The Mormon Church's Impact on Chilean Democracy

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During a period in which numerous Latin American and Caribbean countries are in crisis, Chile is often heralded as an exception with its relatively strong economy,[1] functioning democratic government and low levels of corruption.[2] Yet Chileans are some of the most politically disengaged citizens in the region. The LATINOBARÓMETRO 2002 survey found that 31 percent of Chileans – up from 22 percent in 2000[3] and the highest figure among the 17 Latin American countries surveyed – are indifferent to the kind of regime in power.[4] The percentage of Chileans registered to vote out of the total eligible population has been declining since 1988.[5] Taking into account those who are not registered as well as those who abstain from voting, void their ballots or leave their ballots blank, 41 percent of Chileans who are eligible to vote don't express their support

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[1] Despite the spillover effects of the Asian financial crisis during the latter part of the '90s, Chile experienced robust average annual growth of four percent in its per capita real gross domestic product from 1992 to 2001. The figure for Latin America as a whole was 1.2 percent. Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean's *Current conditions and outlook. Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean 2001-2002*.

[2] According to Transparency International's 2002 Corruption Perceptions Index, Chile is the 17th least corrupt country in the world (just one ranking behind the United States). Among Western Hemisphere countries, Chile is the third least corrupt (after the U.S. and Canada). See http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2002/cpi2002.en.html. In recent months, corruption scandals have erupted in Chile, but this is an anomaly.

[3] http://www.latinobarometro.org/English/pdf/press-release/eng00.pdf

[4] http://www.latinobarometro.org/ano2001/prensa2002.pdf
See also Corporación CERC's "Informe de Prensa sobre Temas Económicos y Políticos" (September 2002), pp. 6-7.

[5] Based on voter registration data from the Chilean Electoral Service (specifically, the chart "Inscripciones Hábiles por Sexo 1988-2001") and population figures from the Chilean national statistics agency (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, or INE), specifically, the "Compendio Estadístico" for 2001, Table 1.2.1-03. In Chile, being registered to vote tends to indicate active political participation (more so at least than in many other countries) because those who are registered to vote in Chile are obliged to vote in every election (or must pay a fine). While nine percent of those Chileans registered for the 1993 and 1999 presidential elections didn't vote (source: Chilean Electoral Service charts "Inscripciones Hábiles por Sexo 1988-2001," "Resultados Generales Elección Presidente de la República 1993" and "Escrutinio General Elección Presidente de la República Período 2000-2006"), the majority of those who are registered do vote, and generally only those who are interested in politics register.

for any candidate.[6] Perhaps part of the explanation for Chileans' political disengagement

is their distrust of one another. Chile has one of the lowest levels of interpersonal trust of

the nations represented in the LATINOBARÓMETRO 2002 survey: only 13 percent of

Chileans supported the statement "you can trust most people."[7] How does the Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (often referred to as the "Mormon Church")[8] and its

astonishing growth levels in Chile fit into this context? What is its impact, if any, on

Chileans' civic disengagement and high levels of distrust? I will argue that, by creating

community at the local level, the Church is helping reconstruct[9] community at the

national level. More specifically, the "social capital" generated by the Church makes

members more civic-minded and trusting.

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[6] Sergio Marras, *Chile, ese inasible malestar* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 2001), p. 36. This figure is based on the 1997 parliamentary elections, but Marras mentions that there was no significant change during the 1999 presidential elections, except for the second round.

[7] Venezuela, Paraguay and Brazil exhibit lower levels of interpersonal trust. See http://www.latinobarometro.org/English/pdf/press-release/graf/graficos2002ingles.pdf. According to Corporación CERC, the situation is even bleaker: 90 percent of Chileans feel that one can never be cautious enough when dealing with others. See page 7 of the Corporación CERC study mentioned earlier. A 1998 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) survey is slightly more positive: 17 percent of Chileans claim to trust other people always or most of the time, although this percentage is still one of the lowest among those surveyed. See Carla Lehmann S-B, "¿Cuán Religiosos Somos los Chilenos? Mapa de la Religiosidad en 31 Países," *Estudios Públicos* no. 85 (Summer 2002), pp. 38-39. Ms. Lehmann is a researcher at the Centro de Estudios Públicos (CEP), which contributed the information on Chile for the ISSP study.

