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# Intermediation through secondary associations: the organizational context of electoral behaviour

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Political intermediation between political elites and voters can take several forms in contemporary democracies. Politicians can interact directly with public opinion through mass media; state institutions can be the locus of eventful encounters among elites, bureaucracy, and citizens; governments usually enact policies interacting with bureaucracy and interest groups representing different segments of the electorate; etc. In this chapter, we focus our attention on the associational context of political participation. In particular, we are interested in the extent to which non-political voluntary associations serve as channels through which the citizens are involved in mass politics, especially in so far as they politicize their members, structure their perception of political stimuli, mobilize them for active participation, and influence their voting decisions. We explore these processes in contemporary democracies that vary considerably with regard to their respective political histories, patterns of economic development, and cultural legacy. Before moving on to these more demanding analytical tasks, we describe the patterns of secondary association membership across the CNEP countries.

Regrettably, interest in the study of secondary association within the field of electoral behaviour research has declined over the past few decades. Earlier research on political behaviour had traditionally placed great emphasis on the social context in which political participation and voting take place. As the editors noted in the Introduction to this volume, the so-called sociological approach to political behaviour—which lay at

the heart of both the European (Rokkan 1999) and Columbia (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944) research traditions begins with the premise that 'people vote in groups'. Accordingly, political parties and movements mobilized citizens along the lines of social, economic, cultural, and ethnic cleavages. They integrated individuals and communities into the larger polity, structured group identities, and articulated interests in a manner intended to guide their electoral behaviour and other modes of political involvement. In Europe, in particular, these processes tended to encapsulate sectors of the electorate, isolating their supporters from outside influences, through the development of parallel organizations, eventually leading to the development of distinctive and separate political subcultures. Accordingly, *organizational membership* is an important analytical dimension of the Rokkanian cleavage concept, along with objective location within the social structure and subjective identification with the social group (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bartolini 2000).

Later research moved away from social group theory, placing greater emphasis on the individual voter and on psychological processes underpinning the calculus of electoral choice. In part, this trend was a reflection of transformations of the social and economic structures of contemporary democracies, the erosion of traditional religious and class cleavages, and the ensuing processes of individualization of political behaviour. The crucial point of the 'Michigan approach' is the mediating role of long-term political predispositions—captured by the concept of party identification—in orienting electoral behaviour (Dalton and Wattenberg 1993). This paradigm shift, augmented by more recent research on rational and cognitive behaviour, has greatly enriched our comprehension of mass political behaviour, and has successfully challenged the assumption of a homogeneous within-social-group electorate. Unfortunately, it has also discouraged research on the social context of political behaviour in general and voting in particular, leaving the study of the political role of secondary associations to students of pressure groups politics and policy-making. We believe that it is still important to study the political ramifications of class, ethnic, regional, cultural, and gender cleavages in society, but we also believe that we should move beyond the original Rokkanian approach by systematically examining the mediation processes linking voters to their respective societies and political systems. Since these intermediation processes have largely been ignored by scholars in the field of electoral behaviour between the mid-1950s and the early 1990s, relatively little is known about the structural elements of socio-political intermediation. And yet linkages between political and civil societies are

of central importance in both old consolidated and new or transitional democracies.

Over the past decade, there has been a resurgence of interest in and research into the connections between associations and democracy. This research lies at the intersection of sociology, political science, and democratic theory. By addressing the general question, 'How do associations enhance democracy?' scholars have brought civil society and groups back into the normative and empirical investigation of democracy, broadening in this manner the research focus from the previous concentration on how secondary associations were linked to political and electoral behaviour, but at the same time making them less salient (Edwards, Foley, and Diani 2001).

### The Intellectual Background

Following Tocqueville, a high degree of societal pluralism is seen as a requisite for a viable and responsive democratic decision-making process and institutions in two ways. First, as the pluralist and neo-functionalist traditions both emphasized, organizational pluralism allows for the articulation of citizens' interests and, through linkages to parties and political institutions, for the aggregation of disparate interests into more coherent inputs into democratic decision-making (Almond and Powell 1978). Second, social participation through membership in voluntary associations is assumed to increase citizens' political awareness and sense of efficacy by providing them with political information, imbuing them with political skills, and developing their civic values. Overall, as Putnam (1993, 1995) has argued, associational life nurturing an ethic of reciprocity enhances democratic governance.

Fung (2003) lists six ways in which associations can enhance democracy: 'through the intrinsic value of associative life, fostering civic virtues and teaching political skills, offering resistance to power and checking government, improving the quality and equality of representation, facilitating public deliberation, and creating opportunities for citizens and groups to participate directly in governance.' For Warren (2001: 94), these contributions are not all mutually compatible with one another, and different forms of associations have differing impacts on democracy according to 'the degree to which an association is voluntary or non-voluntary; the kind of (associative) medium—social attachment, money or power—within an association is embedded or towards which it is

oriented, and the . . . purposes of the associations'. In sum, the basic tenet of the current wave of variations on a theme by Tocqueville suggests that secondary associations are the two pillars of democratic competition, either directly, through the experience of being a member, or indirectly, through exposing individuals to a variety of viewpoints which help to educate them as members of a pluralistic community.

But to what extent do such descriptions accurately reflect the workings of political institutions and processes within contemporary democracies? Some scholars argue that public confidence in political institutions appears to be declining (Pharr and Putnam 2000), while voluntary activism and social participation seem to be increasingly detached from political participation and political decision making. Moreover, other scholars have contended that civil and political societies have tended to separate as cleavage parties based on class and religion decline in contemporary societies, as the cognitive capabilities of electorates are supposedly increasing, and as individual voters depend less on group identities. Most importantly, pressure groups are entering more directly into the political arena, while cartel parties (Katz and Mair 1995) are, to a certain extent, less dependent on society's support. In the end, parties no longer have deep roots with organized groups in society.

To be sure, these trends are less than definitively established. Other scholars have argued that democratic support is not eroding (Klingemann 1999); that political behaviour and civic involvement do not depend directly on social capital (Newton 1999a); that there is no steady cross-national decline of membership in intermediary organizations (Norris 2002); and that membership in intermediary organizations is not becoming de-politicized, at least as far as unions are concerned (Aarts 1995). Also, cross-national comparative studies have found a positive correlation between civic engagement and indicators of democratization and good governance (Norris 2002). Finally, the rise of 'critical citizens' (i.e. those dissatisfied with the performance of their political systems) might end up promoting political reforms rather than de-legitimizing democracy (Norris 1999*d*).

Most importantly, alternative approaches claim that not always or everywhere is the vibrancy of association conducive to democracy. There is a 'dark side' of social capital, as exemplified by the mafia and other criminal organizations. Moreover, the proliferation of politicized mass-membership organizations may be less an indicator of a healthy democracy than it is of polarization within a vulnerable democratic system in crisis, as was true of Weimar Germany (see Allen 1965; Linz and Stepan

1978). 'Bridging' or 'bonding' networks (Putnam 2000) can have widely varying impacts on culture and society at large. More telling in this context, however, is the argument that the nature, democratic or not, of associations' effects depends on distinctive features of that society's political and institutional context. For Berman (1997a: 427), 'many of the consequences of associationism stressed by neo-Tocquevillean scholars can be turned to antidemocratic ends as to democratic ones. Perhaps, therefore, associationism should be considered a politically neutral multiplier—neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but rather dependent for its effects on the wider political context' (see also Berman 1997b).

We assume this claim as a basic premise for our inquiry, admitting, however, that relatively little is known about the relationships among social, political, and electoral involvement. We lack extensive, cross-national analyses of how civic and social involvement is connected to organized politics at the grass-roots level. We need to ascertain the way voluntary associations politicize their members, translating their organizational involvement into political behaviour. In short, we need to know if secondary associations still play a significant political intermediation role in contemporary consolidated democracies.

We begin this exploration, therefore, by examining cross-national patterns of associational membership. One issue that needs to be addressed is whether these patterns reflect prior characteristics of non-democratic regimes. Linz and Stepan (1996) have argued that a legacy of 'limited pluralism' might emerge in democracies which evolved from post-authoritarian regimes, while no societal pluralism (a 'flattened landscape') might be associated with post-totalitarian societies.

A second consideration is whether the development of secondary organizations in new democracies can be characterized by 'leapfrogging'. Gunther, Puhle, and Diamandouros (1995), Pasquino (2001), and Morlino (1995) have suggested that parties in new democracies might reveal features of 'modernity' or 'the new campaign politics' more clearly than do parties in long-established democratic systems. In old democracies, most parties were created and institutionalized in the early twentieth century or in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when the mass-based cleavage party model was still dominant. In so far as the institutionalization of parties perpetuates key organizational features and electoral strategies of that earlier era, they may evolve towards new party models slowly and through processes involving considerable intra-party conflict (as exemplified by the British Labour Party's struggle over the retention of Clause IV in its charter). In contrast, parties created

'from scratch' in the late twentieth century are less institutionally constrained, and can more quickly and thoroughly take on the organizational forms and strategic orientations of newer party models, such as the catch-all party—characterized by personalization of politics through an enhanced role of leaders, direct appeal to voters through mass media, no mass membership, broad, inter-class electoral and programmatic appeals, and lacking close links to mass-organized groups and secondary organizations (see Kirchheimer 1966; Gunther and Diamond 2003).<sup>1</sup>

In short, we need to compare and analyse how secondary associations provide the organizational context of political behaviour in contemporary democracies. This chapter is a step in that direction.

The associational context of political participation can be addressed from two different perspectives: that of the association and the individual. These perspectives reflect the complexity of the notion of mobilization. As Bartolini (2000: 11) argues, mobilization includes processes of hetero-mobilization and self-mobilization, of 'mobilizing' and of 'being mobilized'. In accord with this distinction, our research first explores the extent of associational politicization from the point of view of the organizations themselves, and then analyses the process of politicization at the individual level, particularly with regard to how organizational membership and level of involvement mobilize individuals for active electoral participation.

Our initial expectation is that the extent of political intermediation by secondary associations varies according to the political history of the country and to association types. Some organizations, such as unions and religious associations, have traditions of political activism, especially in Europe—functioning as collateral agencies of political parties, organizing their members, and channelling their electoral support. Other types of associations, such as civic non-religious groups, have been more detached from explicit political action. The constellation of such roles across countries depends on the historical pattern of development of political cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967*a*; Rokkan 1999; Bartolini 2000). Time and space constraints would not allow for analyses of complex historical patterns of cleavage formation and structuring. Instead, we analyse the extent to which secondary organizations in the 1990s still played a political role in contemporary democracies—often characterized as lacking structured links between parties and organized societal groups, and as composed of individuals rather than social groups—and whether old and new democracies are alike in this regard. While our study does not deal with the 'strong' concept of political mobilization—that is, of integrating

former 'subjects' into the political system, as appears to be taking place in the post-communist countries of Central Europe (Enyedi 2003; Markowski 2003)—but it will analyse efforts by political organizations to activate members as voters in elections.

Neither will we explore the interest-articulation roles performed by secondary associations in the manner conceptualized by Verba and Nie. As they observed (1972: 175), organized groups increase

the potency of the citizenry vis-à-vis the government in a number of ways. Organizations through their paid officials speak *for* their members . . . [Individuals] can gain access to the government *through* the organization . . . [O]rganizations may have an impact on political life in a society through the influence they have on the participatory activities of their members. Citizens may participate directly *because* of their affiliation with an organization . . . A rich political participant life may rest on a rich associational life.

