

**WHO JOINS TRADE UNIONS?:
TESTING NEW SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Why do some workers join trade unions and others do not? This article attempts to shed new light on this question by considering how certain behavioural and attitudinal differences among workers shape their propensities to join trade unions. In particular, it is hypothesized that variations in civic and political engagement, as well political and cultural values, are important but overlooked determinants of trade union membership. This hypothesis is tested with data on 12 affluent democracies from the World Value Survey. Results from binary logistic regression models indicate that individual-level variation in trade union participation positively correlates with civic and political participation, with left-leaning political views, but not with post-materialist values. The article concludes by discussing the research's limitations and its implications for issues surrounding organized labour's changing fortunes.

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WHO JOINS TRADE UNIONS?: TESTING NEW SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The existence of trade unions, and their ability to improve the lives of workers, ultimately hinges on their capacity to attract and maintain members. Consequently, many scholars interested in labour market issues have sought to understand why some workers join trade unions and others do not. In exploring this issue, the social science literature takes different approaches. The most general approach starts from the premise that, for various reasons, different types of workers have different propensities to join trade unions. Here studies proceed by comparing the characteristics of members and non-members, with the aim of identifying prominent determinants of trade union participation. Several important findings emerge from these types of studies. First, it appears that younger workers are considerably less likely to join trade unions than their older counterparts (Brady 2007; Bryson and Gomez 2005; Haynes et al 2005; Machin 2004; Schnabel and Wagner 2005; Western 1994; Windolf and Haas 1989). Second, workers with left-leaning political views are more likely to be trade union members than workers with centre or right-leaning political views (Bryson and Gomez 2005; Schnabel and Wagner 2005, 2007; Windolf and Haas 1989). Finally, female workers are less likely to be unionized than their male counterparts (Brady 2007; Bryson and Gomez 2005, Machin 2004; Schnabel and Wagner 2005; Visser 2002; Western 1994; Windolf and Haas 1989). Overall, an important implication of these findings is that trade unions will likely struggle to sustain the size of their membership roles, because workers who are less inclined to join trade unions are becoming more prevalent in the workforce.

Since unionization rates vary significantly across affluent democracies, another prominent approach emphasizes the institutional context in which trade unions operate. Broadly speaking, this perspective considers the possibility that different types of labour-market institutions generate different levels of support for labour organizing. Studies based on survey data find that workers are more apt to

be unionized when trade unions operate in labour markets underpinned by centralized wage-bargaining, corporatist policymaking procedures, workplace access for union organizers, and union-controlled unemployment insurance schemes (Brady 2007; Western 1994). It is thought that these institutional arrangements help to facilitate class solidarity, thereby making it easier for trade unions to attract and maintain members.

Being interested in developing a better understanding of why some workers join trade unions and others do not, the present study seeks to move the abovementioned literature in a new direction. While the demographic and institutional factors discussed above clearly account for much of the observed variation in trade union participation, it also seems possible that certain behavioural and attitudinal differences among workers may account for some of this variation as well. Evidence from two prominent sociological literatures supports this premise. The first literature focuses on social capital and civil society (Hall 1999; Li et al 2003; Putnam 1995, 2000). Here the key insight is that norms underpinning participation in voluntary organizations, such as trade unions, are not immutable but rather vary across time and segments of society. In the context of the present study, this argument suggests that individuals who regularly participate in civil society may be more inclined to join trade unions than their less civically active counterparts. The second literature focuses on attitudinal changes brought about by rising affluence and social stability, which supposedly lead younger generations to view socio-cultural and environmental concerns, rather than economic issues, as society's most pressing concerns (Inglehart 1971, 1990, 1997). For the present study, this perspective suggests that people with 'post-materialist' values may be disinclined to join trade unions, because trade unions deal with basic economic issues, such as wages and working conditions.

This study seeks to articulate and test these two hypotheses. It begins by elaborating the theoretical rationale for why the decision to join a trade union is likely affected by one's propensity to participate in civic and political affairs, and by one's cultural and political values. Then, based on data from the fifth wave of the [3]

World Value Survey (WVS)—covering more than 7,000 workers across 12 affluent democracies—these hypotheses are tested with binary logistic regression models. To anticipate my main findings, the results show that individual-level variation in trade union membership is positively correlated with civic and political engagement, with left-of-centre political views, but not with post-materialist values. Unfortunately, difficulties in constructing time-series data prevent more comprehensive tests of these relationship, especially ones that could assess whether these factors are responsible for changes levels of trade union participation over time. Similarly, difficulty in finding suitable instrument variables within the WVS prevents the use of statistical controls for possible circular patterns of causation—for example, the possibility that trade union membership affects political participation as well as the other way around. These limitations and their possible ramifications are discussed in the method’s section and in the conclusion. Despite these limitations, this study represents an interesting starting point for assessing the determinants of trade union participation in a new light.