[8] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the church's official name. Church authorities discourage the use of the term "Mormon Church." "Mormon" may be used only as an adjective, in proper names or to refer to a member of the Church, although "Latter-day Saint" is preferred. See the official Web page for the Church (http://www.lds.org), "News Media Resources," "Quick Facts and FAQ's," "Writer's Style Guide." In this paper, I will strive to use church-sanctioned terminology, and "Church" will always refer to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[9] I am using the word "reconstruct" here for a particular reason. My word choice alludes to the idea that there was a stronger sense of national unity, or community, before the dictatorship. In fact, according to "An Investigation of Public Opinion in Santiago" conducted in 1958 by the University of Chile's Sociology Institute, the quality or attitude most striking among Chileans was their sociability. See Rodolfo Acevedo, *Los Mormones en Chile: 30 años de la Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de los Últimos Días (1956-1986)* (Santiago*: Imprenta Cumora*, 1990), pp. 75-76.

The Church in Chile

Compared to the number of followers of other religions in Chile, the number of Chilean Latter-day Saints is relatively insignificant. As of the end of 2001, there were 520,202 Chilean Latter-day Saints[10] out of a total population of 15,402,000.[11] Catholics comprise 70 percent of the population (over age 15),[12] and, since the 1930s, a form of native Pentecostalism has attracted significant numbers of converts.[13] In 1997, there were between 1.6 and 1.8 million Pentecostals in the country (compared to 481,836 Latter-day Saints in the same year).[14] However, since 1956,[15] the number of conversions to Mormonism in Chile has been astonishingly high compared to Mormon growth rates in other countries. While there are more Brazilian and Mexican Latter-day Saints than Chilean, the differences are not significant, especially considering the total populations of these countries. Moreover, as Elder[16] Dallin H. Oaks observes, "[t]here is no other major nation in the world that has the proportion of membership [3.1] percent that Chile has, a

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[10] Church statistics department (phone interview on February 18, 2003). The 2002 Chilean census figure for the number of Latter-day Saints ages 15 and older (103,735) is significantly lower than the official Church figure since the Church counts all members in the country regardless of age and counts anyone "affiliated" with the Church, while the census counts only those who currently identify themselves as "Mormon." For Latter-day Saints, "affiliated" means anyone who has ever been baptized by the Church, irrespective of his or her current level of involvement. (Note: the same is true of the Catholic Church.) Regardless of the difference between these two figures, it is significant that, because of the notable growth of the Church (as well as other "new" religions) in Chile, the census, for the first time, has a separate category for those who identify themselves as Mormon (as well as for Jehovah's Witnesses).

[11] INE, "Compendio Estadístico" 2001, Table 1.2.1-01.

[12] Chilean Census 2002, Table 6.1.

[13] See Anthony Gill, *Rendering unto Caesar: the Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 131 for a description of the origins of Chilean Pentecostalism.

[14] Based on estimates from both churches. See the U.S. Department of Sate's "International Religious Freedom Report 2002" for Chile and Mauricio Giordano Navas's thesis *Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de los Últimos Días en Chile: El triunfo de la Nueva Reilgión*, March 2000, Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano in Santiago.

[15] While a Church mission to Chile in 1851 met with little success, since the second Chilean mission was launched in 1956, the Church has been thriving there. Rodolfo Acevedo's book gives a detailed account of the Church's history in Chile.

[16] "Elder" refers to members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Quorum of the Seventy as well as to full-time male missionaries. See http://lds.about.com/library/glossary/bldefelder.htm and footnote 19 for related definitions.

proportion even greater than that of the United States."[17] Chile was also the first Spanish-speaking nation in which a temple was constructed – a sign of its robust growth.[18] In fact, some believe the Church has grown too fast in Chile; in other words, conversion rates have outpaced the Church's ability "to train [local] leadership and to help new members assimilate into the Church and attend the temple." And, while this is an issue that "the Church has faced for years in many developing areas," the fact that the Church, for the first time in 50 years, has assigned apostles to help ensure healthy growth while serving as area presidents in two countries – the Philippines and Chile – shows Chile's uniqueness.[19]

Social Capital

The over-use of the term "social capital" by scholars from a variety of disciplines as well as by practitioners (development specialists and consultants, among others) has rendered it so broad as to lose much of its meaning.[20] According to Alejandro Portes and