The problem with this approach is that the distinction between social and political participation at the individual level does not have clear boundaries. Associations seemingly unrelated to politics, such as sports and leisure clubs, can be strongly connected with a party. There is no doubt that in such contexts members are exposed to a number of political stimuli. They might be exposed to information flows or to cues indicating support for the party which their organization was linked to. Even within these groups, reception of information and political cues might be not uniform across individuals. Some members could be more responsive to the political stands of their organization and successfully politicized, others less.

We regard the degree of receptiveness to political messages from organizations as crucial to the process of politicization. In turn, an individual's receptivity to these messages is a function of the level of organizational involvement—over and above other factors, such as level of education, social status, age, political interest, and so on (Verba and Nie 1972; Baumgartner and Walker 1988; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). We analyse this relationship across CNEP countries and across different types of associations.

We also examine the behavioural consequences of organizational involvement, such as with regard to turnout, carefully controlling for other determinants of the level of electoral participation (e.g. social status, political interest, sense of political efficacy, and party strength [Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Norris 2002]). Another relevant behavioural consequence is voting for one party or another and the extent to which the individual's

partisan choice is consistent with the cues and recommendations of the politicized secondary association. In doing so, we analyse what studies in the social-cleavage tradition referred to as 'encapsulation', that is, the ability of some organizations to create an 'external closure' of their members from outside pressures (Bartolini and Mair 1990). Bartolini and Mair seem also to suggest that, among the three components of a cleavage—social, normative, and organizational—it is associational membership that contributes most to the political closure of social relationships. Their aggregate-level study found that organizational density, operationalized as the density of union membership and the ratio of party voters to party members, has had a particularly strong impact, stabilizing partisan preferences and reducing the level of electoral volatility over more than a century of European electoral history. With the benefit of cross-nationally comparable survey data, we test this relationship at the individual level, and expand the range of organizations to be analysed beyond unions and parties. These cross-sectional data, unfortunately, do not allow us to fully explore the *dynamic* factors affecting the formation of political preferences (Zaller 1992). But we undertake a cross-national comparison of the share of the electorate in each country that is 'encapsulated', as well as an attempt to determine the impact on this encapsulation process of such factors as the type of association, the extent of active involvement within the organization, the degree of exposure to its political messages, and perceptions of bias in that flow of information.

The politics included in the CNEP study reflect a wide array of political development trajectories, levels of social and economic development, and organizational structures. This variation will greatly facilitate our analysis and provide a unique research opportunity. In this chapter, we focus on ten countries (Bulgaria, Chile, Greece, Hungary, Hong Kong, Italy, Spain, Uruguay, and the United States), which vary substantially in their patterns of association membership, aggregate levels of involvement, and the development of social capital and democratic legitimacy.

The United States, previously regarded as the paradigmatic example of a democratic polity nurtured by a diffuse texture of social participation, has experienced a decline of social capital, and an acceleration in the personalization of politics and in the individualization of voting behaviour. Italy's fifty-year-old democracy, with a record of intense partisan cleavages, underwent in the 1990s a radical change of its party system which substantially altered relationships between parties and other secondary associations (with the Christian Democratic collapse undermining the political relevance of religious associations). Japan also underwent similar



changes in the early 1990s. Spain and Greece, in contrast, consolidated their democratic institutions without developing the close links between parties and other organizations that were forged in Italy in the 1940s. Bulgaria and Hungary are post-communist systems with no significant prior democratic experience, and whose civil societies are considered less vibrant than those in countries with long democratic histories. Chile and Uruguay, at the time of the 1993 and 1994 surveys, represented yet a different political, social, and economic pattern, with Chilean democratic consolidation still a work in progress. Hong Kong stands alone, since it is not a democratic regime, and its future political trajectory is still very much in doubt. These widely differing political trajectories will make it possible to compare the political roles of secondary associations in new democracies with those in older, long-established democratic systems.

This chapter is organized as follows. In the second section, an analysis of patterns of membership in voluntary associations is presented, and an explanatory model of social participation is discussed. In the third section, we explore how countries differ as to the degree of politicization of their secondary associations. We also discuss factors that affect our respondents' perceptions of stands taken by their respective associations, and influence electoral turnout and partisan choice. In the fourth section, we analyse, cross-nationally and across different types of secondary association, the extent of electoral encapsulation.

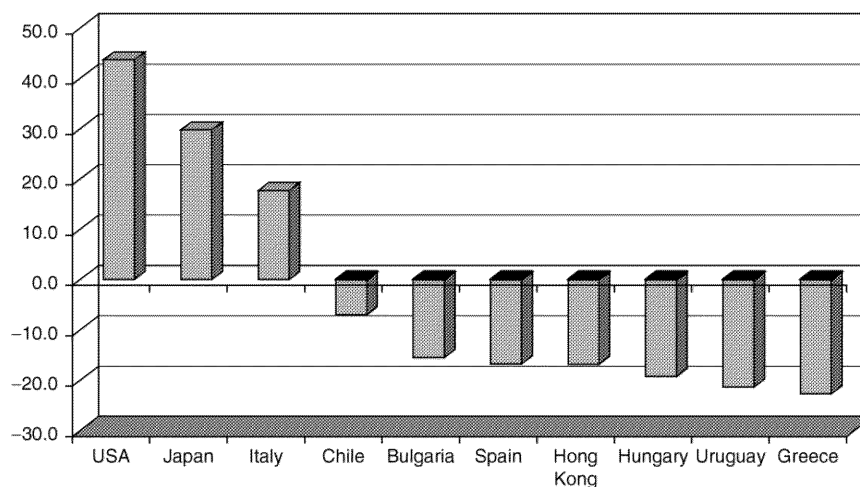
### **Voluntary Associations: Patterns of Membership**

We begin our analysis by considering the patterns of social participation among our group of countries, employing three standard indicators of joining propensity: the membership rate, measured by the share of citizens who belong to at least one association; the density rate, that is the individual multi-membership in voluntary associations; and active membership, that is the percentage of citizens who participate actively in the life of associations. The three measures together describe the 'joining propensity' of civil society, although each taps a different dimension of social involvement.

#### *Being an Association Member*

As expected, membership in voluntary associations varies quite considerably across countries. The overall membership rate for each country is

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**Figure 4.1** Overall associational membership (Percentage difference against average value)

presented in the second-to-last row of Table 4.1. In terms of overall membership, on average, more than 40 per cent of the citizens in our countries belong to at least one association. But there is considerable cross-national variation, from a peak of 85 per cent in the United States to less than 20 per cent in Greece. In general, it can be said that longer-established democracies exhibit a higher 'joining propensity' than younger democratic polities, with the United States as an unequivocal leader and Japan and Italy not far behind. A clearer picture of the differences between the new and old democracies can be seen in Figure 4.1, which presents a graphic image of each country's deviation from the pooled average.

These findings lend support to the hypothesis that liberal democratic institutions encourage a wider range of associations and deeper associational activity than do less liberal polities. Nonetheless, it should be noted that one study (Paxton 2002) found that the impact of democracy on secondary associations (i.e. that more associations would be expected to exist when governments allow them to exist) was relatively modest following the introduction of controls for other variables.<sup>2</sup> Our data also show that the nature of the previous non-democratic regime does not seem to affect the joining propensity. In Greece and Spain, both previously authoritarian regimes, the overall membership rate is actually lower than that of Bulgaria, which had a post-totalitarian regime.

**Table 4.1** Membership in voluntary associations (percentage of total population)

	USA	Japan	Italy	Chile	Bulgaria	Spain	Hong Kong	Hungary	Uruguay	Greece
Labour unions	14.1	8.4	24.7	5.6	13.7	6.8	8.4	12.3	8	2.3
Political parties	4.9	4.9	6.2	3.1	10.3	1.7	0.2	1	7.7	6.6
Professional associations	27.3	6.8	15.8	4.3	0.3	2.8	4.8	2.4	2.1	5.5
Farmers' associations	4.3	13.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Religious associations	52.7	4.7	5.1	22	2.1	3.2	6	2.5	8.6	0.9
Cultural associations	—	—	—	3.7	0.7	2.3	1.1	0.9	4.5	2.5
Public interest groups	14.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fraternal associations	16.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Environmental associations	11.3	0.6	4.5	1	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.1	0.6	1
Youth associations	—	—	3.5	2.4	0.5	0.7	1.4	0.4	1.8	0.7
Sports associations	17.1	11.4	16.9	13.7	0.8	5	0.7	1.4	5.9	4.5
Feminist associations	4.3	0.5	—	1.1	0.4	1	1.3	—	1	0.1
Neighbourhood associations	22.2	47.3	—	10.1	0.5	5	4.2	0.8	3.5	—
Parents' associations	—	—	—	7.9	0.4	4.3	4.2	—	2.5	2.3
Voluntary associations	—	—	11.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Veterans' associations	9.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
War bereaved associations	—	1.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Civic groups	20.5	0.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ethnic/racial associations	5.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Support groups	14.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Livelihood cooperatives	—	9.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Young/old man/woman associations	—	13.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Groups of service to public	—	2.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hobby clubs	—	13.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other associations	—	—	12.1	2.2	0.6	1.7	1.2	2.8	1	0.6
<b>Overall membership</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>71.5</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>34.7</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>19.0</b>
No. of cases	1,318	1,333	2,502	1,305	1,216	1,448	988	1,500	1,005	966

The rows above the Overall Membership rate in Table 4.1 present the percentages of the population belonging to each type of organization.<sup>3</sup> These data reveal large variations cross-nationally with regard to the *type* of voluntary association. To be sure, cross-national differences are quite modest among types of associations with generally low-membership levels (e.g. feminist, youth, and cultural groups). But for other types of organizations (e.g. professional, sports, union, neighbourhood, and religious associations) the range is quite considerable, with cross-national variations running up to 52 per cent of respondents for religious groups. Particularly noteworthy is the extraordinarily high level of membership in religious organizations in the United States (and, to a lesser extent, in Chile). In the American context, this high level of affiliation (53% of population) may in part be a supply-driven consequence of a competitive sectarian market (Curtis, Douglas, and Grabb 1992; Chaves and Gorski 2001), which boosts the participation rate.<sup>4</sup> In Japan, the joining propensity is particularly marked by a high level of involvement in neighbourhood associations (47% of population), a peculiar feature of Japanese society not found elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> However, it is not only membership in religious associations which sets the United States apart from other countries. Civic non-religious associations—which in the aggregate have the largest membership in our sample (22% of the total)—are a case in point. Here again, apart from Japan, the huge lead of American citizens goes unchallenged. Thus, our findings seem to support the claim by Lipset (1990: 74–89) that the strong American orientation to religious voluntarism extends and spills over to voluntary community or civic activity in general.

Yet this gap between the United States and the other countries shrinks significantly when other types of associations are taken into account. This trend is already well visible in the case of unions and professional associations; sport associations are another example.<sup>6</sup> Finally, when we look at the propensity to join a political party, Americans are outpaced by citizens of several countries: noticeably, though little surprisingly, Bulgarians, but also Italians, Greeks, and Uruguayans. In addition, it should be noted that differences *across countries* increase, pointing to the working of some specific local factors.

