether nonvoters are, empirically, satisfied abstainers or alienated outsiders; second, whether sociological or economic theories better explain the empirical reality. I have sought to complicate the first question and seek compromise on the second.

Empirically, the results reported here show that abstainers can be both satisfied and alienated. Satisfaction has many facets; satisfaction with the democratic regime *promotes* turnout, while satisfaction with the government (external efficacy) decreases it. Moreover, political self-satisfaction (internal efficacy) also leads potential voters to stay home. Berelson's (1954) exaltation of voter indifference as a sign of a healthy polity is missing a leg; while lower turnout may indicate indifference toward the government, it may also represent increasing frustration with the democratic regime itself. And mounting frustration hardly furthers the elitists' goal of political stability.

Racial and ethnic minorities and those identifying with the poor remain more likely to be alienated or excluded from the political community, as evidenced by their lower turnout in spite of controls for sundry alternative explanations, including satisfaction and resources. This residual definition of alienation is simple, concrete and minimal: if a group does not or cannot participate in the political community at the same rate as others, all else being equal, it is clearly alienated.

Theoretically, I have tried to make a case for understanding political-cultural attitudes and normative contexts in terms of the integrative "socioeconomic" theory of social capital. "Psychocultural" explanations, as Almond and Verba (1963) termed it, have been hard to swallow for political economists, who object to the characterization of people as irrational, habitual actors. Without denying that irrationality is possible or even likely, this analysis contends that the "political-cultural" attitudes of respondents are useful indicators of the institutional context that constrains their choices, in the same terms used by the new institutionalism in political economy. Respondents with high levels of democratic regime support indicate that the social capital "currency" of mutual obligations in the democratic system is of high value in their context or "market"; respondents with high levels of external efficacy government support indicate their possession of a large "stock" of this social capital. Potential voters act rationally on this context; those with a surplus of social capital are less likely to vote than those with a deficit, when the value of the democratic regime's "currency" is controlled.

There are obviously simpler ways to describe the findings; when support for democracy is held constant, those who don't trust government are more inclined to try to change it by voting than those who do. But the social capital vocabulary offers an opportunity for a wider dialog between previously disparate fields of inquiry; political sociologists may be able to generate hypotheses in terms that lend themselves, semantically, to prompter understanding and

testing in formal analytic terms by political economists. It would be a pity if the burst of interest in social capital in the 1990's were written off as a fad and the conceptual innovation discarded; if merciless critics would read at least chapter 12 of Coleman (1990) closely and respond to it directly, the discussion would surely rise to a new level of understanding.

The good news for American democracy appears to be that the electoral system of social capital generation is partly self-regulating; when stocks of trust in government run low, people are more likely to vote and replenish them by affirming the electoral ritual of solidarity (Rahn *et al* 1999). When regime support runs low, people are more likely to campaign, probably for its reform.

We must ask: how generalizable are these 1996 U.S. results? The simple finding that people dissatisfied with their government are more likely to vote may be limited spatially to exactly those nations which have developed the "civic culture" Almond and Verba described. In transitional democracies, dissatisfaction amid the high expectations of transition may produce disillusionment, cynicism and abstention, rather than participation. A comparative extension of this analysis is a practical future project. Temporally, 1996 seems fairly generic – but perhaps results would be different in a more hotly contested and controversial presidential election. Only continued replication of the newer NES survey items can tell. It also remains to be seen if regime support can supplant external efficacy in Abramson and Aldrich's (1982) analysis of the decline of turnout. If so, the declining turnout trend truly is a disturbing sign.

Finally, the theoretical compromise sought here suggests a practical compromise in policy-making and activism as well. While we have included few controls here for institutional transaction-cost determinants of voting (voter registration laws, for example), the existing literature and low explained variance here suggests that there is more than adequate room in the realm of truth for both institutional reformists and morale-boosting civic communitarians. There is without doubt room for policy initiatives and public reconciliation that will continue the legacy of the civil rights movement and welcome racial and ethnic minorities into the national political community.