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[17] "Pres. Packer, Elder Oaks greeted by Chilean leaders," *Church News*, 11 September 1999. Note that Elder Oaks was comparing Chile to other "major nations"; a few very small countries like Tonga (with a total population of 106,000 and 42.28 percent membership as of year-end 1999, according to the corresponding *Church Almanac*) have more members relative to their total populations. It is important to note as well that, while Elder Oaks classifies Chile as a "major nation," its population is still small compared to countries like the United States, which must be taken into account when analyzing percent membership. The figure 3.1 percent is also dated. By December 31, 2001 the percentage of Chilean Latter-day Saints of the total national population was 3.46, according to the Church's statistics department (phone interview on February 18, 2003). Keith Atkinson of the Church's public affairs department in Los Angeles told me in a phone interview on October 18, 2002 that, according to "anecdotal evidence from the ground," the percent membership in Chile is about five percent.

[18] Acevedo, p. 70. The Church authorities in Utah decide when a temple should be constructed based on membership levels, among other factors.

[19] "Two Apostles to Take Overseas Assignments," 9 April 2002, available at http://www.lds.org/media2/newsrelease. The Twelve Apostles, along with the president of the Church and his two counselors (the First Presidency), are seen as prophets and constitute the highest Church authority. See http://www.lds.org, "News Media Resources," "Quick Facts and FAQ's," "Structure and Organization." "Area presidents" are part of the First Quorum of the Seventy (just below the Twelve Apostles in the Church hierarchy) and preside over the Church in different countries around the world. See http://lds.about.com/library/weekly/aa093002a.htm.

[20] James S. Coleman (1988 and 1990), Jane Jacobs (1961), Glen Loury (1977, 1981), and Pierre Bourdieu (1979, 1980, 1985 and 1986) were the first to use the term, according to various sources, including Robert

Patricia Landolt: "Social capital now appears poised to repeat the experience suffered by other promising social science concepts from the past: from intellectual insight appropriated by policy pundits, to journalistic cliché, to eventual oblivion. It deserves better."[21] In this paper, I will use Robert Putnam's definition, although I do not necessarily agree with all his applications of the term.[22] Putnam states, "[b]y analogy with notions of physical and human capital – tools and training that enhance individual productivity – 'social capital' refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."[23]

The Church's Welfare Services system exemplifies Putnam's definition. Members are encouraged to fast once a month and to donate the money they would have spent on food to the Church, which then draws on this money for its Welfare Services system. Each member trusts that every other member will also donate this money to the Church and that the Church will choose welfare recipients rationally (that, if a particular member is not currently receiving aid, it is because it is unnecessary and that, if it becomes necessary, the member will receive aid at that time). The trust among members and

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Putnam, "Bowling Alone," *Journal of Democracy* 6:1 (January 1995): pp. 65-78; Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt, "The Downside of Social Capital," *The American Prospect* no. 26 (May-June 1996); and Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology," *Annual Reviews, Sociology* (1998): pp. 1-24.

[21] Portes and Landolt, p. 1.

[22] Putnam's definition focuses on social organization as opposed to the individuals who may access the social capital that social organization generates (as Alejandro Portes's definition does, for example). I find Putnam's focus useful for examining the Mormon community in Chile as a collectivity as well as its effects on Chilean society, but I also recognize the validity of Portes's concern that this approach facilitates using social capital as a panacea for society's ills. See Portes and Landolt and the section "Social Capital as a Feature of Communities and Nations" in Portes.

[23] Putnam, "Bowling Alone," p. 67.

between members and the Church hierarchy, as well as the Church's norms and member network, allow for a very efficient (and deep!) welfare system.[24]

Just as different corporations possess varying amounts of physical and human capital, different communities possess more or less social capital based on their particular "features of social organization" (see Putnam's definition of social capital).[25] In "Bowling Alone," Putnam argues that, while the number of bowling leagues in America has declined substantially in recent years, membership in "tertiary organizations" (national environmental organizations or feminist groups, for example) has skyrocketed. However, these "tertiary organizations" generate much less social capital than the more intimate kinds of "secondary associations," including bowling leagues.[26] For Putnam, the density of the social network and the existence of horizontal ties within the network are the key variables for predicting how much social capital the network will generate.[27] In other words, because members of bowling leagues play on teams (creating horizontal ties among teammates) that meet regularly (creating a dense network), they receive greater benefits (in terms of social capital) from their participation than do members of national advocacy groups who may never even meet one another.