One explanation of these cross-national variations that has been put forward is that membership rates are related to a country's level of economic development: *ceteris paribus*, the higher the income per capita, the higher the propensity to join an association. On the whole, this relationship receives some support (Pearson's  $r = .74$ ): the United States, Japan, and Italy are almost perfectly aligned on the polynomial regression

line. But at lower levels of associational involvement, Hong Kong and Bulgaria are widely off it, though in opposite directions, as are Spain and Chile. Clearly, other factors impinge on associational propensity other than a country's level of economic development (see, among others, Curtis, Douglas, and Grabb 2001).

The data we have examined to this point are based on objective measures of organizational affiliation. Let us turn our attention to a more subjective notion of associational membership. Our CNEP questionnaire asked respondents to identify 'the most important' organization to which they belong. We aggregated these responses by type of association, and present the percentage mentioning each type in each country in Table 4.2. The resulting typology distinguishes among professional associations, labour unions, political parties, sports groups, religious organizations, and a residual category (which we call 'civic non-religious') in which we include community groups, social welfare organizations, cultural associations, etc. Seen from this perspective, it becomes apparent that there is no common associational pattern. Rather, each country exhibits a distinct 'associational configuration', clearly indicating that associational membership is remarkably context- and path-dependent. A typical example of this dependence is union membership, both for formerly socialist countries and also for countries with closed-shop practices. Other examples are religious associations in the United States and Chile, or neighbourhood associations in Japan. If we exclude political parties from the analysis (as we do throughout the remainder of this chapter), so as to concentrate on (ostensibly) non-political voluntary associations, the picture does not change significantly, except for Bulgaria, Greece, and Uruguay, where political parties are an important component of the country's associational landscape (see Table 4.2).

We now move to an analysis at the individual level utilizing a 'pooled' data-set in an effort to assess those factors leading to membership in voluntary associations. As can be seen in Table 4.3, taking into account membership in *any* voluntary association, characteristics commonly associated with 'social centrality' appear to foster higher levels of social participation (Milbrath and Goel 1977): in particular, being male, employed, and better educated makes it more likely to join a voluntary association of some kind.<sup>7</sup> Only the age factor seems to have a different impact, in the sense that all age groups have a higher probability of associational membership vis-à-vis the youngest cohort considered (18- to 29-year old).

However, the most interesting result of the analysis is the huge impact that the variable country has on membership propensity, even controlling

**Table 4.2** Membership by type of voluntary association and country (most important group as percentage of total association members)

Type of association	USA <sup>a</sup>	Japan	Italy	Chile	Bulgaria	Spain	Hong Kong	Hungary	Uruguay	Greece	Overall
Civic non-religious	13.7	61.2	33.8	18.7	6.1	33.3	36.9	20.5	20.2	21.7	30.1
Union	2.1	8.5	23.2	10.4	45.9	26.5	27.4	51.2	21.6	12.0	18.4
Professional	2.8	16.6	17.4	7.3	1.3	10.0	13.3	9.9	5.3	23.9	11.3
Religious	11.2	5.2	5.0	40.5	7.3	11.2	21.2	8.1	26.9	4.9	11.0
Sport	1.6	7.9	16.1	18.7	1.0	14.2	0.8	5.1	9.6	13.0	9.2
Party	0.4	0.6	4.5	4.4	38.5	4.7	0.4	5.1	16.3	24.5	5.9
Multi-member	68.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of cases	1,130	950	1,412	385	314	339	241	332	208	184	5,495

<sup>a</sup> Since most important association is not recorded, associations' membership (re-coded in mutually exclusive categories plus a multiple membership category) is used.

**Table 4.3** Logistic model of membership in voluntary associations (pooled analysis)<sup>a</sup>

	All associations	Civic non-religious	Religious	Sport	Union and professional	Parties
Age (18–29)						
30/45	0.406*	0.437*	0.067	-0.489*	0.902*	0.503*
46/59	0.408*	0.452*	0.194***	-0.750*	1.023*	0.704*
60+	0.438*	0.469*	0.408*	-1.136*	0.851*	1.103*
Not working						
Work	0.422*	-0.030	-0.098	-0.014	1.197*	0.169
Education (less than secondary)						
secondary completed	0.374*	0.499*	0.036	0.206*	0.276*	0.559*
Gender (male)						
female	-0.349*	-0.045	0.134***	-1.057*	-0.511*	-0.697*
Country (USA)						
Spain	-2.616*	-2.183*	-3.538*	-1.359*	-1.610*	-0.541**
Italy	-1.286*	-1.439*	-2.975*	-0.081	-0.123	0.632*
Chile	-2.241*	-2.038*	-1.774*	-0.830*	-2.176*	-0.368
Bulgaria	-2.752*	-3.961*	-3.973*	-3.163*	-1.371*	1.068*
Greece	-3.149*	-3.100*	-4.785*	-1.560*	-2.156*	0.649*
Hong Kong	-2.806*	-2.380*	-2.826*	-3.380*	-1.638*	-2.801*
Uruguay	-2.999*	-2.758*	-2.774*	-1.616*	-2.291*	0.541*
Hungary	-2.858*	-3.281*	-3.719*	-2.590*	-1.101*	-1.096*
Japan	-0.824*	0.025	-3.137*	-0.470*	-0.741*	-0.809*
Constant	1.093*	-0.232**	-0.103	-0.722	-1.880	-4.057
No of cases	13,459	13,459	13,459	13,459	13,459	13,459
$\chi^2$	3,353.39	3,312.87	2,199.59	1,177.80	2,418.98	441.90
P	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.297	0.334	0.320	0.192	0.262	0.112

\* p < .01; \*\* p < .05; \*\*\* p < .10

<sup>a</sup> Dependent variable: member of voluntary association (1); non-member (0).

for socio-demographic factors. Using the United States as the reference category, citizens of all other countries exhibit a much lower propensity to join a voluntary association. Only the Japanese are not so vastly outdistanced by the Americans as far as membership propensity is concerned. Again a note of caution is appropriate at this point: this picture might have been different if other countries (such as Britain, Canada, Australia, and Scandinavian countries) were compared with the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Somewhat different findings result from analyses using specific types of associations as the dependent variable. For example, employment status disappears as a significant determinant of joining propensity except for membership in union and professional associations. And the impact of other variables (age, gender, and education) also varies, but in a rather predictable fashion.<sup>9</sup>

*Networks of Involvement*

Absolute membership rates, however, are less relevant than the existence of an articulated network of associations in which individuals are involved. In this respect, the countries we analyse exhibit a highly differentiated level of associational density (Table 4.4). On the whole, more than half of association members belong to a single association, a quarter of them to two organizations, and a fifth to three or more. Differences across countries appear large, with the United States being

**Table 4.4** Density of membership (multiple membership) in non-political voluntary associations (excluding political parties)<sup>a</sup>

Country	Number of associations					Total	Mean	Standard deviation	N
	1	2	3	4	>4				
USA	25.2	26.5	19.9	11.5	16.9	100	2.87	1.83	1,126
Japan	43.4	33.6	15.1	5.0	2.8	100	1.92	1.08	953
Italy	57.6	28.4	10.0	2.9	1.0	100	1.61	0.87	1,459
Uruguay	65.6	21.9	8.2	3.8	0.5	100	1.54	0.94	183
Chile	65.9	22.2	9.4	1.8	0.7	100	1.49	0.80	446
Spain	72.7	19.3	6.0	1.4	0.6	100	1.38	0.75	352
Greece	73.8	20.1	6.0	0.0	0.0	100	1.32	0.58	149
Hong Kong	74.3	19.2	4.9	0.4	1.2	100	1.37	0.87	245
Hungary	86.0	11.0	2.4	0.6	0.0	100	1.18	0.48	328
Bulgaria	88.7	9.5	1.8	0.0	0.0	100	1.13	0.39	221
Total	54.5	25.2	11.4	4.4	4.4	100	1.83	1.26	5,462

<sup>a</sup> The table refers only to association members. Non-members are excluded from calculations.



## Intermediation Through Secondary Associations

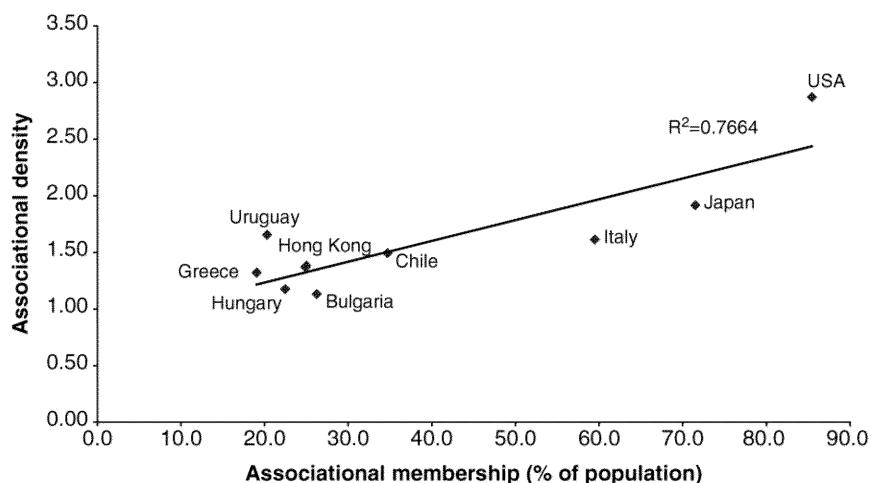


Figure 4.2 Association membership and association density

a noteworthy outlier: only a quarter of those Americans who belong to an organization belong to just one, while 17 per cent belong to more than four associations—a percentage which vastly exceeds those of the other countries in this survey. On average, Americans belong to 2.9 associations (standard deviation 1.83). In this respect, it is not inaccurate to speak of American exceptionalism (Putnam 2000; Putnam and Feldstein 2003). All the other countries appear to be in a different league altogether, with the partial exception of Japan. By contrast, at the other end of the spectrum, the overwhelming majority of Bulgarian and Hungarian respondents who belong to a group limit their membership to a single association (mostly, unions), confirming the poor civic articulation of these post-communist societies.

In terms of explaining the density of associational affiliation, by far the best predictor is the country's aggregate level of membership. As can be seen in Figure 4.2, the higher the membership rate of a country, the higher also its associational density. The strength of this linear relationship is quite impressive ( $R^2 = .77$ ).

### *Membership Versus Active Participation*

The growing literature on social capital has emphasized the importance of distinguishing between people who are simply members of associations

and those who are actively involved in the workings of the organizations they join (see Newton 1999a). If participation is limited to mere formal membership and check-writing rather than active involvement with these groups, the positive internal effect of membership—on communication and organizational skills, socialization, political efficacy, etc.—are weak or non-existent. From this viewpoint, the third measure of social participation we take into account is *active membership*.<sup>10</sup> Overall, almost 40 per cent of association members appear actively involved in the life and work of their organization. Of course, this is an average value; cross-country differences are indeed noticeable. In fact, the ‘involvement index’ (the ratio between active and passive members) ranges from 1.37 in the United States and a meagre 0.18 in Italy, as can be seen in Table 4.5.

It is noteworthy that, seen from this perspective, the relative rankings of countries are quite different from what we observed above: Uruguay and Greece, which ranked lowest in terms of overall membership rate, are second and fourth in terms of the involvement index. At the other end of the spectrum, we find Hong Kong and, especially, Italy, where the overwhelming majority of association members is uninvolved with the activities of their organizations. These changes in relative rankings notwithstanding, there is a very strong positive correlation ( $r = .87$ ) between overall membership and active membership. In other words, the degree of involvement is a positive linear function of the size of associational membership in our countries. The propensity to activism (better, the factors leading to it) among association members is roughly similar in all countries examined, with the exception of Italy.