NEW EXPLANATIONS FOR TRADE UNION PARTICIPATION

Civic and Political Engagement

It is well-established within sociology that individuals can enhance their capacities to achieve desired ends by collaborating with people who share similar goals (Tocqueville [1840]/2000; Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993). The key contention is that isolated individuals typically have little power, but when such individuals band together, they can achieve ends that were impossible through the actions of lone individuals. Consequently, collective action is an important means by which less powerful people can solve common problems and mould society in their interests. In the early 19th century, Tocqueville made such an observation about ordinary Americans, noting that the propensity to join voluntary associations made the United States more egalitarian than comparable European societies at that time. He wrote that,

in democratic peoples, all citizens are independent and weak; they can do almost nothing by themselves, and none of them can oblige those like them to cooperate. They therefore fall into impotence if they do not learn to aid each other freely..... [Thus, when ordinary people want to accomplish something,] they seek each other out; and when they have found each other, they unite. From then on, they are no longer isolated men, but a power one sees from afar, whose actions serve as an example; a power that speaks, and to which one listens. (Tocqueville [1840]/2000: 490-2)

Modern social science generally corroborates this view—finding, for instance, that civically engaged citizens are important determinants of stable and democratic political systems (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993).

More recent research, however, finds that civic participation is waning across broad swaths of society in the United States (Putnam 1995, 2000; Andersen, Curtis, and Grabb 2006; c.f. Paxton 1999), and among the working class in Britain in particular (Hall 1999; Li et al 2003). Evidently, increasing numbers of people in these two countries are prioritizing individual pursuits over communal activities. This trend not only focuses social life more tightly around the private sphere of family and close friends, but it also magnifies the Anglo-American tradition of privileging the individual over society, with one consequence being that ordinary people are becoming less inclined to use collective action to achieve common goals (Baumam 2009; Luke 2006).

Importantly, for the topic at hand, this body of scholarship hints at the possibility that the cultural practices and traditions surrounding civic participation may account for some of the observed variation in trade union participation among workers. While this question has not been systematically addressed until now, prior studies provide some insights into this possibility. For instance, studies based on survey data consistently find that young workers are considerably less likely to

be trade union members than their older counterparts (Bryson and Gomez 2005; Haynes et al 2005; Machin 2004; Schnabel and Wagner 2005; Western 1994; Windolf and Haas 1989). In the context of the Dutch labour market, Visser (2002) uses the 'social customs' theory to explain declining participation in trade unions. In particular, he contends that the decision to join (or not join) a trade union is influenced by prevailing social norms, which are established and re-established by the ongoing actions of co-workers, family, and friends (see also Goerke and Pannenberg 2004). Where joining a trade union was once the social norm in the Netherlands, Visser believes this is no longer the case, especially for younger workers. The erosion of this social custom, he argues, is contributing to the dwindling ranks of organized labour in the Netherlands. Likewise, a similarly study finds that more and more British workers have never been trade union members, with the greatest portion being young workers (Bryson and Gomez 2005). This finding holds even after accounting for the reduced opportunities to join trade unions, brought about by the declining number of unionized workplaces in Britain. In sum, the studies mentioned above implicate changing norms of participation with declining trade unionism.

Cultural and Political Values

For most of the modern era, politics in democratic countries centred on class-based issues (Lipset 1960; Mann 1993). This occurred in large part because industrial capitalism created unprecedented amounts of wealth but distributed this wealth in highly uneven ways. Consequently, society and politics split along class lines, with the numerically small but institutionally powerful industrialists seeking to protect their privileges and the numerically large but institutionally weak working classes seeking to redistribute income and broaden social rights. This enduring political dynamic resulted in what Lipset (1960) called the 'democratic class struggle'.

Trade unions, of course, played a significant role in these political struggles (Lipset 1960). Foremost, trade unions provide the institutional means by which

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workers can band together in voluntary associations and develop strong links with left-labour political parties. This places trade unions at the heart of struggles over the direction of economic and social-welfare policy. Given this overt political role, it is not surprising that workers with left-leaning political views would be thought to be more likely to join trade unions than workers with centre or right-leaning political views (Bryson and Gomez 2005; Schnabel and Wagner 2005, 2007; Windolf and Haas 1989).

The centrality of class-based politics, however, has not lasted to the present day. Over the last few decades, the 'democratic class struggle' has been partially eclipsed by other forms of political contestation (Clark and Lipset 1991; Hechter 2004; Inglehart 1971; Inglehart and Rabier 1986). In recent decades, much of the pressure for social change has come not from poorly paid workers seeking egalitarian economic and social policies, but from a range of social actors seeking greater environmental protections and the dismantlement of traditional gender, racial, and sexual hierarchies. This is not to say that traditional left-right class politics has been supplanted by 'new politics'—for example, class voting is still strong in many affluent countries (Achterberg 2006; van der Waal et al 2007). Rather, it means that left-right class politics now shares the political arena with other political concerns.

Perhaps more than any other scholar, Inglehart has put forward the most convincing and systematically articulated explanation for these political changes (Inglehart 1971, 1990, 1997; Inglehart and Abramson 1994; Inglehart and Rabier 1986). Drawing on the European Values Survey and the World Values Survey, his considerable body of work shows that a broad array of affluent countries is experiencing widespread attitudinal change, in which successive generations become more likely to view socio-cultural and environmental concerns, rather than economic issues, as society's most pressing problems. This new value orientation, which he labels 'post-materialism', is supposedly brought about by rising economic prosperity, which in the West has eradicated scarcity for most people, including most people in the working class. Inglehart contends that, with decent living [7]

standards being largely assured for most people, younger generations increasingly turn their attention to quality of life issues, such as the desire for greater freedom of self-expression, more opportunities for democratic decision-making, and better preservation of the natural environment. This is not the case, however, for older generations who were socialized during times of economic scarcity and social instability (i.e. during the Great Depression or World War Two).

