**Workers of the World, Participate!**

*A Comparative Study of Union Membership and Political Participation*

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Abstract: This paper explores the effect of union membership on civic and political participation in the current age – from a comparative perspective. I study five countries: the United States, México, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy; and five measures of political participation: voting, joining (other) voluntary associations, boycotting, signing petitions, and participating in demonstrations. I use data from the World Values Survey (2005) and logistic regressions to test my hypothesis. I find positive evidence for the hypothesis that union membership increases political participation.

**Introduction**

This paper explores the effect of union membership on political participation among five countries. Political participation has garnered interest across both political science and sociology, and many scholars have studied the effects of a host of independent variables on various methods of participation. Generally, people participate in the political system because of a sense of duty and civic engagement, self- or group-interests (such as advancing specific goals or initiatives) or because they enjoy the act of being engaged in politics. For an individual to participate in the political system, one must believe that the benefits of participation outweigh the costs.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Kerrissey and Schofer (2013) argue that “unions strive to develop the organizational and political skills of their members, cultivate their members’ political identities, and directly mobilize members to participate in political life,” (p. 895). Their account of unionization in the United States concludes that union membership increases political participation, and does so quite convincingly. In this paper, I simplify the analysis and broaden the scope to include five countries: the United States, México, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy.

I proceed in several steps. First, I describe the canon literature on political participation and the previous empirical research conducted on union membership specifically. Second, I move to the data and methods section, where I describe the logic behind my case selection and outline the dataset. Third, I analyze the data using logistic regressions, controlling for a host of standard variables. Finally, I end with a discussion of the results and implications for future research.

**Describing the Model Participant**

*The Canon Literature on Political Participation*

What is it that effects the varying levels of political participation in the population? We know from existing research that income, race/ethnicity, age and education are major determinants of a person’s propensity to participate in politics (and what participation vehicle they are more or less likely to use). Both political scientists and sociologists have spilled massive amounts of ink to expose the answer to the question, “who participates?”

The question gives way to several patterns. We know from over five decades of political science and sociology research that perhaps the most crucial determinant of voting (and other forms of political participation) is the age of the potential participant. Typically, the older the potential participant, the more likely they are to participate (Norvall and Grimes, 1968; Nie, Verba and Kim, 1974). When data are corrected for educational differences, we also know older people are the *most* active participants (Nie, Verba and Kim, 1974).

The previous point leads into the next: education is a strong predictor of political participation. As education increases, so does the propensity to participate (Milbrath, 1965; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Gagnon, 2003). This effect is intensified in countries with greater emphasis on civic education in primary and secondary schools (Finkel, 2002). Greater levels of education also come with more financial resources, which imbue individuals with the ability to participate. And while social pressures once persuaded individuals not to participate in protesting activities, trends have changed – protesting is seen as more acceptable as it once was; more educated people tend to protest more (Jenkins and Wallace, 1996). Although there is some debate on whether or not education is the casual link to more political participation (e.g., Kam and Palmer, 2008) more recent studies have shown that education does indeed serve as a casual link to greater political participation (Mayer, 2011).

Socioeconomic status can also be used to predict political participation. Numerous studies show that political participation is greatly impacted by levels of wealth/income, occupational prestige, and education, as was already noted (Verba, Nie, and Kim, 1978; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, 1995; Ansolabehere, De Figueiredo, and Snyder, 2003; Bartels, 2008). More crucial, still, is the effect of concentrated resources – studies have shown that greater economic inequality leads to political inequality (Solt, 2008). Even if the inequality is in the tails or more broadly undistributed, the effect is still less participation (Anderson and Beramendi, 2008).

Existing research also shows that Caucasians/whites are most likely to be political participants compared to members of any other racial or ethnic group (Tate, 1991; Tate, 1993; Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999; Hutchings and Valentino, 2004). When controlling for socioeconomic status, however, the relationship is less discernable, especially among blacks with higher levels of “political consciousness” (Shingles, 1981). The 2008 election also demonstrated that minorities with higher levels of attachment (i.e., a black voter voting for a black candidate) or personal appeals to a candidate are more likely to participate in electoral and non-electoral politics (Lopez and Taylor, 2009).

Civic engagement has also shown to be an important predictor of political participation. Group engagement leads to more political participation – especially protest participation (Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson, 2000). Social capital effects participation as well – more social group involvement also increases political participation (Putnam, 2000; Finkel, 2002). Political culture more broadly also impacts political participation – being involved in voluntary associations helps increase civic engagement and thus attributes to greater political participation, despite changing political norms (Dalton, 2008). Although these cases are not directly related to the question I seek to explore here, it provides contextual help and an array of variables for which I control in my analysis section.