The type of organization is another factor explaining the intensity of participation. It is to be expected that different kinds of associations entail different commitments of time, anticipated costs, problems of availability, etc., which in turn influence the depth of individual involvement in the groups activities. We can explore this dimension by examining the distribution of active members according to the typology of non-political voluntary associations we have elaborated taking into account ‘the most important organization’ mentioned by our respondents mention (see above). As can be seen in Table 4.6, there are, indeed, substantial differences among types of groups with regard to the intensity of involvement. Religious groups show the highest rate of activism (55% of whose members participate always or often in group activities), followed, as one could perhaps have foreseen, by sport groups (49%). Civic non-religious

**Table 4.5** Intensity of participation in activities of voluntary non-political associations by country (percentage of total population, excluding political parties)

Intensity of participation	USA	Uruguay	Chile	Greece	Japan	Spain	Bulgaria	Hungary	Hong Kong	Italy	Overall
Non-member	19.4	84.7	67.9	85.1	31.4	77.9	84.6	78.6	75.2	43.8	61.6
Passive involvement <sup>a</sup>	34.1	6.9	14.6	6.8	35.6	14.7	11.0	15.4	18.9	47.5	23.7
Active involvement <sup>b</sup>	46.5	8.4	17.5	8.0	32.9	7.5	4.5	6.0	5.9	8.7	14.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of cases	1,318	971	1,288	921	1,327	1,432	1,095	1,483	987	2,438	13,260
Involvement index <sup>c</sup>	1.37	1.22	1.20	1.17	0.92	0.51	0.41	0.39	0.31	0.18	0.62

<sup>a</sup> Passive involvement: members participate never or sometimes to activities of association.

<sup>b</sup> Active involvement: members participate often or always to activities of association.

<sup>c</sup> Ratio between active and passive involvement.

**Table 4.6** Intensity of participation in activities of voluntary non-political associations by type of association and country (percentage of active members; countries are ranked according to overall activism from highest to lowest)

Type of association	USA	Uruguay	Chile	Greece	Japan	Spain	Bulgaria	Hungary	Hong Kong	Italy	All countries
Religious	63.4 <sup>a</sup>	68.0 <sup>a</sup>	49.0	<sup>a</sup>	53.1	67.6	47.8 <sup>a</sup>	55.6 <sup>a</sup>	52.9 <sup>a</sup>	38.0	54.5
Sport			64.3	91.3	69.9	48.9	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	31.1	49.2
Civic non-religious	39.0	66.7 <sup>a</sup>	62.7	59.0	43.2	34.8	<sup>a</sup>	45.6	25.8	17.8	35.3
Professional	25.0	<sup>a</sup>	18.5	42.9	56.9	15.2	<sup>a</sup>	9.1	0.0	4.5	23.3
Union	22.7	26.3	80.0	27.3	42.3	17.0	25.2	15.9	7.6	5.2	18.6
Multi-member	63.1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
All associations	57.7	55.0	54.6	54.0	48.0	33.8	29.0	28.0	23.7	15.5	38.3
No. of cases	1,062	149	414	137	910	317	169	318	245	1,371	5,092

Note: Entries are active members as a % of total members.

<sup>a</sup> N < 20.

groups (35%) and, especially, professional associations (23%) and labour unions (19%) show significantly lower rates of activism.

When these patterns of organizational affiliation are examined cross-nationally, three different groups of countries can be distinguished. A first cluster, made up of the United States and Japan, is characterized by higher-than-average levels of involvement for all types of associations. In a second group of countries—Uruguay, Chile, and Greece—some types of associations (different for each country) show an extraordinarily high level of members' activism, pushing their overall percentage above the average value. In the last, and largest, group of countries—including Spain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Hong Kong, and Italy—the level of active involvement for some types of associations is so low as to depress significantly their average level of activism. On the whole, the observed differences among countries' 'working' memberships appear to depend both on the association's specific involvement capacity and on the varying combinations of voluntary associations within countries.<sup>11</sup>

The data we have presented to this point clearly reveal that membership in voluntary associations varies quite considerably across countries, although this point should not be overemphasized: certain types of associations are characteristic of a specific country, and if we leave these national peculiarities outside general analysis, cross-country differences in membership rate decrease considerably. Second, what appears more important than rates of membership is the fact that there is no common associational pattern among the countries we analyse. Rather, each country exhibits a specific 'associational configuration', implying that associational membership is remarkably *context- and path-dependent*. This also appears at the individual level with regard to factors pushing towards associational membership. Third, there is no obvious pattern in membership density among our countries, except for its strong linear correlation with the overall membership rate. Fourth, shifting to active participation in the life of associations, our data reveal that the degree of involvement is a linear function of the size of associational membership in our countries: the more widespread that associational affiliation is, the higher the degree of individuals' involvement. Unions show the smallest rate of activism and religious associations the highest. Finally, the observed differences among countries' working memberships appear to depend both on the different configuration of voluntary associations within countries and, especially, on the association's *specific* involvement capacity. Significant interaction effects between country and types of association were found.

### **Political Intermediation by Voluntary Associations: Associations' Efforts and Individual Resources**

In this section of the chapter we analyse the linkages between political and civil societies by looking at the pattern of group politicization, that is, the involvement of various associations in the electoral process through the mobilization of their members. We analyse this relationship from a dual perspective: first, that of the association, and then that of the individual. In the last section, we then discuss the extent to which politicized secondary associations succeed in channelling their members' electoral support, and help to shape their voting preferences.

#### *The Web of Associations' Political Contacts*

We begin our analysis by examining the extent to which civil societies are involved in the electoral process. To gauge these group activities, we consider the respondents' reported political contacts at time of elections by associations to which respondents belong.<sup>12</sup> Table 4.7 shows the percentages of members of each type of group contacted. Overall, about 30 per cent of group members reported that they were contacted at time of elections by associations passing on information about the upcoming election, with Japan showing the highest level of group politicization (58%) and Hungary the lowest (11%).

What is most noteworthy in this table is the high percentage of political contacts among organization members in Asia. This is best seen if we look at the ratio of informed to uninformed members, as is presented in the second row of data. This indicator reflects the associations' capacities to distribute political information to members. In Japan and Hong Kong, these ratios are 1.39 and .98, respectively. Much lower ratios are found in other countries, ranging from about .4 in the United States and Uruguay to .18 and .13 in Spain and Hungary, respectively. Italy and Chile share a low score of .22: for every 100 uninformed members, only 22 were exposed to political information from the (most important) organizations which they belong to. Overall, it is clear that the degree of politicization of voluntary associations varies considerably from one country to another, and that this variation is not correlated with the aggregate level of organizational membership in each country. Higher levels of membership are not accompanied by higher propensities of groups to get politically involved.

**Table 4.7** Non-political voluntary associations' electoral contacts by country and according to type of association (countries ranked according to percentage of informed members)

Type	Japan	Hong Kong	Uruguay	USA	Bulgaria	Greece	Chile	Italy	Spain	Hungary	All	All (weighted <sup>b</sup> )
Informed members (% of members)	58.2	49.6	28.7	28.3	25.4	25.2	20.3	18.0	15.5	11.4	29.9	32.0
Ratio of informed/not informed	1.39	0.98	0.40	0.39	0.34	0.33	0.22	0.22	0.18	0.13	0.42	0.46
Type of association												
Professional	74.1	40.6	<sup>a</sup>	12.5	<sup>a</sup>	15.9	<sup>a</sup>	23.3	12.5	9.1	36.1	39.0
Union	60.5	68.2	51.1	70.8	27.1	54.5	38.5	30.8	37.8	15.3	35.7	38.2
Sport	45.3	<sup>a</sup>	15.0	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	20.8	11.4	9.3	4.4	<sup>a</sup>	15.7	17.7
Religious	65.3	29.4	25.0	22.8	4.3	<sup>a</sup>	14.8	16.9	11.1	11.1	23.2	23.8
Civic non-religious	54.6	44.9	19.0	22.6	31.6	25.0	23.8	10.7	6.7	5.9	30.2	33.6
Multi-member (USA)				30.0							30.0	30.0
Base (N)	944	240	174	1,126	193	139	202	1,348	291	315	4,972	4,603

Note: Entries are informed members as a % of members of associations.

<sup>a</sup> N < 20.

<sup>b</sup> Data weighted to equal sample size by country.

One possible explanation of these varying patterns involves the type of organization. We hypothesize that the nature of the intermediary organization may exert some influence on its perceived political activism. The percentage of members reporting that they received electoral information for each type of group is presented in Table 4.7. Indeed, different kinds of organizations vary with regard to political contacts reported by their members, with unions and professional organizations perceived as the most politicized, and sport associations the least politically involved.

Labour unions are the most heavily involved in vote-mobilization efforts in all countries except Bulgaria, where community organizations appear slightly more politically active. This does not come as a surprise, given unions' historical record of engagement in electoral politics. Seen from this historical perspective, however, unions are actually weaker in their electoral contacts than one might have assumed. With the exception of Japan and Hong Kong, where over two-thirds of union members report having received electoral information, the range is from a high of about 50 per cent in Uruguay and Greece to a low of 15 per cent in Hungary. In Italy and Spain, only between three and four out of ten union members received political information. And in both of our post-communist countries, Bulgaria and Hungary, unions exhibit a very low propensity to engage in electoral politics. With regard to the United States, which shows a very high propensity to be active at election time, these data must be interpreted with some caution, since this variable is constructed in a manner that differs from those in the other questionnaires.<sup>13</sup> The dissemination of political information by the other economic-based organizations—professional associations—is less common, except in Japan, Hong Kong and, to a lesser extent, Italy. In these somewhat 'corporatist' countries, membership in a professional organization may be a requisite to practise a profession, meaning that joining may not be a fully voluntary activity, which might, in turn, affect receptivity to these messages.

Civic non-religious associations are the next most frequent disseminators of political information. This is a significant finding. Closest to the 'model' of civic engagement, these associations politically mobilize their members at a rate (34%) only slightly lower than that of unions (whose weighted average is 38%). One could speculate that a weakened political role of unions has been counterbalanced by a rise of political engagement of civic associations, although we have no diachronic data to test this hypothesis. The overall trend appears to be one in which union and civic group membership reinforce each other: countries with higher union



political involvement show also a more intense civic association political activity. This is not a uniform finding, however: in Spain and Italy, where unions are significant sources of political information for their members, civic associations do not appear to be politicized, while the exact opposite is true in Bulgaria and Chile.

Religious organizations exhibit an intermediate propensity to engage in politics. On average a quarter of their members in our panel were contacted at election time. Again, Japan stands out as exceptionally high (65%), although the relatively small share of our respondents who belong to such groups (5%) suggests that not too much should be made of this finding, since only about 3 per cent of the electorate received political information through this channel. The reverse is true of our interpretation of data from the United States: while only 23 per cent of religious group members received such communications in the course of the 1992 election, they amount to fully 12 per cent of our respondents.<sup>14</sup> Findings for other countries are mixed. In Chile and Italy, political involvement of religious organizations appears lower than one might have predicted on the basis of the strong Catholic subcultures in both countries. Spain's low level of political involvement of religious organizations in 1993 (11%) reflects the prudence shown by the Church during the transition to democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996: 93), while the low scores for post-communist Bulgaria and Hungary are most likely a legacy of restrictions on religious practice under the previous communist regimes.