APPENDIX A: 1996 LIKELY TURNOUT PROXY FOR THE 1978-90 VALIDATED VOTE

In eight elections between 1964 and 1990, NES staff took the tedious and expensive step of checking local records, attempting to verify the reported turnout of survey respondents. Although the “validated vote” is not available in 1996, this data presents an opportunity to project real voting behavior in 1996 based on the characteristics of verified voters in previous years. The new measure is an “auxiliary instrumental variable.”

Katz (1999) takes a more sophisticated approach than employed here, using probit to predict misreported turnout and integrating this into a complex maximum likelihood equation that simultaneously estimates reported turnout while correcting for misreporting. Despite using several times as many respondents as Katz, like him I found it difficult to get a very satisfactory purchase on misreporting (Katz 1999: 10); our ability to correctly predict misreporting is very weak, probably due to the complex characteristics of the relatively small number of misreporters. Instead, I have employed a probit model of the validated vote using the 1948-1996 cumulative data file provided by the NES. The model generates predicted values that explain nearly a quarter of the variance in validated turnout (the squared correlation is .227, compared to only .019 for the best misreporting model I could devise).

Some powerful variables were not available in the 1964 and 1976 elections, and the validation project was scrapped in 1982, so the model uses 7451 observations from 1978, 1980, 1984, 1986, 1988 and 1990. The the time-series data is less detailed than the 1996 set, with education and income measured in ordinal categories rather than yearly and dollar intervals. As observed in the main body of this paper, Aldrich (1993) has argued that turnout is a low-salience decision for most and thus very sensitive to small changes in a wide range of variables. This model bears out the observation; the table below presents the results.

Table 4 Probit Model of Validated Vote, 1978-1990
N = 7,451, pseudo R-squared = 0.185

<i>Variable (dummy unless noted)</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>P> z </i>
Constant	-1.503	0.000
* Year index (<i>year-1964</i>)/4	0.179	0.000
* Poor registration records	-0.302	0.000
Days past election (<i>0 to 95</i>)	-0.007	0.000
Female	0.064	0.060
Cohort: WWII	-0.110	0.028
Cohort: Baby Boom	-0.305	0.000
Cohort: Generation X	-0.493	0.000
Education (<i>0 to 1 by 0.2</i>)	-0.018	0.931
Education, squared	0.315	0.075
Family income (<i>0 to 1 by 0.25</i>)	0.195	0.008
Unemployed	-0.228	0.000
Black	-0.248	0.000
Hispanic	0.099	0.275
West * Hispanic	-0.489	0.001
Other nonwhite ethnicity	-0.567	0.000
Years in residence, logged	0.066	0.000
Geographic belt (<i>0, 0.5, 1 = rural</i>)	0.132	0.004
Secessionist South	-0.345	0.000
West	0.222	0.000
Married	0.110	0.003
Religious Attendance (<i>0 to 1 by 0.25</i>)	0.432	0.000
House Candidate and Majority Recall (<i>0 to 1 by 1/7</i>)	1.146	0.000
Interest in Politics	0.732	0.000
Party Contact	0.152	0.000

* Asterisks mark variables that affect the quality of the dependent variable and are omitted from the 1996 instrument.

The “year index” variable probably reflects increasing capacity to locate voters in local records over the years; it certainly does not reflect any real increase in turnout. A “presidential year” variable is significant when it is included, but does not change the results substantively or improve the fit, and in any case it would not vary for 1996. The dummy for poor registration records is significant in the expected direction. Both of these variables are omitted from the instrument, since they serve only to control for error in the validated vote dependent variable.

Respondents who were interviewed after longer intervals from the election were much more likely to fib or forget; the maximum number of days yields one of the largest values in the

model. Women are slightly more likely to vote than men, and younger cohorts remain less likely to vote. The rest of the coefficients are in expected directions and correspond to variables discussed in the main text.