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[24] For more information on Church welfare see Garth Magnum, "Welfare Services," http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/daily/welfare/welfare_services_eom.htm. As an interesting aside, in *Mormonism, Americanism and Politics*, Richard Vetterli states on page 61: "From the very beginning the American religion [Mormonism] catered to the temporal as well as spiritual welfare of its adherents. Each Saint was considered his 'brother's keeper.' The spirit of brotherhood and mutual help grew so strong that the Mormons came to be known as a 'people different.'" Richard Vetterli*, Mormonism, Americanism and Politics* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Publishing Company, 1961).

[25] Social scientists are now trying to measure social capital. Two such measurement tools are the "Integrated Questionnaire for the Measurement of Social Capital" and the older "Social Capital Assessment Tool," both from the World Bank.

[26] Putnam, "Bowling Alone," p. 70

[27] Horizontal networks bring "together agents of equivalent status and power," while vertical networks link "unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence." Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: civic traditions in modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 173. See page 76 of "Bowling Alone" for more discussion of dense social networks.

Putnam asserts that "houses of worship build and sustain more social capital . . . than any other type of institution."[28] The unique organizational structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints[29] creates an extraordinarily dense social network and encourages the kind of horizontal ties Putnam advocates, generating particularly high levels of social capital (even when compared to other churches). Wards and branches[30] meet every Sunday for services, after which members break up into smaller groups: children take classes introducing them to the tenants of Mormonism, women discuss upcoming activities for their Relief Society,[31] veteran Church members lead discussion groups for newer members, and so on. Members also meet during the week for similar activities. In addition, because several wards and branches often share one chapel, members of different wards and branches may interact on Sundays. Social events, like dances and sports competitions, as well as classes offered at Church Institutes and learning centers also regularly involve members of different stakes (and nonmembers as well in some cases).[32] So, not only do Latter-day Saints meet with great frequency; they

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[28] "Bettertogether," final report of the Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement in America at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Putnam directs the project. The quote is from the section entitled "Religion and Social Capital," p. 1, available on-line at www.bettertogether.org.

[29] A reference to the Church's structure around 1900: "No other organization is as perfect . . . except for the German army." Quoted in "Mormon Conquest," *Forbes*, 12/07/92, page 78.

[30] These are geographic subdivisions of the Church (based primarily on membership levels). Stakes are comprised of several wards and branches (a very small ward).

[31] An organization within the Church run by women, which facilitates volunteering as well as visiting lapsed members

[32] Church Institutes offer young (19- to 30-year-old) members (and interested nonmembers, I believe) classes in religious studies and are part of the formal Church education system. In addition, in Chile, the Church has offered (until very recently) free classes to members and nonmembers in such diverse fields as language, carpentry, baking, first aid, accounting and hairstyling, among others. In 2001, there were at least two such learning centers in Santiago operating out of chapels (when they were not being used for services) located in Gran Avenida and Providencia. These learning centers are not part of the Church's formal service or education networks and seem to be particular to Chile. The teachers at these learning centers are all volunteers. The ratio of members to nonmembers who take classes at these centers is about 70-30. The ratio of member to nonmember volunteer teachers is about 80-20. Most of this information is from personal interviews with the director (at the time) of the Gran Avenida learning center Hermano Vallejos and with

also have several overlapping circles of contact. The associational density of wards and branches is stronger than that of any of the other geographical subdivisions, but the associational density of the Mormon network as a whole is reinforced by the interactions among the various subgroups. Moreover, taking classes together and working together in aid societies, among other activities, creates horizontal ties among members. The rotating lay leadership structure of the Church also supports the formation of horizontal ties over vertical ones.

In addition to producing varying degrees of social capital, communities also produce different kinds of social capital. "Bonding" social capital refers to the social capital generated within a community where as "bridging" social capital transcends community boundaries.[33] The early proponents of the notion of social capital focused only on its positive effects; it is now widely accepted, however, that possessing social capital can be negative or positive, depending on the circumstances. [34] Bonding social capital is often identified in the literature as potentially dangerous because, for example, it can lead to exclusion and lack of trust of those outside the community (both of which have other negative ramifications), while bridging social capital is almost universally seen as good. According to Ramon Daubon and Harold Saunders, bonding social capital

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Cristina, an Italian teacher there. I also confirmed some of this information with Rodolfo Acevedo by phone on March 12, 2003.

[33] Several authors have referred to these different kinds of social capital. See, for example, the paper by Ramon Daubon and Harold Saunders of the Kettering Foundation entitled "Operationalizing Social Capital: A Strategy to Enhance Communities' 'Capacity to Concert,'" p. 4. Also, see work by Putnam and Michael Woolcock (World Bank), among others.