*Union Membership and Political Participation*

Research that has focused on union membership as its critical independent variable is more limited, specifically in a cross-national sense. Kerrissey and Schofer (2013) provide empirical support for the hypothesis that union membership should increase political participation. Their analysis uses several national datasets, all of which lead the authors to conclude political participation increases due to union membership. The authors also trace the reasoning behind unions’ ability to mobilize members, but that is beyond the scope of my project.

The literature on union membership in relation to political participation has primarily centered itself on voting. We know from the existing literature that union members are more likely to vote Democrat compared to Republican (Asher, Heberlig, Ripley, and Snyder, 2001; Juravich and Shergold, 1988) and are more likely to vote overall compared to non-union members (Leighley and Nagler, 2007; Rosenfeld, 2010; Kerrissey and Schofer, 2013). Union members are also more likely to engage in non-electoral methods of political participation as well (Norris, 2002; Kerrissey and Schofer, 2013).

Leighley and Nagler (2007) suggest union members are more likely to vote due to unions’ effects on mobilizing members (in the same fashion as political parties). More activity in the union should therefore increase political participation as well. Previous empirical research suggests a positive relationship between union membership and political participation.

*Implications of the Literature and Hypotheses*

We know from the literature that union members are more likely to vote than non-members. I replicate the conclusions of previous literature on voting using a different dataset and expect to see similar findings. In regards to the other vehicles of political participation, I expect to see similar effects. Kerrissey and Schofer (2013) note that unions’ ability to mobilize their members is effective, while Leighley and Nagler (2007) argue that this should increase their desire to participate.

*Hypothesis 1 (H1): Union members are more likely to participate in politics through voting than nonmembers*.

*Hypothesis 2 (H2): Union members are more likely to join other voluntary organizations than nonmembers.*

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): Union members are more likely to join in a boycott than nonmembers.*

*Hypothesis 4 (H4): Union members are more likely to sign a petition than nonmembers.*

*Hypothesis 5 (H5): Union members are more likely to attend a legal demonstration than nonmembers.*

**Case Selection, Methodology, and Variable Description**

*Case Selection*

I have chosen to study the five nations of the United States, México, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy for several pragmatic reasons. Firstly, there is a precedent in the field of political science and a literature trail that stems from Almond and Verba (1963). Secondly, these five nations are relatively homogenous in their level of union membership as a percentage of the workforce (see Figure 1 for levels of union membership). I sought uniformity in the level of union membership in order to limit the unintended effects of exogenous variables.



*Dataset and Methods*

The dataset that I use for this project is available online through the World Values Survey (WVS), conducted by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel. Although the survey has been ongoing for nearly thirty years, I use the most recently completed wave (the fourth-wave), which is from 2005-2007. The WVS collects data on nearly 90% of the world’s total population, but for the purposes of my paper, I am strictly looking at respondents in Germany, Italy, México, Great Britain, and the United States – all other data were dropped.

I use logistic regressions for all analyses, as all dependent variables are coded as dichotomies. I present results as odds ratios rather than coefficients in order to make the results more easily interpretable; I also include standard errors and z-scores. It should also be noted that since I use the most recent wave of the WVS, there are variables with missing data. As such, I run all regressions including missing data, since Stata uses listwise deletion of data from specific cases when using correlation measures by default.[[2]](#footnote-2) See Appendix A for a list of missing data.

*Dependent Variables*

I measure five different indicators of political participation. It should be noted that the WVS has questions related to whether or not a person *would* take part in a political action and whether or not a person *has* taken part in a political action. I use questions that are initially coded as whether a person has, would or would not take part in a political action due to limitations of the data. I include the corresponding variable from the WVS in parentheses below:

* Voting. The WVS asks respondents whether or not they voted in the previous election (E257).
* Joining Voluntary Organizations. The WVS has numerous measures of voluntary activity/membership in civil groups, but I focus on membership in organizations. These include membership in political parties (A102), environmental organizations (A103), professional organizations (A104), charitable/humanitarian organizations (A105), and membership in any other group (A106). In the country-specific analysis, I use an index variable rather than list each voluntary group individually.
* Boycotting. The WVS asks respondents whether or not they have participated in a boycott (E026). This question also asks if the respondent *would* participate in a boycott, but I leave out this answer in my coding (I repeat this format for petitioning and attending lawful demonstrations).
* Signing a petition. Again, this asks whether or not the respondent has participated in a boycott (E025).
* Attending a lawful demonstration. The WVS does not collect data on respondents participating in peaceful/unlawful demonstrations, so I test for participation in *only* legal demonstrations (E027).