The rise of post-materialist values should have implication for trade unions. Given that trade unions deal with basic economic issues, such as wages and fringe benefits, and given that trade unions are bureaucratic organizations run by professional managers, it seems likely that the spread of post-materialism would hinder their ability to recruit new members. Inglehart makes this claim directly, stating that post-materialism will cause 'elite-directed hierarchical organizations, such labor unions, to lose members' (Inglehart and Catterberg 2002: 302). Here his contention is not that post-materialism engenders civic and political apathy, but rather that it inspires new forms of participation, ones that eschew involvement in formal organizations run by elites in favour of participation in informal groups whose goals are determined by ordinary members. As Inglehart writes, post-materialism leads people to 'engage in types of political action that do not leave written membership lists, because they are elite-challenging activities that are loosely coordinated by ad hoc groups that come into existence suddenly and disappear just as suddenly' (p. 302). For Inglehart, it is clear that people with post-materialist values will have little interest in trade unions.

However, in contrast to Inglehart's view, there is another plausible interpretation of the relationship between post-materialism and trade unions. In a highly influential work, Freeman and Medoff (1984) depicted trade unions as having 'two faces', with each face pursuing different types of goals. The 'monopoly face' of trade unions aims to increase the wages and fringe benefits of its members, a goal that is consistent with Inglehart's concept of materialist values. Conversely, the 'collective voice face' of trade unions aims to develop the means by which workers can identify and redress problems in the workplace and in the national [8]

economy. Under this guise, trade unions are not addressing economic issues in the narrow sense of monetary well-being, but rather a whole range of work-related issues. Similar ideas about the non-materialist aspects of trade unions have been expressed by other labour scholars (i.e. Fantasia 1988). Importantly, since the desire to participate in decision-making processes is an essential post-materialist value, this aspect of trade unionism should appeal to workers with post-materialist values. Hence, it could be that the different faces of trade unions appeal to different value orientations, with materialists favouring the monopoly face and post-materialists favouring the collective voice face.

DATA AND RESEARCH STRATEGY

Data

To empirically test the theoretical propositions developed above, I assemble data from the fifth wave of the World Value Survey (WVS), a freely available source of high-quality, cross-national survey data. Conducted in 2005 and 2006, the fifth wave of the WVS comprises nationally representative surveys from countries around the world. In each country, the survey was administered face-to-face with anywhere from 1,000 to 3,500 randomly selected adults. The primary aim of the WVS is to provide the social science community with comparable, cross-national data on people's values, beliefs, and norms. Fortunately, it also gathers basic demographic, occupational, and associational information, including one question about trade unions membership. This question constitutes the dependent variable of this study.

For two reasons, the study uses only a portion of the data available from the WVS. First, authoritarian and quasi-democratic countries were eliminated from the sample. This was done to focus the analysis on those countries in which trade unions play comparable roles in politics, civil society and the economy. Without this step, comparisons across dissimilar countries would be difficult. For instance, involvement with trade unions in China (with its government-controlled unions) or

in Mexico (with its use of company unions) is not the same phenomenon as involvement with trade unions in the democratic West, where trade unions have traditionally been independent members of civil society rather than appendages of state or corporate power. To avoid these complications, the sample is limited to respondents living in affluent countries where trade unions operate within democratic political systems and open civil societies. Second, following other scholars using similar data (Western 1994; Brady 2007), respondents outside of the formal workforce are not used in the study. This is accomplished by discarding pensioners, homemakers, students, and the unemployed from the sample. Combined, these two steps yield a data set comprising 7,238 full- or part-time workers living in one of 12 affluent democracies: Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and USA. (Missing data precluded Italy and New Zealand from being in the sample.) Finally, due to changes in questions across waves of the WVS, attempts to create a time-series dimension for this cross-section of countries were unsuccessful. The implications of this issue are discussed in the conclusion.

Measures

Dependent variable. The dependent variable is a binary measure of trade union participation. It is derived from a question asking respondents whether they are trade union members, and if so, whether they are active or inactive participants. Since the active-inactive distinction is not germane to this study, all active and inactive members are coded as '1' and non-members as '0'.

Key explanatory variables. The study has four key explanatory variables. The first one, *civic participation*, measures a respondent's involvement with voluntary organizations. It is constructed from a battery of questions asking respondents whether they are active or inactive members of eight different types of voluntary organizations: church or religious organizations; sport or recreational organizations; art, music or educational organizations; environmental organizations; professional associations; humanitarian or charitable organizations; consumer organizations; or any other voluntary organizations. For each type of

voluntary organizations, active or inactive members are coded as '1' and non-members are coded as '0'. Next, the number of memberships in different types of voluntary organizations are tallied, yielding a continuous variable ranging from zero (involvement with no voluntary organizations) to eight (involvement with eight different types of voluntary organizations). Note that this measure undercounts participation when respondents belong to two or more voluntary organizations from a single category. Due to the wording of the survey, such situations will still be coded as '1'.