[34] See, for example, Portes and Landolt. In Portes (the section "Negative Social Capital"), Portes identifies four possible negative consequences of social capital (exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms and downward leveling norms) and discusses various related studies. I should note that Portes never associates these negative effects with a particular type of social capital (bonding or bridging). Putnam also refers to potential negative outcomes, but doesn't go into such depth. See "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life," *The American Prospect* no. 13 (Spring 1993), p. 7 and "Bowling Alone," p. 75, for example.

"provides cultural reinforcement for unreliability in public institutions and as a result leaves open spaces for corruption in the broader, public sphere" while bridging social capital makes "transacting more efficient and thus enhance[s] economic life,"[35] among other benefits. I would argue, however, that this conceptual framework is too polarizing. Take, for example, Max Weber's reflections on Protestant sects in the United States prior to the influx of European migrants, which provide a counter-argument to Daubon's and Saunders's assertion that (only) bridging social capital "enhance[s] economic life." Weber states that, while generally "*business* [Weber's italicization] dealings with non-members were not interdicted . . . it was self-understood that one preferred the brethren."[36] The bonding social capital fostered within these religious sects was clearly exclusionary, but it was precisely this quality that lubricated business transactions among fellow members. Belonging to the same church, according to Weber, did not have the same effect.[37] Using the community of Latter-day Saints in Chile as an example, I will explain two other ways in which the literature has exaggerated the dichotomy between bonding and bridging social capital. First, communities can possess both kinds of social capital. In fact, bridging social capital cannot exist without bonding social capital since, without bonding social capital, communities would unravel and with them the potential for bridging social capital. Second, bonding social capital can bridge "cleavage lines"[38] within communities, just as bridging social capital does between communities.

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[35] Daubon and Saunders, p. 5.

[36] Max Weber, "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. Gerth and Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 319.

[37] For Weber, a church is something you are born into and hence obligatory where as belonging to a sect is voluntary and requires approval by standing members.

[38] Putnam, "Prosperous Community," page 4.

Social Capital and the Church in Chile

I believe we have already demonstrated that the Church produces bonding social capital (see, for example, my earlier description of the welfare system) so I will turn now to showing that the Church, at least in Chile, also produces bridging social capital. The clearest example of the bridging social capital generated by the Church is its younger members' engagement in politics.[39] According to the results of my questionnaire,[40] 18 percent of respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 were registered to vote, higher than the average for all *Santiaguinos* (residents of Santiago) ages 18-24, which was 15 percent.[41] Respondents ages 25 to 34 were also more likely to be registered to vote than the average *Santiaguino* in the same age category (69 percent compared to 62 percent). For the second two age groups I questioned, however, the same did not hold true:

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[39] See Daubon and Saunders page 6 on how anonymous civic engagement points to the presence of bridging social capital. The Saguero Seminar distinguishes between "conventional politics participation" and "protest politics participation" in its Executive Summary of the "Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey" (page 9). Both are forms of anonymous civic engagement and therefore both indicate involvement in community life, but I am focusing only on "conventional politics participation" here.

[40] From June to August of 2001 as part of the fieldwork for my MA thesis, I distributed questionnaires to Chilean Church members, which included questions about their degree of participation in the Church, social networks, political beliefs, and socioeconomic and education levels, among other topics, in numerous parts of Santiago and at different events (not only before and after sacramental, or services, but also at sporting matches, classes and other social activities). My method for distributing these questionnaires was largely opportunistic (purposive sampling); in other words, I distributed questionnaires whenever the opportunity presented itself (if I got invited to a Church-related event, for example). I also used the snowball/chain method to identify members who could offer introductions to Church leaders with the authority to permit me to distribute the questionnaires. Please note that the data were not gathered in a way that would allow for statistically rigorous analysis. (In other words, I did not use random sampling, over sampling for certain groups or pilot surveys nor did I take into account the bias created by non-response, etc.).