*Independent (and Control) Variables*

My particular focus is on union membership (A101).[[3]](#footnote-3) This is my primary independent variable whose relationship I seek to explore. In addition, I control for various demographic variables that the literature reveals as common predictors of political participation. I exclude racial/ethnic categorizations, as this is a cross-national project.

* Age. This is a scale measure of the respondents’ ages (X003).
* Male. A dichotomous variable, with males coded as 1 (corresponds with X001).
* Class. I choose class over income because it is more stable cross-nationally (X045).
* Education. I chose to use a three level index variable as to make the results more uniform across countries (X025R).

See Appendix B for descriptive statistics by country.

**Analysis**

For clarity, I break up the analysis by each country and each dependent variable. I present results in odds ratios for easy interpretability and simple analysis. Table 1 presents logistic regressions for all participation measures without separating them by

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| **Table 1. Logistic Regressions (Without Controls) for All Countries** | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Vote | Political Party | Environment | Professional | Charitable | Other Group | Boycott | Petition | Demonstrate |
| Union | 1.48\*\*\* | 4.45\*\*\* | 5.14\*\*\* | 5.31\*\*\* | 3.24\*\*\* | 2.21\*\*\* | 2.17\*\*\* | 2.06\*\*\* | 2.47\*\*\* |
|  | (4.39) | (20.01) | (19.23) | (21.96) | (16.01) | (5.42) | (7.81) | (6.87) | (9.88) |
| Chi-Squared | 20.47 | 375.60 | 333.79 | 451.41 | 241.77 | 26.11 | 57.27 | 52.96 | 99.57 |
| P>Chi-Squared | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pseudo R-Squared | .0028 | 0.0579 | 0.0710 | 0.0739 | 0.0345 | 0.0126 | 0.0142 | 0.0097 | 0.0195 |
| Odds Ratios are reported and rounded to hundredths; z-scores in parentheses | | | | | | |  |  |  |
| \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < .001 | | | | | | | | |  |

country. If we observe Table 1, before controlling, union membership is significant at an alpha of .001 for all of the participation measures. A union member is one-and-a-half times as likely to vote in an election as a nonmember, significantly more likely to be a member of another voluntary organization (whether that be a political party, an environmental group, professional group, charitable/humanitarian group, or any other group), more likely to participate in a boycott, petition, and participate in a lawful demonstration. For all measures, the pseudo r2 is relatively low, but for a single variable, this is to be expected.

*Union Membership and Voting by Country*

Table 2 presents the logistic regressions for voting as a method of political participation by country and union membership as its predictor. Interestingly, my results conflict with those of previous research, as in the United States, although the relationship is a positive one, the coefficient is not significant at an alpha of .05. This may be a result of a smaller N, though, because results are significant when testing across multiple waves in the WVS, rather than just the most recent wave. In Germany and Great Britain, union members are about twice as likely to vote compared to nonmembers and the results are significant at an alpha of .01. The age and education of the respondent are the best predictors amongst all independent variables, as they garner significant results across all countries.

All countries show a coefficient above 1, indicating that union membership does increase voting likeliness, although the only two countries to return significant results are Germany and Great Britain. In Italy, México and the United States, age and education are better predictors of voting. Every single year increase in age corresponds to a .04 percentage point increase in the likelihood to vote in the United States, for instance.

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| **Table 2. Logistic Regressions for Voting by Country[[4]](#footnote-4)** | | | | | |
|  | Germany Vote | Italy Vote | México Vote | Great Britain Vote | United States Vote |
| Union | 2.02\*\* | 1.40 | 1.19 | 1.94\*\* | 1.14 |
|  | (2.98) | (0.84) | (0.68) | (3.17) | (0.60) |
| Age | 1.04\*\*\* | 1.07\*\*\* | 1.05\*\*\* | 1.05\*\*\* | 1.04\*\*\* |
|  | (9.74) | (7.31) | (10.63) | (10.54) | (8.68) |
| Male | 1.19 | 1.18 | 1.10 | 0.69\* | 0.75 |
|  | (1.40) | (0.70) | (0.80) | (-2.42) | (-1.83) |
| Class | 1.73\*\*\* | 1.12 | - | - | 1.49\*\*\* |
|  | (6.87) | (0.82) | - | - | (4.67) |
| Education | 1.49\*\*\* | 1.49\* | 1.31\*\*\* | 1.83\*\*\* | 2.49\*\*\* |
|  | (3.71) | (2.22) | (3.38) | (4.64) | (5.40) |
| Chi-Squared | 193.04 | 72.47 | 136.26 | 158.74 | 161.93 |
| P>Chi-Squared | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pseudo R-Squared | 0.1034 | 0.1246 | 0.0711 | 0.1331 | 0.1321 |
| Odds Ratios are reported and rounded to hundredths; z-scores in parentheses | | | | | |
| \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < .001 | | | | | |