The second key explanatory variable measures *political participation*. This variable is constructed from a battery of questions asking respondents whether they have engaged in any of the following political activities over the last five years: signed a petition, joined a boycott, attended a peaceful demonstration, or any other political activity. Additionally, two other questions ask whether respondents voted in the last national election and whether they belong to a political party. This creates six possible types of political activities. For each activity, respondents are coded as '1' if they have recently engaged in that activity and '0' if they have not. The different types of political activities are tallied, yielding a continuous variable ranging from zero (no recent political involvement) to six (recent involvement in six different types of political activities.) Like the measurement above, this one also undercounts participation when respondents are involved in multiple activities within one category.

The other two key explanatory variables measure political and cultural values. The variable *right political values* assesses left-right political orientation. It is based on a question asking respondents to place their political views on a 10-point continuum, in which '1' equals 'the left' and '10' equals 'the right'. This yields a continuous variable ranging from 1 (the left) to 10 (the right). The final key explanatory variable measures *cultural values* using Inglehart's 12-item post-materialist index. This index is based on 12 questions, each tapping one of two value orientations. Based on the answers to these questions, 'materialists' are people placing high priority on fighting inflation, promoting economic growth, [11]

maintaining economic stability, maintaining social order, combating crime, and maintaining national security. Conversely, 'post-materialists' are people placing high priority on protecting free speech, enhancing democratic decision-making, having a voice in workplace affairs, enhancing the aesthetic qualities of their communities, making society more humane, and reducing the importance of money in society. The resulting variable ranges from 1 (materialist) to 6 (post-materialist).

Demographic variables. The model accounts for several demographic factors thought to affect trade union participation. *Educational attainment* is measured as one of four categories: completed university or higher, some university, completed secondary school, and failed to complete secondary school. *Occupation* is measured as one of six categories: executive management, professional, routine white-collar, skilled trade, unskilled labour, and other. *Sector of employment* is identified as either the private, public, or non-profit sector. Other control variables account for *gender* (1= male and 0 = female) and *age* (1= young [18-29], 2 = middle-aged [30-49], and 3 = older [50 and above]). Finally, for the four English-speaking countries in the sample, it was possible to develop control variables for *race* (1 = white and 0 = non-white) and for *ethnicity* (1 = English speaker and 0 = any other language). However, due to country-by-country differences in how minority-majority relations manifest and are coded in the WVS, it was not possible to construct these two variables for the other countries in the sample.

[Insert table 1 about here.]

Statistical Estimation

To empirically assess whether individual-level variation in trade union participation is affected by the aforementioned variables, I use binary logistic regression (BLR) analysis. Like ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, BLR is a basic statistical technique used to model variation within a dependent variable based on variation within one or more explanatory variables. Under both techniques, the explanatory variables can be of any kind—for example, interval-scale, ordinal in dummy-variable format, nominal in dichotomies, etc. But unlike

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OLS, BLR is used when the dependent variable is dichotomous. In the present study, this technique is used to understand how the likelihood of being a trade union member, a binary outcome, relates to one's involvement in civic and political affairs, one's cultural and political values, and one's demographic background. Following conventions for BLR, the parameter estimates are expressed as odds ratios, which can be interpreted as the odds persons differing by one unit along the explanatory variable will differ in respect to the dependent variable, holding the other variables in the model constant. In particular, odds ratios greater than '1' indicate an increased likelihood of being a trade union member, whereas odds ratios less than '1' indicate a decreased likelihood of being a trade union member. For ordinal variables in dummy-variable format, the odds ratio for the reference category is '1', albeit this number is not reported.

Before the models can be estimated, two methodical complications should be addressed. First, it is well known that pooling cross-national data into a single data set can introduce confounding factors related to unmeasured, country-specific effects. For example, it is likely that institutional differences among countries affect the propensity of workers in my sample to be unionized, yet these institutional differences have not been incorporated into the model—i.e. corporatist bargaining systems or union-controlled unemployment insurance schemes (see Brady 2007). Even if all such institutional factors are included in the model, it is still likely that country-specific factors remain unaddressed. Hence, to control for these unmeasured 'fixed effects', I use a dummy variable to identify each respondent's country of residence. This step has been taken by other scholars seeking to control for fixed effects in BLR models of unionization (i.e. Rosenfeld and Kleykamp 2009).

Another complication arises from the possibility that casual relationships between some of the independent variables and the dependent variable are circular rather than unidirectional. It could be, for instance, that one's propensity to engage in political activities not only affects one's propensity to join a trade union, but that the reverse is also true—namely that being a trade union member heightens one's likelihood of being involved in politics. Such feedback loops are

[13]

common in many social and economic processes. Yet, if left unaddressed by the statistical model, they can result in suboptimal parameter estimates. For this reason, regression techniques have been developed to overcome this complication, but they require that researcher finds suitable instrument variables, which by definition must be correlated with the independent variable embedded in the feedback loop, but not with the dependent variable. Once identified, the instrument variables are used to derive a replacement for the independent variable embedded in the feedback loop. Unfortunately, finding suitable instrument variables within the WVS proved to be unworkable, largely because the WVS was not designed to address the questions being examined in this study (and hence related variables could not be found within the survey). Nonetheless, given the robustness of the findings presented below, it is unlikely that controls for simultaneity would alter the substantive conclusions drawn in this study, although they may reduce the size of some of the parameter estimates.