The overall levels of exposure to political communications through secondary associations (presented in the first row of Table 4.7) can be regarded as the aggregated product of highly differentiated patterns of politicization of the various types of groups in these countries. And each country's particular associational configuration is, in turn, a product of highly path-dependent processes of institutional evolution of these groups with regard to both overall levels of organizational membership and varying levels of group politicization. Accordingly, the low rates of both information diffusion and political involvement of secondary associations in former communist countries is explained by the fact that the relatively low level of politicization of trade unions (the organizational type with the highest membership rates), coupled with the overall weakness of other types of organizations. Similarly, surprisingly low level of dissemination of political information by organized groups in Italy, a country with relatively high levels of organizational membership, is explained by the weak partisan links of those groups following the complete restructuring of the Italian party system in the mid-1990s and the

predominance of catch-all-type parties. It is likely that these scores would have been much higher a decade earlier when the Italian party system was dominated by mass-membership parties with strong links to allied secondary associations. This same configuration is also generally characteristic of the United States, which has a very high level of organizational membership but a relatively modest level of group politicization. Again, we must interpret these data in light of the specific political context of the 1992 elections. At that time, religious organizations were characterized by relatively low levels of partisan involvement (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 63; in future research, we will be able to examine the extent to which the politicization of religion over the following decade and a half has altered this partisan/associational configuration in the United States). The exact opposite configuration can be seen in Uruguay and Hong Kong, which are characterized by low levels of organizational membership but high politicization of those groups (especially unions and religious groups in Uruguay and unions and civic associations in Hong Kong).

### *Organizations' Explicit Partisan Support*

To what extent is the political information disseminated by organizations explicitly supportive of a party or a candidate? Secondary organizations can take positions on many political issues, and inform their members of their positions. But does this information explicitly endorse candidates and parties? Some organizations, such as unions, have a long and established tradition of political and party involvement (though our data reflect some recent retrenchment). In other cases, partisan involvement is more recent, such as the recent politicization of the fundamentalist right in the United States. Other groups, in contrast, may adopt non-partisan stands on a number of political issues.

With the striking exceptions of Bulgaria and Hungary, which stake out the two extreme ends of the continuum, we find surprisingly little cross-national variation in the extent to which our respondents report having received information explicitly endorsing a party or candidate (see Table 4.8). For most of the countries examined in this chapter, the percentages reporting such contacts range between 16 per cent (in Spain) to 26 per cent (Japan). The two post-communist countries, in contrast, are extreme and puzzling outliers, with only 8 per cent of Hungarian respondents reporting such contacts, while fully 79 per cent of Bulgarians having received such information. What is most striking about the Bulgarian case is that all three of the predominant types of organization (trade unions,

**Table 4.8** Non-political voluntary associations' electoral support by country and according to type of association (percentage of association members who report electoral support by organization; countries ranked according to percentage of those members perceiving support)

Type	Bulgaria	Japan	Greece	Hong Kong	Uruguay	USA	Chile	Italy	Spain	Hungary	All	All <sup>a</sup>
Members perceiving associations' electoral support (% of all members)	78.8	25.7	25.2	21.3	21.3	19.2	17.8	16.8	15.8	8.3	21.5	22.5
Ratio support/not support	3.76	0.34	0.33	0.27	0.27	0.24	0.19	0.20	0.19	0.09	0.27	0.29
Type of association												
Professional	<sup>b</sup>	41.8	27.3	25.0	<sup>b</sup>	6.3	<sup>b</sup>	10.6	19.4	3.0	21.9	24.9
Trade union	79.2	60.5	59.1	47.0	28.9	62.5	30.8	35.7	44.6	7.6	41.4	43.9
Sport	<sup>b</sup>	8.0	12.5	<sup>b</sup>	5.0	<sup>b</sup>	11.4	6.6	2.2	<sup>b</sup>	7.5	7.9
Religious	87.0	63.3	<sup>b</sup>	0.0	19.6	11.0	9.9	14.1	5.4	14.8	19.0	19.0
Civic non-religious	73.7	15.7	15.0	13.5	21.4	11.0	21.4	12.4	3.8	11.8	14.2	14.7
Multi-member (USA)						21.4					21.4	21.4
Base (N)	193	944	139	240	174	1,126	202	1,348	291	315	4,972	4,604

<sup>a</sup> Data weighted by sample size per country.

<sup>b</sup> N < 20.

religious groups, and civic non-religious associations) are all highly politicized in an explicitly partisan manner. Post-communist Hungary and Bulgaria stand then in sharp contrast with one another, with the former having a relatively non-partisan civil society, but secondary associations in the latter being highly politicized and partisan. Given the presence of a strong post-Communist Party in Bulgaria, this pattern might be regarded as a legacy of the former regime's non-democratic mobilization from above rather than as an autonomous and lively civil society.

What explains the relatively narrow variance in the extent of partisan political involvement of secondary associations in the aggregate? An answer to this question requires an examination of the level of partisan politicization of each type of group. One pattern is clearly evident: in every country (except for Bulgaria and Hungary) unions are the most partisan organizations. Only in Hungary (8%) is the percentage of union members receiving explicit endorsements of parties and candidates below 30 per cent, and in four of these countries the percentage substantially exceeds 50 per cent. On average, 44 per cent of union members report that their trade organization explicitly favoured one party or candidate during the previous election campaign. If we also include professional organizations (25% of whose members report a political support), it is then evident that economic associations show the most pronounced political bias.

After unions and professional associations, religious groups would appear at first glance to be the next most politicized type of organization. Its average level of reported partisan contact (19%) is inflated by the very high figures for Bulgaria (87%) and Japan (63%). In the other countries, religious organizations actually appear to be generally non-partisan. Only in Japan, Hungary, and Bulgaria are religious organizations perceived as taking sides more than any other kind of organization. And with the exception of Bulgaria, and to a much lesser extent Uruguay and Chile, civic non-religious groups are generally non-partisan.

In general, then, economic secondary associations are clearly more strongly committed to partisan politics than are non-economic organizations. This has a substantial impact on the aggregate level of partisanship with which we began this discussion. Where traditional economic organizations are well developed, secondary associations have their greatest impact on the electoral process, in large measure because they tend to be more politicized and explicitly partisan. This finding implies that, from a social capital perspective, associations are not all alike in their impact on the political involvement of their members. Most strikingly,

civic non-religious organizations—the very model of civic engagement—have a relatively modest impact on the flow of partisan information to their members, despite their relatively high levels of membership and their ‘importance’ to their members.

### *Individual-Level Effects of Association Involvement on Exposure to Political Information*

The aggregate-level data we have discussed to this point have revealed that about 30 per cent of all members of secondary associations (or about 11% of the total population) across these ten countries report having received political information from those groups during the course of the previous election campaign. The average percentage of respondents reporting that organizations explicitly supported a party or candidate was about 8 per cent, or 21 per cent of those who belonged to at least one secondary association. The conventional wisdom, from Michels on, is that people highly involved in the association’s life are more likely than less active members to perceive the political stands of their organization. In other words, organization involvement has an impact beyond those of individual-level factors such as education, social status, and political interest. Several recent studies have confirmed this observation. Baumgartner and Walker (1988: 923), for example, found in their analysis of American National Election Studies pilot-survey data that ‘only 28.5 per cent of those who are contributors only or report that they are inactive members believe that the groups they are affiliated with are engaged in public affairs, while 43.5 per cent of those who describe themselves as active members report political activity by their groups’. They also found that active membership affects the awareness of the group’s involvement in public affairs, ‘regardless of the type of group with respondents are affiliated’. Additionally, Verba and Nie (1972: 194) found that ‘affiliation with manifestly non-political organizations does increase an individual’s [political] participation rate but only if there is some political exposure within the organization’. In 1995, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady found new evidence of the strong relation between level of involvement and perception of the political stand of the association, showing also the crucial role played by the perception of association political stands in fostering the individual’s political participation level. Contrary to Baumgartner and Walker, however, Verba and Nie (1972: 194) claimed that ‘the groups differ in the opportunities they afford for activity and in the political exposures that takes place in them’. Thanks to the CNEP research design, we are

able to test these hypotheses and determine whether these American-based findings also hold in other countries and across different types of organization.

In our earlier analysis of the correlates of organizational activism, we also found that the level of involvement varies according to the type of association, even after individual-level socio-demographic characteristics and country effects are controlled. The level of activism in an organization is greater among members of secular-voluntary and religious organizations than among union members. Even sport and recreational groups seem to offer more opportunities for individual activity than unions and professional associations. But we also found that these economic associations were more clearly perceived as disseminating partisan-biased information to their members than were other types of groups. What, then, is the net impact of these two seemingly contradictory influences on the politicization of members? While unions and professional associations allow for less active involvement, do these more partisan types of organizations have larger effects on perception of information and partisan support than do other organizations?

Finally, in the previous discussion we also pointed out that, at the aggregate level, the frequency of political contacts by non-political secondary associations appears to have been affected by each country's previous political evolution, particularly with regard to how its society was politicized. Not unexpectedly, in the majority of CNEP countries labour unions have been the most common associational sources of partisan information flowing to their members. But in other countries, other types of groups have also played this role.

Let us now turn our attention to an individual-level analysis of the effects of level of involvement in each type of association.<sup>15</sup> In the following analysis, the dependent variables represent (a) the probability that group members perceive having received political information from their respective associations and (b) the probability that they perceive having received explicit endorsements of a party or candidate. The independent variable is the type of secondary association to which the respondent belongs.<sup>16</sup> In the first two columns of Table 4.9, the zero-order probability of perceiving either of the two types of political communication is presented separately for both passive and active members.<sup>17</sup> In the next two columns, predicted probabilities generated by a logistic regression are presented for these same two types of group members after controls were introduced for demographic characteristics (gender, education, and age) and 'country'. Our expectation is that passive or rarely active union

**Table 4.9** Zero-order probability and predicted probability of political cues and perception of partisan support

	Zero-order probability		Predicted probability after controlling for countries and socio-demographic factors			
	Non- or rarely active members (Col. 1)	Often active members (Col. 2)	Difference (Col. 3)	Non- or rarely active members (Col. 4)	Often active members (Col. 5)	Difference (Col. 6)
<b>Perception of political cues</b>						
Union (n)	0.34 (811)	0.46 (169)	0.12**	0.42	0.53	0.11*
Professional association (n)	0.28 (470)	0.63 (139)	0.35**	0.29	0.56	0.27**
Civic non-religious (n)	0.26 (1,069)	0.38 (538)	0.12**	0.22	0.29	0.07*
Religious association (n)	0.18 (242)	0.28 (238)	0.10*	0.16	0.25	0.09*
<b>Perception of party's support</b>						
Union (n)	0.38 (811)	0.59 (169)	0.21**	0.35	0.58	0.23**
Professional association (n)	0.16 (470)	0.42 (139)	0.26**	0.16**	0.32	0.16**
Civic non-religious (n)	0.14 (1,069)	0.14 (538)	0.00	0.14	0.13	-0.01
Religious associations (n)	0.20 (242)	0.19 (238)	-0.01	0.16	0.15	-0.01

Notes: Entries in columns 1 and 2 are the zero-order probability of perception of political cues and party support across levels of involvement within different secondary associations. Entries in columns 4 and 5 are predicted probabilities across levels of involvement within the secondary associations, setting the control variables at their mean value. Predicted probability scores are estimated through a logistic regression for each type of association. Control variables include gender, education, age, and country (all as dummy variables). Entries in columns 3 and 6 are differences between the probability of perception among the most active and the less- or non-active members. (n) is the number of cases.