What does this mean for H1? I argue that union membership does increase the propensity to vote for two reasons: Table 1 indicates there is a positive effect on voting overall and Table 2 indicates positive coefficients (although not significant for three-out-of-five results). Although there is support for the hypothesis, it is clear that there are better predictors of voting behavior.

*Union Membership and Participation in Voluntary Organizations by Country*

For obvious reasons, the voluntary index variable I created does not include union membership as one of the voluntary organizations. Table 3 presents the logistic regressions for the second measure of political participation for which I test. The results here are more convincing for the hypothesis that union membership increases political participation. Union membership is a significant predictor of membership in other voluntary groups for all countries I explore at an alpha of .001. The smallest effect is in the United States, where a union member is 2.71 times as likely to be a member of another voluntary organization compared to a nonmember. In México, a union member is 5.35 times as likely as a nonmember to be involved in another organization – the largest effect. Age was also significant across countries, as were class and education. Sex was not significant in three-out-of-five countries as a measure of political participation.

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| **Table 3. Logistic Regressions for Voluntary Organization Membership by Country** | | | | | |
|  | Germany Voluntary | Italy Voluntary | México Voluntary | Great Britain Voluntary | United States Voluntary |
| Union | 3.16\*\*\* | 3.13\*\*\* | 5.35\*\*\* | 3.05\*\*\* | 2.71\*\*\* |
|  | (7.29) | (5.54) | (10.18) | (6.10) | (4.69) |
| Age | 1.02\*\*\* | 1.01\* | 1.02\*\*\* | 1.02\*\*\* | 1.02\*\*\* |
|  | (5.17) | (2.56) | (4.73) | (5.69) | (5.81) |
| Male | 1.29\* | 1.42\* | 1.19 | 0.94 | 0.78 |
|  | (2.21) | (2.38) | (1.57) | (-0.42) | (-1.89) |
| Class | 1.47\*\*\* | 1.39\*\*\* | - | - | 1.54\*\*\* |
|  | (5.10) | (3.68) | - | - | (5.66) |
| Education | 1.59\*\*\* | 2.00\*\*\* | 1.49\*\*\* | 2.89\*\*\* | 2.23\*\*\* |
|  | (5.32) | (6.23) | (5.16) | (8.65) | (5.37) |
| Chi-Squared | 174.37 | 123.66 | 175.09 | 151.20 | 154.63 |
| P>Chi-Squared | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pseudo R-Squared | 0.0856 | 0.1024 | 0.0852 | 0.1104 | 0.1040 |
| Odds Ratios are reported and rounded to hundredths; z-scores in parentheses | | | | | |
| \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < .001 | | | | | |

It is clear from Table 1 and Table 3 that membership in voluntary organizations is predicted by membership in labor unions. I find consistent support across all countries for H2. In this relationship, it could be argued that union membership is actually the best measure of civic engagement in other organizations.

*Union Membership and Participation in Boycotts by Country*

Union membership as a predictor of boycotting is significant in three-out-out-five countries as a measure of political participation. Again, my results differ from the previous literature. In the United States specifically, I do not find a significant result for participating in boycotts using union membership as a predictor. Education is much more likely in the United States to predict boycott participation, as a one-point increase on the scale of education corresponds to a 261% likeliness of participating in a strike, as indicated by Table 4. In Germany, Italy and Great Britain, union members are between 2.20 and 2.55 times as likely to participate in boycotts as nonmembers.