FINDINGS

Table 2 shows results from 13 BLR models of the individual-level determinants of trade union membership. The parameter estimates are reported as odds ratios, with the corresponding p-values indicated by asterisks. As customary when reporting odds ratios, standard errors are not calculated. Each model is based on the same set of variables, but uses data from different countries. Specifically, model 1 is based on pooled data from all 12 countries in the sample and the remaining models are based on data from one of the individual countries. To focus the analysis on the research hypotheses, the variables of principal theoretical interest are discussed first and the control variables afterward.

Norms of Participation

The analysis begins by examining the relationship between civic participation and the likelihood of being a trade union member. Based on the theoretical logic outlined above, one would expect that people's norms and habits regarding civic engagement would affect their likelihood of being unionized, with those being heavily involved in civil society showing the highest probability of being trade union members. Consistent with this expectation, the regression results shown in table 2 indicate that involvement with civic organizations increases a worker's likelihood of being unionized. This is evidenced by the estimated odds ratios for the variable *civic participation*, which across all 13 models is statistically significant and considerably larger than '1'—outcomes that consistently indicate a positive relationship between civic and trade union membership. Substantively, the results means that for each additional membership held in a different type of voluntary association a worker increases his or her likelihood of being a trade union member by as much as 80% in the Netherlands and by as little as 16% in Sweden. For the combined model (model 1), the likelihood of being a trade union member goes up by 35% for each membership in a different type of civic association. Importantly, these findings are consistent with my contention that trade union membership is influenced by larger norms and practices surrounding participation in civil society.

Next, the analysis examines possible links between political participation and trade union membership. Recall that, according to the theoretical logic outlined above, people who regularly participate in political activities are more likely to be trade union members than those who are politically inactive. The results provide some support for this expectation. This is evidenced by the estimated odds ratios for the variable *political participation*, which are larger than '1' for all 12 countries, but statistically significant at the $p > .10$ level for only half of them. For the sample as a whole, the odds ratio is 1.263 and statistically significant. Overall, these results provide qualified support for the idea that regular participation in political affairs predisposes workers to be trade union members.

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

Values Orientations

Next, the analysis considers whether the political values of workers affect their likelihood of being trade union members. Here the basic assumption is that—since trade unions seek economic redistribution, and since economic redistribution is the domain of left politics—people with left-leaning political views will be more inclined to join trade unions than people with centrist or right-leaning political views. The regression results provide reasonable support for this expectation. As predicted, the estimated odds ratios for the variable *right political values* are less than ‘1’ for all 13 models, suggesting that workers’ with right political values are less likely to join trade unions across all the countries in my sample. However, the estimated odds ratios are not statistically significant in four out of 12 countries. Hence, the substantive interpretation of these results is that—for each incremental, rightward movement along the 10-point, left-right scale—workers decrease their chances of being unionized by as much as 28% in the Netherlands but by 0% in Canada, France, Japan, and the United States. For the sample as a whole, a one-point rightward movement along the left-right scale is associated with a 15% reduction in the odds of being unionized. Again, these results generally support the idea that the political values of workers influence their likelihood of joining trade unions, but they also highlight significant cross-national differences in this regard.

Finally, the analysis assesses the relationship between post-materialist values and the odds of being unionized. Given that trade unions focus on basic economic issues, such wages and fringe benefits, it seems possible that trade unions would have limited appeal for workers whose personal values orient them towards non-economic issues, such as environmental protection, gender equality, and freedom of self-expression. However, as Freeman and Medoff (1984) note, trade unions also give workers a collective voice over important issues affecting their working lives, a goal that is consistent with post-materialist values. The regression results are generally indicative of no systematic relationship between post-

materialist values and trade union participation. For nearly all of the models, the estimated odds ratios for the variable *post-materialist values* are close to '1' and statistically insignificant, suggesting that post-materialist values having little bearing on trade union participation. For Great Britain, the estimated odds ratio is 0.83 and statistically significant at the $p > .10$ level, a finding that lends some support to Inglehart's argument about post-materialism and trade union participation. However, given the heightened probability of a type 1 error under multiple comparisons, caution should be exercised when interpreting Britain as an anomaly in this regard.

Demographic Control Variables

The demographic control variables yield few surprises. Net of the effects arising from the key explanatory variables, educational and racial differences among workers are found to have little influence over the odds of being unionized, but difference across gender, age, occupation, and sector of employment are found to influence trade union participation. More specifically, looking at the pooled model, the results indicate that being male, middle-aged or older, and a public sector worker increase one's odds of being unionized. Here the most notable finding is that younger workers are less likely to be unionized than their middle-aged and older counterparts—a finding that is consistent with several other studies (e.g. Bryson and Gomez 2005; Goerke and Pannenberg 2004; Visser 2002; Windolf and Haas 1989).

[Insert table 3 about here.]

Recoded Variables

To examine the subject in a slightly different light, the main variables are recoded, changing them from interval-scale variables to ordinal variables in dummy-variable format (see table 3). To make the analysis more succinct, this additional step is undertaken only for the English-speaking countries and for the dataset as a whole. Changing the level of measurement in this way allows for the

possibility that the estimated effects differ at various points along the independent variables' distributions. Indeed, judging from the results of the re-estimated odds ratios, this appears to be the case.