\* Mean difference between levels of involvement significant at  $p < .10$ .

\*\* Mean difference between levels of involvement significant at  $p < .05$ .

and professional association members perceive more political cues and partisan endorsements than do members of other types of groups.

The data in the first column show that the probability of perceiving a flow of political information from the organization is, indeed, somewhat higher among passive union members than among the inactive within other types of groups. Passive members of professional associations, however, are not substantially more likely to perceive such information flows than are members of civic non-religious and religious groups. The data in the second column reveal that active members of all types of organizations are substantially more likely to perceive political cues than are passive members, although these perceptions are by far the most common among active members of professional associations. In short, the level of active involvement with the group plays a powerful intervening role, particularly among members of professional organizations, as the data in column four indicate. With regard to perceptions of explicit partisan endorsements, the picture that emerges is somewhat different, in so far as level of involvement increases this probability only among members of union and professional associations. Active members of religious and civic non-religious organizations are no more likely than the inactive to perceive such partisan support by their respective groups. These same findings hold true even more strongly after controls are introduced for gender, education, age, and country, as can be seen in the data in column six.

Two conclusions emerge from this analysis. First, the extent to which partisan politics permeates organized groups varies from one type of association to another, with unions being more overtly politicized than the others. Secondly, within each type of organization more active members are more likely to perceive political cues than passive or rarely active members. The interactive effect of level of involvement is especially strong within professional associations. This finding is particularly interesting in light of the fact that opportunities for activism are generally greater among religious and civic non-religious groups than they are among the more elaborately institutionalized and hierarchical unions and professional associations.

### *The Impact on Turnout*

Single-country studies of electoral participation tend to explain turnout rates on the basis of two main approaches. One perspective interprets voting turnout as a product of the skills and resources of individual



citizens (in turn, a function of education, socio-economic status, etc.), while the other regards mobilization as the key to high rates of electoral participation.<sup>18</sup> The two approaches are in fact complementary. Mobilization may indeed contribute to compensate for the lack of resources and individual incentives (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). From this perspective, parties, their organizations and the psychological attachment they are able to build across the electorate, are considered the principal agencies of mobilization. The impact of non-political secondary associations on turnout has received less attention than that of parties, except in the work of Verba and his associates (1972, 1995), but even in their view electoral participation does not seem to be affected by associational involvement by itself. In *Voice and Equality*, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995: 358) found that non-political organization membership had virtually no effect. More important were attitudes relating to political engagement, such as political interest, political information, political efficacy, and partisanship.<sup>19</sup> A contrary view is presented by Radcliff and Davis (2000: 137), who found that labour unions have a significant impact. Analysing turnout levels in the fifty American states in the 1980s, they found that unionization had a significant impact. Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies (1998: 448), moreover, following the strategic elite model in explaining turnout, show that in Japan participation is 'an interactive function of closeness [in electoral competition] and social capital'—that is, a dense web of associations and social networks. It must be noted, however, that neither study includes in its analysis the effects of individual attitudes like political interest, political efficacy, and political information.

Comparative studies of electoral participation are able to undertake both cross-national and cross-sectional comparative analyses. On this basis, they have noted that cross-sectional turnout rate differences are generally less wide than cross-national differences in electoral participation. In Table 4.10, data summarizing average national turnout rates from 1961 to 1999 are presented for our sample of CNEP countries. These figures range from a high of 90 per cent in Italy to 52 per cent in the United States.

In order to explain these differing rates of turnout we need to consider other explanatory factors, such as the level of a country's socio-cultural development and institutions which shape the electoral process. Franklin (1996) and Norris (2002) consider the voters' instrumental motivation as largely determined by the institutional and political context in which elections take place.<sup>20</sup> By institutional and political context they mean to refer to a large set of factors, among them the salience of elections,

**Table 4.10** Average electoral turnout in CNEP countries 1961–99

Italy (10)	90	Bulgaria (3)	73
Uruguay (7)	86	Japan (12)	69
Chile (7)	83	Hungary (6)	57
Greece (11)	82	USA (9)	52
Spain (7)	74	Hong Kong	NA

*Data sources:* Franklin (1996) and [www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int) website (Uruguay data). In parentheses the number of elections.

the use of compulsory voting and postal voting, and the presence of a highly competitive party system. All these factors, plus the rules of the electoral system, may ‘provide the most plausible explanation of cross-national differences in voting turnout because these influence the cost and the benefits of casting a ballot’ (Franklin 1996: 148). Both the Norris and Franklin studies undertake comparative analysis of a large number of countries and generate evidence that these variables are powerful predictors of cross-national differences in voting turnout.

It is clear, however, that even this approach overlaps somewhat with the other two. For instance, party competitiveness can be considered part of the mechanism through which political mobilization takes place. Moreover, neither approach denies in principle that its central factors may interact with those of the other approaches. Anduiza Perea (1999), for example, in her detailed analysis of European countries’ turnout rates, shows that taking into account the interaction between individual incentives and institutional variables increases powerfully the ability to predict both individual- and national-level differences in voting turnout.

This short summary of the main tenets of the explanatory theories of electoral participation helps us to frame our own analysis of the non-political association effects on turnout decision. First of all, we need to distinguish among four different dimensions of involvement with non-political association: being member of some voluntary non-political groups, a multi-membership density index (the number of associations to which respondents belong), the type of organization (professional associations and unions, on the one hand, and the civic non-religious, religious, and sports groups, on the other), and awareness of the association’s political stands (both in the generic sense of receiving political information from the group and perceiving that it favours one particular candidate or party). The rationale for these distinctions is based on the notion that each of them relates to different aspects of the mobilization and resource theories. The density of organizational involvement could

affect voting turnout because those who belong to multiple organizations may already have a participatory 'inclination' that can be easily transformed into voting behaviour. The type of association relates to the previously noted distinction between 'economic organizations' like unions and professional associations, which tend to be more permeated by politics, and other types of organized groups. These groups, therefore, have an inherent interest in encouraging their members to vote in order to advance their respective political interests. With regard to organizational membership, *per se*, one could further hypothesize that involvement with any association can increase the opportunity for political exposure. Finally, awareness of an association's political stands is linked directly to the subjective dimensions of mobilization.

In order to estimate the impact of these various dimensions of associational involvement, we must first control for individual resources and incentives, as well as institutional- and political-context variables commonly regarded as powerful predictors of within- and between-country differences in turnout. In carrying out this analysis, we have constructed two models. In the first (Model A), which includes nine of ten CNEP countries (excluding Hong Kong), our control variables include measures of individual-level resources (gender, age, education, and employment status), as well as institutional and political context measures: two country-level variables (the presence or absence of mandatory voting requirements, and of proportional electoral system). An additional independent variable was the ability of the respondent to place himself or herself on the left-right spectrum, able to indicate whether an individual shares the most important political representation of the party competition space.<sup>21</sup> In the second model (Model B), for the seven countries for which we have comparable data (Spain, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary, Uruguay, and Chile), we included as additional controls political interest and political efficacy among the measures of individual resources. Table 4.11 presents the results of these two logistic regression analyses.

As can be seen, in both models the institutional and political context control variables (mandatory vote, electoral rules, and the ability to self-locate on the left-right continuum) have a large impact. In Model A, age and education also have an important effect. In Model B, not unexpectedly, political interest and political efficacy are important. These results largely confirm previous studies. Turning our attention to the impact of our associational variables, we see that simple membership and membership in multiple organizations have tiny effects, except for the American case as the category of multi-membership shows very clearly.<sup>22</sup>

## Intermediation Through Secondary Associations

**Table 4.11** Effects of association mobilization, individual resources, psychological involvement, and institutional context on turnout (logistic regression, pooled analysis)

	Model A			Model B		
	B	S.E.	T score	B	S.E.	T score
Gender: man	0.05	0.05	1.0	-0.19	0.07	-2.7
Age (18–29)	ref.	—	—	ref.	—	—
30–45	0.39**	0.06	6.5	0.46**	0.09	5.1
46–59	0.60**	0.07	8.6	0.82**	0.11	7.5
>60	0.76**	0.08	9.5	0.78**	0.11	7.1
Education: secondary completed	0.25**	0.05	5.0	0.02	0.08	0.3
Working	-0.10*	0.05	2.0	-0.08	0.08	-1.0
Mandatory vote	0.98**	0.05	19.6	1.07**	0.11	9.7
Electoral system: proportional	0.65**	0.05	13.0	0.51**	0.08	6.4
Left–right ideological awareness	1.5**	0.06	25.0	1.21**	0.09	13.4
Political interested	n.a.	n.a.	—	0.72**	0.09	8.0
Political efficacy (low)	n.a.	n.a.	—	ref.	—	—
Medium	n.a.	n.a.	—	0.22**	0.08	2.8
High	n.a.	n.a.	—	0.42**	0.11	3.8
Perceive political information and support (No)	ref.	—	—	ref.	—	—
Only political information or support	0.00	0.09	0.0	0.32*	0.19	1.7
Both political information and support	0.47**	0.14	3.4	0.77**	0.32	2.4
Association member	0.11	0.22	0.5	0.12	0.39	0.3
Number of associational affiliations	-0.02	0.08	-0.3	-0.03	0.18	-0.2
Type of association (not members)	ref.	ref.	—	ref.	ref.	—
Union and professional	0.30	0.21	1.4	-0.10	0.34	0.3
Others (civic non-religious, religious, and sport)	0.22	0.20	1.1	-0.08	0.32	-0.3
Multi-membership	1.38**	0.24	5.8	n.a.	n.a.	—
Constant	-0.66**	0.08	—	-0.84**	0.13	—
$\chi^2$ Improvement	1,521.10**	—	—	696.63**	—	—
df	16	—	—	18	—	—
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.18	—	—	0.17	—	—
N	11,619	—	—	6,208	—	—

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01.

Notes: Model A: 9 countries, only individual resources; Model B: 8 countries, political efficacy and political interest included. Dependent variable is respondent turn-out (scored 1 for yes and 0 for no). Independent variables: Association membership (ranging from 0 for not affiliated to 2 for membership in more than 1 association); Type of association (includes four categories [three in Model B]—not affiliated, professional and union, civic non-religious, religious, and sport, and, in the United States, multi-member); Political interest (ranging from 0, for 'somewhat' or 'no', to 1 for 'enough' to 'a lot'); Political efficacy (an index i.e. the sum of NoInflu, DontCare, PolComp, ranging from 0, for no efficacy, to 3, for disagreement with all three items); Political interest (a dummy variable with 0, for below average to 1, for above average); Mandatory vote (ranging from 0 to 1, where vote is mandatory); Electoral system (with 1 indicating proportional representation and 0, for 'Not PR'); and Ideological awareness (with 0 for those unable or unwilling to self-locate on the left-right continuum, and 1 for those who do).

T scores are the ratio between B values and their error standard. They provide a rough metric making possible comparisons across categories of variables.

In contrast, being aware of the association's political stands does matter. In fact, in both models, being aware of the political information flow and of which party is supported by the group increases the turnout probability significantly, even after controlling for factors commonly regarded as strong determinants of electoral participation.

Our data therefore suggest that what fosters electoral turnout by individuals belonging to secondary associations is whether they are aware of the group's political stands. Given the generally small percentage of members who are aware of the political stands of their associations, this limits the impact of organizational membership on electoral turnout. But it does provide a clearer insight into the specific dynamics of electoral mobilization, suggesting that groups can affect electoral participation by their members *if and only if* they are able to increase their members' subjective perception of their political orientations.