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| **Table 4. Logistic Regressions for Boycotting by Country** | | | | | | | |
|  | Germany Boycott | Italy Boycott | | | México Boycott | Great Britain Boycott | United States Boycott |
| Union | 2.37\*\*\* | 2.20\*\* | | 1.71 | | 2.55\*\*\* | 1.42 |
|  | (3.39) | (2.68) | | (1.42) | | (4.12) | (1.45) |
| Age | 0.98\*\* | 0.98\* | | 0.97\* | | 1.01 | 1.00 |
|  | (-3.10) | (-2.18) | | (-2.17) | | (1.02) | (0.26) |
| Male | 1.46\* | 1.10 | | 1.79 | | 1.21 | 1.69\*\* |
|  | (2.05) | (0.44) | | (1.77) | | (0.94) | (2.88) |
| Class | 1.40\*\* | 0.85 | | - | | - | 1.22 |
|  | (2.98) | (-1.24) | | - | | - | (1.82) |
| Education | 1.72\*\*\* | 2.58\*\*\* | | 1.25 | | 2.44\*\*\* | 2.61\*\*\* |
|  | (3.94) | (5.96 ) | | (1.03) | | (5.22) | (4.58) |
| Chi-Squared | 77.17 | 71.12 | | 14.00 | | 57.77 | 50.12 |
| P>Chi-Squared | 0 | 0 | | 0.0073 | | 0 | 0 |
| Pseudo R-Squared | 0.0881 | 0.1190 | | 0.0387 | | 0.0847 | 0.0667 |
| Odds Ratios are reported and rounded to hundredths; z-scores in parentheses | | | | | | | |
| \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < .001 | | |  | | |  |  |

This does not mean that union members are unlikely to participate in boycotts in the United States and México, though. Table 1 still indicates positive results for both of these countries in the boycott category, and I find support for H3 from the data in both Table 1 and Table 4. In México particularly, boycotting is still an ambiguous effect, as my data do not reveal significant predictors.

*Union Membership and Propensity to Sign a Petition by Country*

Table 5 presents the logistic regressions for union membership and petitioning by country. Yet again my data clash with the literature. In the United States, union membership is not a significant predictor of a respondent’s propensity to have signed a petition. In Germany and Italy, however, petitioning can be predicted by union membership; people are either three-and-a-half or four-and-a-quarter times as likely to have signed a petition compared to nonmembers, respectively. Education remains a significant predictor at an alpha of .001 for all categories, making it a more consistent predictor of participation.

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| **Table 5. Logistic Regressions for Petitioning by Country** | | | | | | | |
|  | Germany Petition | Italy Petition | | México Petition | | Great Britain Petition | United States Petition |
| Union | 3.56\*\*\* | 4.28\*\*\* | | 1.28 | | 1.82 | 1.16 |
|  | (4.95) | (3.57) | | (1.22) | | (1.75) | (0.31) |
| Age | 0.99\*\* | 0.99 | | 1.02\*\*\* | | 1.01\* | 1.037\*\*\* |
|  | (-2.77) | (-1.89) | | (3.59) | | (2.01) | (3.54) |
| Male | 0.88 | .945 | | 1.42\* | | 0.57\* | 0.53 |
|  | (-0.97) | (-0.25) | | (2.30) | | (-2.40) | (-1.94) |
| Class | 1.26\*\* | 1.20 | | - | | - | 1.30 |
|  | (2.87) | (1.36) | | - | | - | (1.50) |
| Education | 2.27\*\*\* | 3.55\*\*\* | | 2.46\*\*\* | | 1.94\*\*\* | 4.76\*\*\* |
|  | (7.59) | (6.60) | | (8.56) | | (3.46) | (4.91) |
| Chi-Squared | 171.08 | 113.94 | | 96.62 | | 23.14 | 48.07 |
| P>Chi-Squared | 0 | 0 | | 0 | | 0.0001 | 0 |
| Pseudo R-Squared | 0.1070 | 0.1843 | | 0.0857 | | 0.0438 | 0.1298 |
| Odds Ratios are reported and rounded to hundredths; z-scores in parentheses | | | | | | | |
| \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < .001 | | |  | |  | |  |

Table 1 does lend credence to the idea that union membership can predict an individual’s likeliness to sign a petition, and Table 5 supports that claim with respect to Germany and Italy. México, Great Britain and the United States are left slightly more ambiguous as results are not significant at an alpha of .05, but the results do indicate (again) a positive relationship between union membership and petitioning as a form of political participation. Thus, I find support for H4. I now move to the final predicted variable.

*Union Membership and Participation in Lawful Demonstrations by Country*

The final variable I explore in my analysis in participation in lawful demonstrations by union members. The literature indicates that members of unions are more likely to participate in such demonstrations, and my results replicate that finding emphatically across all countries. Union membership in Germany, Italy, and México all are significant at an alpha of .001; Great Britain is significant at an alpha of .01; and the United States is significant at an alpha of .05. Education also remains a strong predictor of political participation yet again, as it is significant at the .001 level across all countries.