The re-estimated results provide evidence of a positive but non-linear effect between civic and political participation and the odds of being unionized. Looking at the combined model, the re-estimated regression results show that workers involved with one type of civic association have basically the same odds of being unionized as workers avoiding civic participation altogether. This contrasts significantly with workers belonging to four or more types of civic associations. Here the results show that these workers are more than three times more likely to be unionized than their civically inactive counterparts, and about two times more likely to be unionized than workers involved with three types of civic associations. This suggests a non-linear relationship, since those workers with the highest levels of civic participation are far and away the most likely to be unionized. The re-estimated odds ratios for *political participation* exhibit similar patterns.

The effects of left-right political values on trade union participation exhibit a similar, non-linear pattern. Looking at the combined model, the re-estimated regression results shows that the odds of being unionized are not statistically different for workers with right and centre-right political values. Yet, compared to workers with right political values, the odds of being unionized increases substantially for workers with centre, centre-left and left political values, with highest odds being associated with workers indentifying as having left political values. Specifically, the re-estimated odds ratios indicate that, compared to workers with right political values, the likelihood of being unionized increases by 65% for workers with centrist political values, by 84% for workers with centre-left political values, and by 147% for workers with left political values. Interestingly, these results show only small differences in trade union participation among workers with centre and centre-left political values, but substantial differences for workers with left political values. Finally, consistent with the results shown in table 2, there is no statistically significant difference between workers with materialist, mixed, [18]

and post-materialist values, except in Great Britain where there is some evidence suggesting that workers with materialist values are more likely to join trade unions.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study develops and tests new sociological explanations for why some workers join trade union and others do not. Past research uses demographic and institutional accounts to explain why trade union participation varies among workers. What has been under-developed in these accounts is an understanding of how the social practices and values of workers influence their decisions to join trade unions. Despite recent attempts to move the literature in this direction—for example Brady's (2007) emphasis on class solidarity and Visser's (2002) and Goerke and Pannenberg's (2004) emphasis on social customs—more scholarship from this perspective is needed. Motivated to prod the literature further in this direction, the present study assesses the possibility that workers' histories of civic and political engagement, as well as their political and cultural values, are important determinants of trade union participation. This hypothesis was empirically tested with data from the fifth wave of the World Value Survey, encompassing over 7,000 workers from 12 affluent democracies. Controlling for a host of occupational, educational, and demographic factors linked to unionization, the results indicate that individual-level variation in trade union membership is positively correlated with civic and political participation, with left-leaning political views, but not with the post-materialist values. Remarkably, despite significant institutional differences among these countries, these results were generally consistent across the 12 countries examined in this study.

Despite the robustness and consistency of the statistical results across the 12-country sample, the substantive findings should be interpreted with some caution. As discussed above, the statistical models do not account for the possibility of circular patterns causation between some of the explanatory variables and trade union membership. For example, it could be that involvement with organized

labour increases one's likelihood of being politically engaged, as well as the other way around. After all, trade unions have compelling reasons to encourage their members to vote, to sign petitions, and to join political parties. Circular causation could also occur between trade union participation and left-leaning political values, with the experience of being a trade union member generating greater appreciation of left politics in general. This type of circular causation, of course, could not affect the demographic variables in the model. For instance, the act of joining a trade union cannot change a person's sex or age, nor is it likely to alter a person's level of education or occupation.

What about the relationship between trade union participation and civic participation? This study puts forward compelling theoretical and empirical evidence that workers' general involvement in civic affairs affects their odds of being unionized. But could the reverse also be true? The likelihood of this seems small to me. While trade unions have sound reasons to encourage political participation among their members—since such activities help them achieve their organizational aims—they have few reasons to encourage broader civic participation among their members. In fact, at least in the United States, evidence shows that trade unions are poorly linked to other voluntary organizations (Cornwall and Harrison 2004). Nevertheless, there may be some indirect effects, such as when workers are encouraged to join other civic associations by fellow trade union members, or when workers develop greater appreciation for volunteerism in general due to their experiences with trade unions.

My estimation is that some of these causal relationships are characterized by complex feedback loops, in which each variable influences the other. As described above, this is likely the case for trade union participation and political participation and for trade union participation and left-right political values. Such circular patterns of causation frequently occur in social and economic affairs, such as when a job's status and pay mutually reinforce one another. Social scientists have developed quantitative methods for untangling these complex effects, but they entail the identification of suitable instruments for the independent variables [20]

embedded within the circular causation, something that could not be found among the WVS data. For this reason, we should keep in mind that some of the parameter estimates generated in this study, but especially the one for the variable *political participation*, are probably larger than the actual population parameters they approximate. However, given the size and robustness of the results, it seems improbable that controls for circular causal would alter the study's main substantive conclusions.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the study is limited by the lack of temporal data. Ideally, researchers want to know why unionization rates have been diverging across affluent democracies—creating the present situation in which, for example, union densities in Nordic countries are almost three times higher than those in English-speaking countries. To make such an assessment, researchers need data that not only span different countries, but also different decades. With this type of data, researchers could estimate what portion of a country's declining union density is attributable to changing norms and practices supporting civic and political participation (if any), and what portion is attributable to other factors (such as deindustrialization, neoliberal public policy, global trade, etc). Unfortunately, the WVS is not a good source for this type of data, at least not for the variables used in this study. It was my experience that the variables used in this study were often changed or dropped from one wave to another. Perhaps better sources of cross-national, temporal data can be found for future research.