[41] Since all questionnaire respondents were from Santiago, I compared the questionnaire results to *Santiaguinos'* voting registration habits as opposed to national averages. The figure 15 percent is an estimate. I estimated the number of *Santiaguinos* ages 18 to 24 in 2001 the following way. Based on the 1992 census figures, the age distribution of *Santiaguinos* was very similar to the national age distribution. Therefore, I found the percentage of the total population of Chile in 2001 that was 18 to 24 (source: Table 1.2.1-04 of the INE's "*Compendio Estadístico*" for 2001) and multiplied the total population of Santiago in 2001 (source: Table 1.2.1-05 of the INE's "*Compendio Estadístico*" for 2001) by that percentage, deriving an estimate of the total number of *Santiaguinos* ages 18 to 24 in 2001. Then I divided the number of *Santiaguinos* ages 18 to 24 registered to vote in 2001 (source: the Chilean Electoral Service's statistics on the 2001 legislative elections, chart "*Estadística Porcentual de Inscripciones Hábiles por Grupos Etáreos*

respondents ages 35 and older were less likely to be registered than the average

Santiaguino in the same age bracket.[42] Yet taking into account the degree of respondents'

involvement with the Church, these results do not necessarily contradict my earlier

statements about the Church's positive effect on political engagement. Compared to the

younger respondents, the older respondents had fewer friends who were fellow members

– a proxy for their degree of insertion in the Church.[43] Based on this information, my

conjecture is that the higher degree of political engagement (as compared to the average

for all *Santiaguinos*) of the younger respondents is directly correlated with their more

intense relationship to the Church (as compared to the older respondents). Therefore,

being more deeply involved in Church life does not seem to have had a negative effect on

these younger Latter-day Saints' political engagement; in fact, it may have had a positive

effect. In other words, involvement – particularly intense involvement – in the Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may produce bridging social capital.

One might argue that being deeply involved in an activity, any activity, is related

to being more involved in activities in other sectors, including the political realm. Yet

according to the Saguero Seminar's Executive Summary, religious involvement in

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en Cada Sexo, por Región y en el Total del País") by the estimated number of *Santiaguinos* in that age category in 2001. I repeated this process for the other age groups.

[42] 83 percent of respondents ages 35 to 55 were registered compared to the average for all *Santiaguinos* in the same age bracket of 94 percent. 87 percent of respondents ages 55 and older were registered compared to 97 percent. My sample sizes – especially in the older age ranges – are very small, however, and therefore I must be wary of concluding too much from them.

[43] 76 percent of respondents ages 18 to 24 claimed that more than half of their closest friends were other members. With each successive age group, this percentage declined (from 61 to 56 to 29). One plausible explanation for why younger members may be more engaged with the Church than older members is that the younger members may be part of the first generation of Latter-day Saints born into the Church in Chile – a generation which is just now reaching adulthood – and it seems likely that those born into the Church would be more likely to be strongly engaged with the Church than those who convert later in life when beliefs and habits are already formed. One of my interview subjects, Claudia, describing her grandparents' relationship to the Church and why they converted at age 50, stated: "Really I don't know why they converted. They were already very set in their ways and attached to their traditions. They went to the (Mormon) Church, they sat there, but, because of their age, they didn't take it all in or they didn't want to."

particular "is positively associated with most other forms of civic involvement."[44]

Moreover, higher levels of church attendance are especially likely to increase political engagement, according to the report "Religion in Latino Public Life" by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.[45] Because the Church encourages and facilitates the deep involvement of its members (particularly the younger ones) in Church life, this association between religious and political engagement may be particularly acute for Latter-day Saints. Two other reasons why membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in particular may stimulate civic participation are, first, the Church leadership encourages members to vote, which is seen as part of every member's civic duty, without telling them how to vote, although this has not always been the case.[46] Second, the Church serves, in a sense, as a school for democracy: by encouraging members to take on leadership roles within the Church and to become involved in its decision making process, the Church is also encouraging them – intentionally or not – to become more involved in the management of the State. The Church also overtly encourages members to make themselves "available for public office," according to Mark Cannon.[47] These Church policies are diametrically opposed to those of the Pentecostal Church in Chile, as described by Christian Lalive d'Epinay in *El Refugio de las Masas*. According to Lalive d'Epinay, the Pentecostal Church in Chile discourages its members from taking on leadership roles outside the church, including political office and

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[44] P. 3.

[45] May 2002, p. 9. My questionnaire results support this finding: those members who did not attend Church services regularly were slightly less likely to be registered to vote than other members.

[46] Mauss, "Sociological Perspectives on the Mormon Subculture," *Annual Review of Sociology* vol. 10 (1984), p. 447. Note: since the Second World War, Utah has consistently ranked as the state with the highest percentage of voters out of its voting age population. Mark Cannon, "Civic Duties," http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/daily/politics/Civic_Duties_EOM.htm.