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| **Table 6. Logistic Regressions for Demonstrations by Country** | | | | | |
|  | Germany Demonstrate | Italy Demonstrate | México Demonstrate | Great Britain Demonstrate | United States Demonstrate |
| Union | 4.06\*\*\* | 4.33\*\*\* | 2.23\*\*\* | 2.16\*\* | 1.80\* |
|  | (6.05) | (5.05) | (3.96) | (3.17) | (2.41) |
| Age | 0.99\*\* | 0.97\*\*\* | 1.03\*\*\* | 1.00 | 0.99 |
|  | (-2.82) | (-4.40) | (6.28) | (0.24) | (-0.85) |
| Male | 1.19 | 1.47\* | 1.38\* | 0.86 | 1.21 |
|  | (1.31) | (2.10) | (1.97) | (-0.72) | (0.95) |
| Class | 0.96 | 0.89 | - | - | 1.15 |
|  | (-0.48) | (-1.04) | - | - | (1.24) |
| Education | 2.95\*\*\* | 2.26\*\*\* | 2.11\*\*\* | 3.18\*\*\* | 2.76\*\*\* |
|  | (10.23) | (5.89) | (6.57) | (6.31) | (4.65) |
| Chi-Squared | 223.46 | 120.08 | 91.12 | 65.53 | 41.21 |
| P>Chi-Squared | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0001 | 0 |
| Pseudo R-Squared | 0.1440 | 0.1473 | 0.0900 | 0.1030 | 0.0617 |
| Odds Ratios are reported and rounded to hundredths; z-scores in parentheses | | | | | |
| \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < .001 | | | | | |

The data lead me to conclude that there is significant support for H5. Union membership is a good predictor of the likelihood to participate in a lawful demonstration. Yet again, however, the United States was the least significant result, registering the lowest alpha value.

**Discussion and Implications**

I argued that union membership should produce increased levels of political participation in comparison to nonmembers. The results of my study indicate that there is support for all of the hypotheses laid out as a result of the literature. Political participation does seem to increase if a potential participant is a member of a labor union. That effect is not uniform across all countries, though. Union members in Germany and Italy are consistently more participatory than their nonmember counterparts. German union members provided statistically significant results in all five measures of participation, and all were at an alpha of .001 except for voting. By contrast, United States’ union members were among the least likely to produce significant results.

Education proved to be the best indicator of political participation by and large. Education was statistically significant at an alpha of .001 in nearly all categories (23/25 times). The worst predictors were class and sex, although class may have been a better predictor if the data were nonmissing.

Unions provide potential participants with critical tools they need for participation: mobilization, resources, and a cause. Union members are more likely to participate in politics because the institution encourages making changes within the political system. This makes sense both intuitively and based on the data.

Finally, I point to several areas where the literature could move. Firstly, a historical account of union membership and political participation would be beneficial. Secondly, although this was missing from my dataset, the *type* of union could also be an important predictor of political participation (by this I mean political orientation/stance). And finally, more research needs to be conducted on the boycott measure of political participation, as it was consistently one of the most difficult relationships to discover in my data.

One thing is clear: if the workers of the world are to participate in the political system, unions are the locomotive to do so.