The 1996 instrument is calculated by scaling a set of 1996 variables to match the coding of the 1978-1990 set and then performing the calculation:

$$\Pr(\textit{turnout}) = \Phi(\mathbf{b}'\mathbf{X})$$

where \mathbf{b}' is the coefficient matrix from the 1978-1990 model and \mathbf{X} is the matrix of 1996 responses:

$$\Pr(\textit{turnout}) = \Phi(-1.503 - 0.007 * \textit{days post-election} + 0.064 * \textit{female} + \dots + 0.152 * \textit{party contact})$$

and Φ is the cumulative normal density function (“normprob” in Stata, “probnorm” in SAS).

The resulting instrument is nearly normally distributed, with a mean of 0.589 and a standard error of 0.223. This compares with the 0.766 mean of the 1996 reported turnout variable. The method used to score a combined variable is explained in the main text.

APPENDIX B: LATENT VARIABLES

This confirmatory factor analytic model presented below was estimated in the SAS “proc CALIS” program. It has a mediocre Goodness of Fit Index of 0.89 and an RMSEA of 0.04, just within the limits of acceptability. The chi-square of 4995.7 with 1492 degrees of freedom indicates that some errors are due to systematic influences and not to random sample variation (Hayduk 1987), a common problem with survey data. The model estimates covariance for the error terms of all indicators and for all ten latent variables (“factors”); fit could probably be improved greatly by constraining some error terms, but with the large number of indicators here I have not begun to consider which. In practical terms the model is acceptable if not ideal; the loadings are all but one strongly significant (see note in table below), there are no problems with convergence, and each latent variable performs comparably to individual indicators when included in the models presented here.

Each latent variable has one indicator with the loading constrained to 1.00 to facilitate estimation and comparison of loadings. External and internal efficacy share a pair of indicators; each of these has a single error term. **Table 5** below shows the complete results of the analysis.

Scores output for each latent variable take into account both loadings on indicators and marginal covariation with other latent variables; as a result, each respondent receives a unique or nearly unique floating-point score for every factor. The means by which SAS calculates this complex score is not documented, but each score is only slightly different from the simple $\mathbf{b}'\mathbf{X}$ combination of loadings and indicator values one would use to construct a simple index.

Each score has been mathematically rescaled to facilitate interpretation. Internal efficacy, civic engagement, behavioral engagement, psychological engagement and religious commitment (along with interpersonal trust and moral traditionalism, not used here) were rescaled to vary from 0 to 1 using the formula:

$$\xi' = \frac{\xi - \text{minimum}}{\text{maximum} - \text{minimum}} = \frac{\xi - \text{minimum}}{\text{range}}$$

External efficacy and regime support (and economic evaluation, not used here) have several indicators with a natural center of zero and a wider range; these have been scaled to range from -1 to 1 with the formula:

$$\xi' = \frac{\xi - \frac{|max| + |min|}{2}}{\frac{max - min}{2}}$$

Table 6 shows the before-and-after results of the transformation.