### The Encapsulation of the Electorate

Having explored the impact of associational involvement on electoral turnout, let us extend this analysis a step further by exploring the extent to which politically committed secondary organizations are able to channel their members' political behaviour in support of a specific party or a candidate. In the following discussion, we also examine factors that may explain at the individual level the alignment between secondary associations and the partisan preferences of their members.

As we discussed in the introduction to this chapter, students of political cleavages refer to 'encapsulation' as the process through which parties and their collateral agencies create an external 'closure' of their members from outside pressures (Bartolini and Mair 1990). This process tends to stabilize electoral loyalties and provide a close connection between organized groups in society, political parties, and policymaking. However, a diffuse interpretation is that in contemporary democracies these linkages have been radically weakened by, among other factors, the transformation of parties as political institutions, and by the impact of social and cultural change on the cohesion of social groups. Partisan de-alignment, declining party identification, individualization of electoral behaviour, and un-freezing of cleavages are the result (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). In the following section, we intend to examine the extent to which secondary organizations still play an active and successful partisan-political role,

influencing the electoral choice of their members, and encapsulating their behaviour.

As we have seen, a portion of joiners ranging between 11 per cent in Hungary and 58 per cent in Japan were electorally mobilized by secondary organizations, which contacted their members about elections, and provided information, advice, and political orientations. Analogously, between 8 per cent (Hungary) and 26 per cent (Japan) perceived a political bias in the flow of information from the voluntary organization to which they belong. Lacking evidence for earlier periods, it is hard to determine from these figures whether there has been a decline in the capacity of organized movements to encapsulate sectors of the electorate, to isolate their supporters from influence of competing groups, and to eventually mould political subcultures and enclaves. But we can assess the current impact of efforts by these voluntary associations to politically mobilize their members by analysing their electoral preferences. Matching information on voting choice, association membership, and perceived organization political bias, we are able to provide a typology of electors in our countries.

As can be seen in Table 4.12, an average of 7 per cent of our respondents are members of voluntary organizations, perceived a political leaning from their organization, and voted for a party or a candidate *supported by their* organization. We label these individuals *coherent voters*, in so far as they voted according to the partisan line of joined organization. These are citizens fully politically encapsulated by their politicized voluntary association. Analogously, 3 per cent of the population are members of associations, but voted for party or candidate other than the one supported by his or her organization. We label them *incoherent voters*, as to underline that their electoral choice deviates from secondary organization's political stance. The vast majority of organizational members, however—27 per cent of the population—perceived no political bias from the association they belong to, either because the association itself was politically uncommitted (did not support any candidate or party) or because members failed to perceive a clear political leaning. These joiners cast a ballot without any reference to or constraint originating from her or his secondary association membership. Finally, 4 per cent of population is composed of joiners who did not show up at the polls.

How should these results be interpreted? On the basis of these figures alone, one would conclude that the political encapsulation of secondary associations' members' stand is quite weak. However, as previously noted, lacking data for earlier 'golden age' periods, we cannot definitively

**Table 4.12** Political encapsulation of the electorate (country ranking according to percentage of members voting coherently)

Type <sup>a</sup>	Japan	Bulgaria	United States	Italy	Uruguay	Greece	Chile	Spain	Hungary	Hong Kong	All
Not voting—not joiners	6.0	15.6	5.2	1.7	5.8	3.7	7.9	15.4	27.0	22.0	10.8
Not voting—joiners	3.9	2.9	12.4	1.7	2.2	1.3	2.6	3.1	5.0	6.1	4.1
Voting—not joiners	20.5	58.5	8.7	40.5	63.5	77.1	62.7	61.2	50.8	49.6	47.7
Voting—joiners—no support	48.5	3.5	59.0	43.7	19.0	9.5	21.3	15.9	15.1	16.0	27.0
Joiners—incoherent voting	7.8	8.6	4.3	2.8	1.9	1.3	1.4	1.8	0.7	5.3	3.4
Joiners—coherent voting	13.3	11.0	10.4	9.5	7.5	7.1	4.3	2.6	1.5	1.0	7.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base (N)	811	1,177	1,213	2,033	625	902	814	1,276	1,375	619	10,845

Note: Missing data on 'vote' variable excluded from the analysis.

<sup>a</sup> Definition of variables.

- Not voting—not joiners: not members of non-political voluntary associations, and did not vote;
- Not voting—joiners: members of non-political voluntary associations who did not vote;
- Voting—not joiners: non-members of non-political voluntary associations who voted;
- Voting—joiners—no support: members of non-political voluntary associations who voted and whose association either did not support candidate/parties or members who did not perceive a clear political leaning;
- Joiners—incoherent voting: members of non-political voluntary associations who voted for a party or candidate other than the one supported by his or her organization;
- Joiners—coherent voting: members of non-political voluntary associations who voted for the party or candidate supported by his or her organization.

conclude that the capacity of voluntary organizations to channel the political support of the citizenry has indeed declined. We simply cannot tell if the level of encapsulation we have observed is as low (or high) now as it has always been. Seen from a different perspective, however, the ability to orient the political choice of 7 per cent of the electorate, which corresponds to 12 per cent of 'joiners', is quite a powerful tool in the hands of organized groups. Moreover, to fully appreciate the relevance of these data it is useful to compare the aggregate percentage of encapsulated joiners (13%) to the share of joiners who received political information from their respective organizations (30%). The ratio of these two figures (.42:1) gives us a general indicator of the success with which organizations' flows of contacts and information translated into political behaviour: 40 per cent of joiners who have been contacted actually turned out to vote according to their associations' political stands. From this perspective, while the absolute level of encapsulated voters may be low, the processes which lead to it could be interpreted as a substantial achievement for the organizations. After all, if a television advertisement were able to convince 40 per cent of viewers to purchase the product, we would regard that as a great success.

There is of course notable variation across countries relative to the extent of voter encapsulation, from a low of 1 per cent in Hong Kong and 2 per cent Hungary, to 10 per cent in Italy, 10 per cent in the United States, 11 per cent in Bulgaria, and 13 per cent in Japan. The ranking is somewhat surprising, since it places the pluralist and participatory United States closest to post-totalitarian Bulgaria. It should be borne in mind in interpreting this seemingly puzzling finding that the highest levels of affiliation with organized groups in established democracies is with politically uncommitted secondary organizations, which do not seek to channel the electoral support of their members. Accordingly, the data in Table 4.12 indicate that established democracies have *both* the largest share of encapsulated *and* uncommitted group members while, with the exception of Bulgaria, more recently established democracies have significantly smaller shares of encapsulated voters *and* the lowest overall levels of organizational affiliation. This would imply that, at country level, political encapsulation rises with increasing social participation rate.

The data presented in Figure 4.3, however, tell a somewhat different story. There is no linear relationship across countries between the extent of political encapsulation and membership rate. Instead, the relationship appears to be curvilinear: political encapsulation rates are high among countries at either end of the range with respect to the overall level of



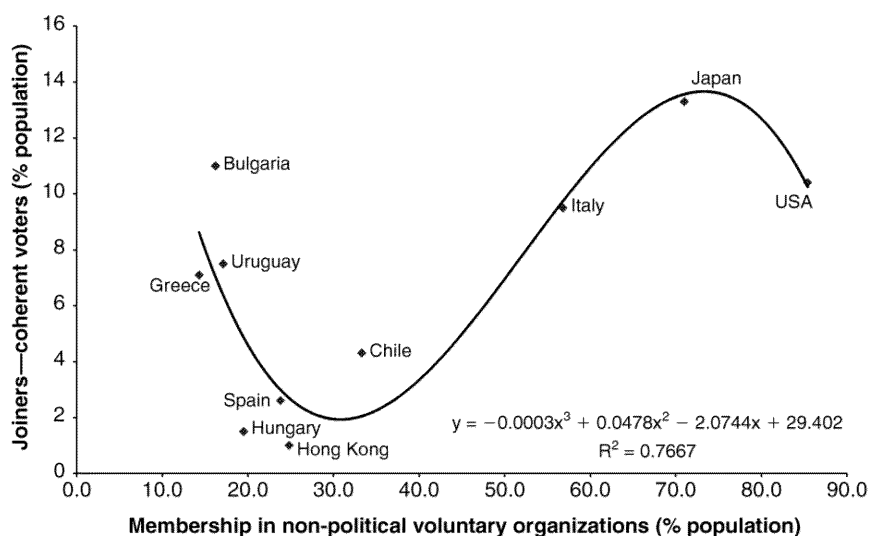


Figure 4.3 Association membership and political encapsulation of the electorate

organizational affiliation, while they are lowest in countries with moderate levels of social participation. We might attempt to explain this aggregate-level pattern by invoking the political histories of these countries. But this graphic presentation of these data does not reveal a close correspondence between the level of encapsulation, on the one hand, and the length of democratic experience or the nature of the predecessor regime (authoritarian or post-totalitarian), on the other. A complex of factors must be evoked in an attempt to explain these patterns, relating both to the associations and to the joiners.

As for the associations, we have noted a great deal of country-by-country variation in both joining propensities and the associations' political involvement. But we also found some patterns: though both economic and non-economic associations are relatively successful in disseminating political information to their members, civic non-religious organizations are perceived as less politically committed than are unions or professional associations. These factors translate into varying capacities of associations to encapsulate their members. As Table 4.13 shows, different types of associations differ greatly as to their rate of success in channelling their members' voting choices: on average, across all 10 countries, only 12.5 per cent of all joiners vote according to the political cues offered by their associations. Labour unions are the most successful in moulding the

**Table 4.13** The political encapsulation of joiners by type of association (countries ranked according to percentage of joiners voting coherently)

Type of association	Bulgaria	Japan	Greece	Uruguay	Chile	Italy	United States	Spain	Hungary	Hong Kong	All
Professional	<sup>a</sup>	24.8	14.5	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	4.7	3.3	3.3	3.3	8.7	10.0
Trade union	19.4	36.5	52.4	20.0	20.8	32.3	25.0	22.5	2.6	6.7	22.0
Sport	<sup>a</sup>	2.4	4.8	<sup>a</sup>	11.8	3.7	<sup>a</sup>	0	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	4.4
Religious	21.7	56.1	<sup>a</sup>	13.5	9.5	10.0	7.1	5.7	7.7	0	12.9
Civic non-religious	<sup>a</sup>	10.2	5.4	14.3	20.0	9.5	6.4	2.1	4.9	1.6	8.6
Multi-member (USA)							13.9				13.9
All	18.9	17.7	16.4	14.8	13.2	12.9	12.1	8.1	3.5	3.4	12.5
Base (N)	185	592	128	162	189	1,120	1,045	284	278	174	4,167

Note: Percentage of members of non-political voluntary associations who voted for the party or candidate supported by his or her organization. (Respondents missing data on the vote variable are excluded from the analysis.)

<sup>a</sup> N < 20.

political preferences of their members (with 22% categorized as 'coherent voters'), while sports associations influence only 4 per cent of their affiliates. Between these two extreme values are religious and civic associations, with 14 per cent and 9 per cent of their members reporting votes for candidates or parties endorsed by the associations. There are of course country-specific variations in these patterns—such as the stronger capacity of civic groups to politicize their members in Latin America, not to mention the remarkable level of encapsulation by religious groups in Japan—but the overall trend is one in which organizations based on 'traditional' (economic and religious) cleavages are still more politically committed and more successful in mobilizing their members than other types of organization.