**Appendix A. Missing Data**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Germany** | | | |  | **Italy** | | | |
| Variable | Missing | Total | Percent |  | Variable | Missing | Total | Percent |
| Vote | 51 | 2,064 | 2.47 |  | Vote | 60 | 1,012 | 5.93 |
| Political Party | 20 | 2,064 | 0.97 |  | Political Party | 11 | 1,012 | 1.09 |
| Environment | 19 | 2,064 | 0.92 |  | Environment | 11 | 1,012 | 1.09 |
| Professional | 26 | 2,064 | 1.26 |  | Professional | 12 | 1,012 | 1.19 |
| Charitable | 19 | 2,064 | 0.92 |  | Charitable | 13 | 1,012 | 1.28 |
| Other Group | 401 | 2,064 | 19.43 |  | Other Group | 734 | 1,012 | 72.53 |
| Boycott | 115 | 2,064 | 5.57 |  | Boycott | 59 | 1,012 | 5.83 |
| Petition | 63 | 2,064 | 3.05 |  | Petition | 36 | 1,012 | 3.56 |
| Demonstrate | 82 | 2,064 | 3.97 |  | Demonstrate | 47 | 1,012 | 4.64 |
| Union | 21 | 2,064 | 1.02 |  | Union | 9 | 1,012 | 0.89 |
| Age | 0 | 2,064 | 0 |  | Age | 0 | 1,012 | 0 |
| Male | 0 | 2,064 | 0 |  | Male | 0 | 1,012 | 0 |
| Class | 139 | 2,064 | 6.73 |  | Class | 82 | 1,012 | 8.1 |
| Education | 24 | 2,064 | 1.16 |  | Education | 12 | 1,012 | 1.19 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **México** |  |  |  |  | **Great Britain** |  |  |  |
| Variable | Missing | Total | Percent |  | Variable | Missing | Total | Percent |
| Vote | 43 | 1,560 | 2.76 |  | Vote | 30 | 1,041 | 2.88 |
| Political Party | 24 | 1,560 | 1.54 |  | Political Party | 17 | 1,041 | 1.63 |
| Environment | 30 | 1,560 | 1.92 |  | Environment | 14 | 1,041 | 1.34 |
| Professional | 30 | 1,560 | 1.92 |  | Professional | 23 | 1,041 | 2.21 |
| Charitable | 33 | 1,560 | 2.12 |  | Charitable | 11 | 1,041 | 1.06 |
| Other Group | 6 | 1,560 | 0.38 |  | Other Group | 0 | 1,041 | 0 |
| Boycott | 186 | 1,560 | 11.92 |  | Boycott | 58 | 1,041 | 5.57 |
| Petition | 74 | 1,560 | 4.74 |  | Petition | 27 | 1,041 | 2.59 |
| Demonstrate | 53 | 1,560 | 3.4 |  | Demonstrate | 39 | 1,041 | 3.75 |
| Union | 22 | 1,560 | 1.41 |  | Union | 35 | 1,041 | 3.36 |
| Age | 0 | 1,560 | 0 |  | Age | 0 | 1,041 | 0 |
| Male | 0 | 1,560 | 0 |  | Male | 0 | 1,041 | 0 |
| Class | 1,560 | 1,560 | 100 |  | Class | 1,041 | 1,041 | 100 |
| Education | 3 | 1,560 | 0.19 |  | Education | 16 | 1,041 | 1.54 |

**Appendix A. Missing Data (Continued)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **United States** |  |  |  |
| Variable | Missing | Total | Percent |
| Vote | 61 | 1,249 | 4.88 |
| Political Party | 17 | 1,249 | 1.36 |
| Environment | 17 | 1,249 | 1.36 |
| Professional | 17 | 1,249 | 1.36 |
| Charitable | 34 | 1,249 | 2.72 |
| Other Group | 1,172 | 1,249 | 93.84 |
| Boycott | 29 | 1,249 | 2.32 |
| Petition | 25 | 1,249 | 2 |
| Demonstrate | 30 | 1,249 | 2.4 |
| Union | 21 | 1,249 | 1.68 |
| Age | 0 | 1,249 | 0 |
| Male | 0 | 1,249 | 0 |
| Class | 67 | 1,249 | 5.36 |
| Education | 0 | 1,249 | 0 |

**Appendix B. Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Germany** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable | Observations | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
| Vote | 2013 | 0.80 | 0.400 | 0 | 1 |
| Political Party | 2044 | 0.05 | 0.224 | 0 | 1 |
| Environment | 2045 | 0.05 | 0.218 | 0 | 1 |
| Professional | 2038 | 0.08 | 0.270 | 0 | 1 |
| Charitable | 2045 | 0.10 | 0.300 | 0 | 1 |
| Other Group | 1663 | 0.07 | 0.260 | 0 | 1 |
| Boycott | 1185 | 0.14 | 0.352 | 0 | 1 |
| Petition | 1394 | 0.68 | 0.466 | 0 | 1 |
| Demonstrate | 1229 | 0.48 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Union | 2043 | 0.11 | 0.313 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 2064 | 50.44 | 17.487 | 18 | 93 |
| Male | 2064 | 0.44 | 0.497 | 0 | 1 |
| Class | 1925 | 2.80 | 0.848 | 1 | 5 |
| Education | 2040 | 1.74 | 0.708 | 1 | 3 |