Nonetheless, despite these limitations, the present study provides valuable theoretical and empirical insights to the possibility that the habits, practices, and values of workers shape their decisions to join trade unions. While qualified for the reasons mentioned above, the empirical findings are sufficiently robust to provide cautious support for the arguments being put forth in this study. Importantly, the study's explanation for individual-level variation in trade union membership may prove useful for understanding cross-national and temporal variations in trade union density. For example, at least in Britain, the decline of organized labour has coincided with the decline of civic participation among the working class (Hall [21]

1999; Li et al 2003) and with the growing popularity of right-leaning political views among the population in general (Curtice 2010: Figure 2.2). When examined through the perspectives developed in this study, these trends suggest that changes in the practices and values of workers have played an underappreciated role in the changing fortunes of organized labour. This possibility should be assessed by future research as well.

Finally, although most of the findings in this study are consistent with theoretical expectations, an important finding is not. The regression results indicate that the distinction between material and post-material values has little bearing on the odds of being unionized. This finding, however, conflicts with the argument put forward by Inglehart, which predicts that workers with post-materialist values are less likely to join trade unions than workers with materialist values. How can this finding be explained? It could be that Inglehart's theory is correct, but that his post-materialism index lacks sufficient measurement validity, something that might cause statistical models to miss an otherwise robust association between materialism and unionization. Indeed, some scholars have questioned the measurement validity of Inglehart's index (Davis and Davenport 1999; Moors and Vermunt 2007). However, it seems more probable that the empirical findings are accurate.

The more plausible explanation centres on Freeman and Medoff's account of the 'two faces' of trade unions. In short, they argue that trade unions not only help workers gain higher wages and better fringe benefits (something prized by materialists), but also help workers gain a 'collective voice' over important issues affecting their work lives (something prized by post-materialists). Recall that the desire to participate in decision making processes—to have one's voice heard—is a paradigmatic post-materialist value. Given that trade unions help workers to influence policy choices affecting the workplace and the larger economy, it seems logical that trade unions would attract significant numbers of workers with post-materialist values. Hence, a reasonable conclusion is not that value orientations have no effect on trade union participation, but rather that different aspects of trade

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unionism appeal to different value orientations, with materialists favouring the monetary benefits of participation and post-materialists favouring the collective voice benefits of participation. This is an interesting question that deserves further scrutiny.

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Table 1. Description of Variables Used in Statistical Analysis

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>
Trade Union Member	Two category variable distinguishing between trade union members and non-members, with 1 = member and 0 = non-member.
Civic Participation	Continuous variable ranging from 0 (belongs to no civic organizations) to 8 (belongs to eight different types of civic organizations).
Political Participation	Continuous variable ranging from 0 (engaged in no political activities) to 6 (engaged in six different types of political activities).
Right Political Values	Continuous variable measuring political orientation, ranging from 1 (“the left”) to 10 (“the right”).
Post-materialist Values	Continuous variable measuring post-materialist cultural values, ranging from 1 (materialist) to 6 (post-materialist). Based on Inglehart’s (1990:74-5) 12-item index.
Education	Four category variable distinguishing university education, some university education, secondary education, and incomplete secondary education. Dummy variable coding with incomplete secondary education as the reference category.
Occupation	A six category variable distinguishing executive managers, professionals, routine white-collar workers, skilled labour, unskilled labour, and others. Dummy variable coding with unskilled labour as the reference category.
Sector of Employment	A three category variable distinguishing private sector, public sector, and non-profit sector employment. Dummy variable coding with private sector as the reference category.
Gender	Dummy variable coding with females as the reference category.
Race	Dummy variable coding with non-white as the reference category.
Ethnicity	Three category variable indicating English speaker, French speaker, and other-language speaker. Dummy variable coding with other-language speaker as the reference category.

Note: The last two variables pertain only to the English-speaking countries in the sample: Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States.

Table 2. Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regressions: The Individual-level Determinants of Labour Union Membership in 12 Affluent Countries, 2005

Independent Variables	All 12 Countries	Great Britain	United States	Australia	Canada
Norms of participation					
Civic participation	1.348***	1.248***	1.283***	1.313***	1.435***
Political participation	1.263***	1.498***	1.005	1.599***	1.310***
Political and cultural values					
Right political values	.855***	.834***	.943	.868**	.940
Post-materialist values	.990	.832*	.868	1.064	1.007
Education					
University degree	.989	1.262	1.091	.796	1.165
Some university	1.059	.825	1.341	1.099	1.199
Completed secondary	.837	1.202	1.437	.863	.956
Didn't complete secondary (ref)					
Occupation					
Executive management	.334***	.580	.121***	.295**	.432*
Professional	.628**	.761	.218**	.649	.790
Routine white-collar	.814	.675	.148***	.824	.907
Skilled trade	1.124	1.126	.338*	1.623	1.834*
Other	.540**	.690	.191***	.459	.616
Unskilled labour (ref)					
Sector of Employment					
Public	3.658***	4.409**	2.957***	3.283***	7.971***
Non-profit	1.487**	1.172	.525*	.804	1.056
Private (ref)					
Age					
Young (18-29)	.757**	.841	.520*	.715	.846
Middle-aged (30-49)	1.094	.972	.767	.969	1.103
Older (50 or older) (ref)					
Sex					
Male (vs. female)	1.272**	1.233	2.190***	1.137	1.781***
Ethnicity					
English speaker		.329**	.606	1.246	1.954*
French speaker					2.661***
Other language (ref)					
Race					
White (vs. non-White)		1.743	.783	.634	.705
Number of observations	7,238	556	710	862	1,156