Table 5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

<i>Latent Variable / Indicators</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Latent Variable / Indicators</i>	<i>Loading</i>
<i>Interpersonal Trust</i>		<i>Civic Engagement</i>	
Are people fair?	1.00	Cultural Organizations	1.00
Can people be trusted?	1.00 (0.07)	Nonpartisan Civic Organizations	0.48 (0.08)
<i>External Efficacy / Government Support</i>		Labor Unions	0.26 (0.07)
Government in D.C. do right?	1.00	Professional Associations	0.85 (0.09)
Government run for big interests?	-1.20 (0.08)	Veterans' Organizations	0.23 (0.07)
Government run by crooks?	-0.99 (0.07)	Churches and Synagogues	0.60 (0.08)
Government waste taxes?	-0.89 (0.07)	Other Religious Organizations	0.64 (0.08)
People like me have a say	0.62 (0.07)	Elderly Groups	0.40 (0.07)
Public officials don't care what people like me think (<i>disagree</i>)	0.81 (0.07)	Ethnic Associations	0.44 (0.08)
<i>Internal Efficacy / Self-Confidence</i>		Women's Groups	0.57 (0.08)
Politics too complicated? (<i>disagree</i>)	1.00	Political Issue Groups	0.79 (0.09)
People like me have a say	1.04 (0.07)	Ideological Groups	0.02 (0.07)
Public officials don't care (<i>disagree</i>)	0.74 (0.07)	Political Parties	0.89 (0.09)
Interviewer Assessment of Intelligence (<i>scale is inverted</i>)	1.01 (0.08)	Youth and Sports Groups	0.66 (0.08)
<i>Behavioral Engagement</i>		Literary and Art Groups	0.47 (0.08)
Gave money to candidate	1.00	Hobby and Sports Clubs	0.60 (0.08)
Gave money to party	0.75 (0.06)	Neighborhood Associations	0.80 (0.09)
Gave money to group	0.43 (0.05)	Fraternal Organizations	0.53 (0.08)
Displayed a campaign button, sticker or sign?	0.78 (0.06)	Charitable Organizations	0.76 (0.08)
Attended political meeting	0.94 (0.06)	Educational Institutions	0.95 (0.09)
Worked for party	0.86 (0.06)	Self-help Groups	0.29 (0.07)
<i>Psychological Engagement</i>		Any other groups	0.43 (0.07)
Attention to Campaign News	1.00		
Interest in Campaign	0.85 (0.03)		
Campaign TV Consumption	0.79 (0.03)		
Attention to Congressional Campaign	0.81 (0.03)		

Cell entries are factor loadings and (standard errors). All loadings are significant at $p < .001$, except Ideological Groups, which has only 3 nonzero observations.

Table 5 (continued)

<i>Latent Variable / Indicators</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Latent Variable / Indicators</i>	<i>Loading</i>
Regime Support		Moral Traditionalism	
Satisfied with democracy in the U.S.?	1.00	New lifestyles breaking down society	1.00
Last election fair?	0.73 (0.07)	Moral views should adjust to change (<i>disagree</i>)	1.04 (0.07)
Elections make government pay attention to people? (<i>high=not much</i>)	-1.10 (0.09)	Fewer problems if emphasis on traditional family ties	0.94 (0.07)
Economic Evaluation (Retrospective)		Should tolerate different moral standards (<i>disagree</i>)	0.95 (0.07)
National economy improved in the last 12 months? (<i>pre-election</i>)	1.00	Cell entries are factor loadings from a confirmatory factor analysis. All factor loadings on this page are statistically significant at $p < .001$.	
National economy improved? (<i>post-election</i>)	0.82 (0.04)		
Government policies make economy better?	0.77 (0.04)		
Religious Commitment			
Is religion important?	1.00		
Frequency of attendance at services (<i>1=more than weekly</i>)	1.07 (0.05)		
Frequency of prayer (<i>1=several times a day</i>)	1.22 (0.05)		
Frequency of Bible reading (<i>1=several times a day</i>)	1.05 (0.04)		
Believe Bible is God's Word (<i>literally or interpretively</i>)	0.72 (0.05)		

Table 6 Latent Variable Summary Statistics

Latent Variable	<i>Original Values</i>				<i>Rescaled Values</i>			
	Mean	SE	Min	Max	Mean	SE	Min	Max
External Efficacy	-0.146	0.214	-0.630	0.466	-0.117	0.390	-1	1
Regime Support	0.084	0.247	-0.613	0.659	0.096	0.388	-1	1
Internal Efficacy	0.827	0.275	0.242	1.662	0.412	0.193	0	1
Civic Engagement	0.277	0.116	0.056	0.889	0.264	0.139	0	1
Behavioral Engagement	0.125	0.123	0.015	0.942	0.118	0.133	0	1
Psychological Engagement	0.562	0.230	-0.025	1.121	0.512	0.201	0	1
Religious Commitment	0.528	0.248	-0.053	0.989	0.557	0.238	0	1
Interpersonal Trust	0.547	0.310	-0.008	1.125	0.490	0.273	0	1
Moral Traditionalism	0.476	0.145	0.026	0.864	0.537	0.172	0	1
Economic Evaluation	-0.016	0.283	-1.006	0.775	0.112	0.318	-1	1

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