**Appendix B. Descriptive Statistics (Continued)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Italy** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable | Observations | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
| Vote | 952 | 0.89 | 0.311 | 0 | 1 |
| Political Party | 1001 | 0.10 | 0.305 | 0 | 1 |
| Environment | 1001 | 0.08 | 0.268 | 0 | 1 |
| Professional | 1000 | 0.17 | 0.373 | 0 | 1 |
| Charitable | 999 | 0.21 | 0.408 | 0 | 1 |
| Other Group | 278 | 0.12 | 0.328 | 0 | 1 |
| Boycott | 477 | 0.39 | 0.489 | 0 | 1 |
| Petition | 663 | 0.79 | 0.404 | 0 | 1 |
| Demonstrate | 646 | 0.54 | 0.499 | 0 | 1 |
| Union | 1003 | 0.14 | 0.349 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 1012 | 45.62 | 15.618 | 18 | 74 |
| Male | 1012 | 0.50 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Class | 930 | 2.84 | 0.920 | 1 | 5 |
| Education | 1000 | 1.93 | 0.780 | 1 | 3 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **México** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable | Observations | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
| Vote | 1517 | 0.66 | 0.474 | 0 | 1 |
| Political Party | 1536 | 0.19 | 0.395 | 0 | 1 |
| Environment | 1530 | 0.13 | 0.338 | 0 | 1 |
| Professional | 1530 | 0.17 | 0.376 | 0 | 1 |
| Charitable | 1527 | 0.24 | 0.425 | 0 | 1 |
| Other Group | 1554 | 0.03 | 0.162 | 0 | 1 |
| Boycott | 1172 | 0.04 | 0.186 | 0 | 1 |
| Petition | 885 | 0.35 | 0.476 | 0 | 1 |
| Demonstrate | 858 | 0.29 | 0.452 | 0 | 1 |
| Union | 1538 | 0.15 | 0.355 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 1560 | 39.69 | 15.715 | 18 | 87 |
| Male | 1560 | 0.49 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Class | - | - | - | - | - |
| Education | 1557 | 1.81 | 0.773 | 1 | 3 |

**Appendix B. Descriptive Statistics (Continued)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Great Britain** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable | Observations | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
| Vote | 1011 | 0.70 | 0.460 | 0 | 1 |
| Political Party | 1024 | 0.12 | 0.322 | 0 | 1 |
| Environment | 1027 | 0.17 | 0.372 | 0 | 1 |
| Professional | 1018 | 0.23 | 0.424 | 0 | 1 |
| Charitable | 1030 | 0.31 | 0.464 | 0 | 1 |
| Other Group | 1041 | 0.01 | 0.093 | 0 | 1 |
| Boycott | 608 | 0.28 | 0.448 | 0 | 1 |
| Petition | 774 | 0.89 | 0.316 | 0 | 1 |
| Demonstrate | 550 | 0.29 | 0.455 | 0 | 1 |
| Union | 1006 | 0.19 | 0.393 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 1041 | 45.69 | 18.543 | 15 | 94 |
| Male | 1041 | 0.49 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Class | - | - | - | - | - |
| Education | 1025 | 2.16 | 0.618 | 1 | 3 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **United States** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Variable | Observations | Mean | Standard Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
| Vote | 1188 | 0.78 | 0.416 | 0 | 1 |
| Political Party | 1232 | 0.51 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Environment | 1232 | 0.17 | 0.372 | 0 | 1 |
| Professional | 1232 | 0.25 | 0.435 | 0 | 1 |
| Charitable | 1215 | 0.30 | 0.460 | 0 | 1 |
| Other Group | 77 | 0.91 | 0.289 | 0 | 1 |
| Boycott | 580 | 0.45 | 0.498 | 0 | 1 |
| Petition | 953 | 0.94 | 0.229 | 0 | 1 |
| Demonstrate | 559 | 0.33 | 0.472 | 0 | 1 |
| Union | 1228 | 0.16 | 0.371 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 1249 | 47.96 | 17.026 | 18 | 91 |
| Male | 1249 | 0.50 | 0.500 | 0 | 1 |
| Class | 1182 | 2.87 | 0.924 | 1 | 5 |
| Education | 1249 | 1.95 | 0.501 | 1 | 3 |

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1. See Riker and Ordeshook (1973) for an account of the costs and benefits of voting. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Introduction to Stata. UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group. from http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/output/stata\_corr\_output.htm (accessed November 20, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. There are two variables that measure union membership in the WVS. One has missing values (A067) which is the reason I prefer this variable. As such, I recoded it to resemble the format of A067. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Class is missing from the dataset for both México and Great Britain. I do not control for these in my analyses for these two countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)