Note: Parameter estimates reported as odds. * p<.10; ** p<.05; *** p<.01

**Table 2 (continued). Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regressions:
Individual-level Determinants of Trade Union Membership, 2005**

Independent Variables	Finland (6)	France (7)	Germany (8)	Japan (9)
Norms of participation				
Civic participation	1.318***	1.552***	1.776***	1.396***
Political participation	1.366***	1.505***	1.109	1.313
Political and cultural values				
Right political values	.806***	.871	.892*	.874
Post-materialist values	1.027	.975	1.130	1.028
Education				
University degree	2.484**	3.340**	.493	1.435
Some university	1.900	2.184	.183	1.001
Completed secondary	.924	1.585	.920	1.502
Didn't complete secondary (ref)				
Occupation				
Executive management	.428	.820	.082****	1.668
Professional	1.086	1.091	.695	.969
Routine white-collar	1.062	1.355	.828	1.830
Skilled trade	1.711	2.438	1.427	2.698*
Other	.811	4.898*	.333*	.185
Unskilled labour (ref)				
Sector of Employment				
Public	1.700**	1.952*	2.029**	2.090**
Non-profit	1.718	3.981*	1.200	.000
Private (ref)				
Age				
Young (18-29)	.998	.462	.460*	2.157*
Middle-aged (30-49)	1.219	.828	.778	1.667
Older (50 or older) (ref)				
Sex				
Male (vs. female)	.733	1.088	1.497*	1.766*
Number of observations	449	414	624	452

Note: Parameter estimates reported as odds. * p<.10; ** p<.05; *** p < .01

**Table 2 (continued). Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regressions:
Individual-level Determinants of Trade Union Membership, 2005**

Independent Variables	Netherlands (10)	Norway (11)	Sweden (12)	Switzerland (13)
Norms of participation				
Civic participation	1.803***	1.552***	1.161*	1.542***
Political participation	1.279	1.492***	1.176	1.019
Political and cultural values				
Right political values	.724***	.889*	.787***	.754***
Post-materialist values	.915	1.004	1.076	.923
Education				
University degree	.191**	.960	1.248	.340*
Some university	.492	.699	.764	1.001
Completed secondary	.811	.941	1.071	.978
Didn't complete secondary (ref)				
Occupation				
Executive management	.554	.406**	.196***	
Professional	.822	.811	.484	
Routine white-collar	.702	1.102	.875	
Skilled trade	2.013	1.555	.766	
Other	.661	.539	.436	
Unskilled labour (ref)				
Sector of Employment				
Public	3.402***	4.960***	2.572***	3.378***
Non-profit	2.392	1.001	3.005	2.092
Private (ref)				
Age				
Young (18-29)	.872	.644	.620	.695
Middle-aged (30-49)	1.296	.834	1.327	1.745**
Older (50 or older) (ref)				
Sex				
Male (vs. female)	1.587	1.454*	.845	1.052
Number of observations				
	294	633	565	523

Note: Parameter estimates reported as odds. * p<.10; ** p<.05; *** p<.01

Table 3. Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regressions for Recoded Variables: Individual-level Determinants of Trade Union Membership, 2005

Independent Variables	All 12 Countries	Great Britain	United States	Australia	Canada
Civic participation					
4 or more organizations	3.281***	2.470**	2.353**	3.991***	4.604***
3 organizations	1.560***	.766	1.802	2.224**	1.716**
2 organizations	1.329*	1.540	.973	1.293	1.794**
1 organization	1.259	.998	.971	1.955**	1.331
None (ref)					
Political participation					
3 or more activities	3.183***	6.427***	1.298	11.721***	2.558***
2 activities	1.727***	3.185***	.897	4.376*	1.495
1 activity	1.387*	2.373**	1.001	4.029*	1.070
None (ref)					
Political Values					
Left (1-2)	2.466***	3.655*	2.684*	3.931**	1.383
Centre-Left (3-4)	1.844**	5.419**	2.451*	1.163	1.299
Centre (5-6)	1.654**	2.204*	2.074**	1.413	1.252
Centre-Right (7-8)	1.180	1.863	2.016	.809	.979
Right (9-10) (ref)					
Cultural Values					
Materialist (1-2)	1.098	2.291**	1.695	.682	.968
Mixed (3-4)	.998	1.437	1.482	.690	1.046
Post-materialist (5-6)(ref)					
Controls for education, occupation, sector of employment, ethnicity, age, sex, and race?					
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	7,238	556	710	862	1,156

Note: Parameter estimates reported as odds. * p<.10; ** p<.05; *** p<.01