With regard to the joiners, we have seen that active membership is higher in religious and civic non-religious organizations than economic organizations. However, greater individual involvement in secondary associations explains political awareness in economic organizations but not in civic non-religious ones.

We conclude this analysis of political encapsulation by undertaking a multivariate logistic analysis, in which the dichotomous dependent variable is 'coherent voters' versus all other group members. The independent variables in these equations include the standard socio-demographic variables (age, employment status, education, and gender), group-membership characteristics (the degree of active involvement in the organization, and association type), exposure to political information from association, and a series of interactions aimed at testing the possible conditional impact of active membership and mobilization across different types of organizations. Two models are tested: a first one to assess the direct impact of factors assumed to be related to political encapsulation, and the second including the variable 'country', in an effort to control for the specific features of the polity. These two models are presented in Table 4.14.

These data indicate that politically encapsulated (coherent) group members tend to be socially peripheral (not working, and with only primary education), male and active members of their associations. Union membership is a very strong predictor of coherent voting as is, to a lesser extent, religious-group membership. There is a progressive lesser likelihood of being encapsulated among members of civic non-religious, professional, and sport associations, respectively. As expected, exposure to political information flowing from associations is a crucial predictor of political encapsulation. The direct effects of these variables are strong, as

## Intermediation Through Secondary Associations

**Table 4.14** Logistic models of political encapsulation by associations (pooled analysis of members who vote coherently vs. all other members)

	Mod. 1			Mod. 2		
	B	S.E.	T score	B	S.E.	T score
Age (18–29)						
30/45	.12	.17	.72	.11	.17	.65
46/59	.03	.18	.15	.06	.18	.32
60+	.34***	.21	1.67	.33	.20	1.61
Not working						
Work	.33**	.13	2.43	.30**	.13	2.27
Education (less than secondary)						
Secondary completed	.14	.12	1.12	.23***	.13	1.67
Gender (male)						
female	.34*	.11	-2.99	-.29*	.11	2.52
Association membership (passive)						
active	.40***	.23	1.74	.32	.24	1.35
Political information (no)						
yes	1.14*	.19	5.96	1.17*	.20	5.81
Association (union)						
Professional	-1.42*	.36	-3.84	-1.59*	.37	-4.28
Sport	-2.67*	.64	-4.14	-2.84*	.64	-4.43
Religious	.62**	.29	2.11	.70**	.31	2.22
Civic not religious	1.06*	.22	4.64	-1.19*	.24	-4.84
Multi-member	.76**	.30	2.51	.73**	.39	1.86
Interactions						
Active member*Professional	.26	.43	.61	.08	.45	.19
Active member*Sport	.13	.61	.21	.11	.62	.18
Active member*Religious	.31	.39	.79	.19	.39	.47
Active member*Civic	.38	.32	-1.18	.36	.33	-1.09
Active member*Multi-member	.69**	.34	2.04	.62**	.34	1.80
Political information*Professional	.53	.45	1.17	.60	.46	1.31
Political information*Sport	1.75*	.60	2.88	1.59**	.61	2.57
Political information*Religious	.31	.37	.86	.29	.37	.79
Political information*Civic	-.01	.29	.05	.10	.31	.34
Political information*Multi-member	1.19*	.32	3.72	1.15*	.32	3.55
Country (USA)						
Spain	—	—	—	.19	.33	.58
Italy	—	—	—	.34	.27	1.26
Chile	—	—	—	.21	.35	.60
Bulgaria	—	—	—	.44	.33	1.32
Greece	—	—	—	.65	.34	1.91
Hong Kong	—	—	—	-1.58*	.49	-3.17
Uruguay	—	—	—	.05	.15	.87
Hungary	—	—	—	-1.20*	.43	-2.75
Japan	—	—	—	.37	.29	1.28
Constant	-1.15*	.23	-4.86	-1.12*	.37	-3.03
N	3,568	—	—	3,568	—	—
$\chi^2$ (df)	324 (23)	—	—	370 (32)	—	—
P	.000	—	—	.000	—	—
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.14	—	—	.17	—	—

\* p < .01; \*\* p < .05; \*\*\* p < .10.

Note: Data weighted by sample size per country.

Definition of dichotomous dependent variables:

- *Joiners—coherent voting*: members of non-political voluntary associations who voted for the party or candidate supported by his or her organization;
- *Other joiners*: members of non-political voluntary associations who voted a party or candidate other than the one supported by his or her organization or whose association either did not support candidate/parties or members did not perceive a clear political leaning.

revealed by the fact that the interactive variables—aimed at ascertaining a differentiated influence of active membership and political exposure according to different associations—generally have little impact, with the exception of information exposure from sport associations and multiple membership. This underscores the importance of the associations' mobilization efforts, since coherent voting increases with exposure to political information even from associations which exhibit the lowest propensity to get politically involved (such as sports organizations). Even after country is introduced as a control variable (see Model 2), all of these variables except 'active involvement' retain their strength as predictors of voter encapsulation, with Hong Kong and Hungary confirming their low propensity.

These findings help to explain the curvilinear relationship—at the country level—between political encapsulation and joining propensities depicted in Figure 4.3. The intervening variable between the extent of societal involvement and encapsulation is the differing mobilization capacities of associations. Those countries with a moderate level of social participation have low levels of political encapsulation not because of their citizens' medium level of involvement, but because their associations fail to mobilize their members. An additional explanatory factor is that different types of associations, with differing levels of political commitment, predominate in different countries. Spain's low encapsulation rate, for example, results from the predominance of civic non-religious group membership (amounting to one-third of all joiners), and these associations were only able to mobilize 7 per cent of their members. Likewise, Hungarian unions, with which 51 per cent of all of that country's were affiliated, mobilized only 15 per cent of their members. By contrast, in 'social-capital-poor' Greece, the two predominant types of association (professional and civic non-religious) were capable to reach out 16 and 25 per cent of members, respectively, resulting in a higher encapsulation rate than Spain or Hungary.

Thus, aggregate data and individual-level findings tell a similar story. Membership in non-political voluntary organizations helps turnout (as we saw earlier in this chapter) and forge electoral alignments (as we have just seen) to the extent that associations are willing and able to disseminate information and mobilize their members. Across our ten polities, secondary organizations differ in their capacity to do so. Economic associations, due to their historical contiguity with partisan politics, are still more capable of performing these roles. Religious and civic non-religious groups lag slightly behind in this respect, reaching one-third of

their members on average. What makes the difference is then the capacity of secondary organizations to inform and persuade their members.

We conclude by returning to one important finding: while their electoral impact is not insignificant, encapsulated voters are only a minority of voters in contemporary democracies. Far more numerous are joiners whose electoral choices are framed without cues from their organizations. However, secondary organizations, differing as they do with regard to their levels of involvement in electoral politics, are still very effective in performing the crucial task of channelling political information in a persuasive manner and influencing voting choices.

### Summarizing the Main Results

The main objective of our analysis was to determine the extent to which secondary organizations provide a relevant context for political exposure and behaviour, in particular with respect to turnout and voting in accord with organizational political cues. The first step was to analyse associational membership patterns cross-nationally, both with regard to the overall joining propensity of a country's population, and with regard to the types of associations with which they were affiliated. Our data made it clear that membership in voluntary associations varies substantially across countries. We further concluded that each country's associational configuration is remarkably context- and path-dependent. In general, longer established democracies exhibit a higher joining propensity than we found in third-wave democratic polities. This finding therefore lends support to the hypothesis that a long history of liberal democratic institutions encourages a wider range of associations and deeper associational activity. However, in both established and new democracies associations differ with respect to the opportunity they afford members to be actively involved: religious and civic non-religious groups entail far more participation than economic organizations. Associations also differ in their levels of political commitment: though their affiliates show lower levels of involvement, unions and professional associations are far more effective in acting as political intermediators than religious or civic organizations. The latter may be effective in disseminating political information to their members, but they fail to clearly convey their partisan preferences to their members.

Exposure to partisan political cues emerges as the critical factor in the process of politically mobilizing group members, both with regard to

encouraging high electoral turnout and in mobilizing the vote in support of a particular party or candidate. Even after controlling for the substantial impact of institutional type and political context on turnout, being exposed to political information and partisan cues from the organization significantly increases turnout. Electoral encapsulation shows a similar picture. Even though cross-national differences are large, when social and individual resources, organizational involvement, and type of association and countries are considered conjointly, country effects on encapsulation are very substantially reduced. This implies that voting in accord with the association's political stands is more strongly related to individual-level attributes of group members and characteristics of the organization than it is to the contextual effects captured by our country variables. Thus, we can argue that the causal processes underpinning political encapsulation are similar in both old and new democracies.

In contemporary democracies, different as their political histories may be, parties are still able to encapsulate segments of the electorate, even though the proportion may not be very large. Nonetheless, this finding contradicts the conventional wisdom that parties are increasingly losing their connections with civil society. Our findings also tend to refute the claim that in contemporary democracies associational life *by itself* is sufficient for the performance of the partisan-politicization role. On the contrary, although on a smaller scale than in the past, the process of politicization seems to follow a path similar to that of the previous era, in which the principal actors were mass parties and their affiliated organizations. Indeed, our analysis shows that secondary organizations based on traditional (economic and, to a lesser extent, religious) cleavages have higher capacities to encapsulate segments of the electorate than have any other civic groups.

This leads us to reconsider from a slightly different perspective most of the recent debate on the effects of civic engagement on democracy. Some of the participants in that debate assume a positive and direct effect of secondary organizations on democracy, while others stress that there could be a dark side of civic engagement (Fiorina 1999), impinging on democratic standards and practices. Our study suggests a more nuanced and conditional assessment of the role of secondary association membership on democracy. In so far as associations can still influence citizens' democratic participation, in accord with their ability to mobilize and encapsulate some of their members, the effects of a vibrant civil society on democracy appear to depend on two sets of interrelated factors:

1. The nature of the associations—specifically, to use Putnam’s concepts, if they are of the *bonding* or *bridging* type. Bonding voluntary organizations are ‘inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups’ (Putnam 2000: 22) and promote exclusive interactions and values. Bridging organizations are ‘outward looking and encompass people across social cleavages’ (Putnam 2000), promoting inclusive multiple identities. Although both types of associations may be beneficial to democracy, bonding associations have higher risks of producing out-group hostility: reinforcing in-group solidarity need not necessarily be matched by civic involvement and political participation.
2. The nature of the values and attitudes that political elites might attempt to convey through the still efficient intermediation channels provided by associations. Both democratic and non-democratic ends can be fostered by involvement in organizations, depending on the nature of the organization itself.

In some cases, the interaction of these two sets of factors could lead to the mobilization of ‘extremists’, whose political values and policy preferences do not reflect those of the majority of the electorate, with the final outcome of distorting the political process and increasing mass alienation from democratic politics.<sup>23</sup>

In our study, we did not examine precisely what values or attitudes towards democracy or policy stands were actually flowing through these institutional channels, or the extent to which encapsulated voters were in this respect different from non-encapsulated citizens. We did find, however, that the organizational opportunities to implement political ideas, good or bad, are still there, and secondary organizations are very effective in translating political cues in voting behaviour. In many countries, they may be replaced by other channels of communication more diverse in their audiences, but secondary organizations are still powerful political weapons.