[47] Ibid.

positions in labor unions, for example, and even from supporting particular political parties because the Pentecostal leadership believes these sorts of affiliations detract from members' engagement with their church.[48]

Further evidence that the Church produces bridging social capital is that, while the majority (63 percent) of the Latter-day Saints I surveyed identified their closest friends as other members, a significant minority (37 percent) claimed that half or fewer than half of their closest friends are members. While these statistics may not seem noteworthy at first glance (especially since Latter-day Saints are a small minority in Chile and must therefore interact with nonmembers on a regular basis), it is important to keep in mind that many Chileans are skeptical of Latter-day Saints and their very particular lifestyle (in more extreme cases, Church members have been discriminated against, and Church structures have been attacked) and that Chileans in general have very low levels of interpersonal trust. In this context, the fact that a fair number of Latter-day Saints trust nonmembers (as evidenced by forming friendships with them) can be explained, I believe, by the presence of bridging social capital.[49]

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[48] See Chapter 6 of Christian Lalive d'Epinay, *El Refugio de las Masas: Estudio Sociológico del Protestantismo Chileno* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1968).

[49] Some authors (Offe, Patterson and Inglehart, for example) have suggested that "having more resources – such as economic wealth, status, and knowledge – makes it less risky to trust others, especially strangers removed in time and space." See Mark Warren, ed., *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 8. Because the Church emphasizes education and training, provides other social services to members, and serves as a status symbol in some instances, Chilean Latter-day Saints tend to have more of such resources compared to other members of their socioeconomic groups, which may also be part of why they are trusting of others, even nonmembers. See Warren, pp. 11-12 on how subjective well-being contributes to generalized trust (as opposed to trust limited to one's own family or to a particular religious or ethnic group), which, in turn, contributes to subjective well-being – a virtuous cycle for some and a vicious cycle for others. It is interesting to note as well that the Church encourages members to form friendships with nonmembers as part of its recruitment strategy because bringing nonmembers into the Mormon social network has proven to be the most effective way to get them to join the Church. Because Church authorities developed this recruitment strategy in the mid 1970s as a response to the dynamic they observed between members and nonmembers, their endorsement does not explain why members formed friendships with nonmembers to a significant extent before this time. The Church's endorsement may have affected members' habits post 1975, however. See Rodney Stark and William Sims

A third example is that the Church in Chile donates part of its resources to causes not affiliated with the Church.[50] During my interview with Gordon Thomas, the Chile Area Welfare Agent at the time, he explained that the Church had supported about 40 projects during the past year. Some of the recent Church "projects" Brother[51] Thomas described included donating high-tech machines to several provincial hospitals, wheelchairs to an organization which loans them to the needy and piping for a sewer system in a squatter community in a poor area of Santiago called Peñalolen. Recently, the Church, along with some members of the Evangelical community and the Chilean government, also opened a school for children (mostly nonmembers) in a poor part of Santiago.[52] All members with whom I spoke about the subject of the Church's humanitarian assistance in Chile concurred that the primary impetus for this aid is a desire to contribute to the advancement of Chilean society, but differed on whether the Church is also interested in publicizing its generosity. According to John Harris, a Church member and U.S. State Department official based in Santiago, the Church has spent millions on such causes, but is so busy "taking care of the basics [of running the Church] that there is no time to go to the newspapers." Miguel Angel Alvear, manager of the Church's job placement and training centers throughout Chile, also underscored the Church's lack of interest in turning this kind of assistance into a form of propaganda. Yet, according to Brother Thomas, a secondary goal of the Church in delivering this aid is improving its image. He stated, "We're a lot less interested in *imagen* ("image" in

Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 316-324.

[50] Being charitable is strongly associated with being religious (not just Mormon). "Involvement in religious community is among the strongest predictors of giving and volunteering for religious causes as well as for secular ones," according to the Saguaro Seminar's Executive Summary (p. 3).
[51] "Brother" and "sister" are terms that many members use to refer to one another.

Spanish) than in helping. We're interested in *ímagen* too. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have something like the Peñalolen sewer on the evening news? But it'll never happen because, for one thing, the evening news isn't interested." He went on to say that the news wasn't interested in covering anything good that happens in Peñalolen nor anything positive that the Church does. The Church provides humanitarian assistance to non-members around the world as well as emergency disaster relief at the national level and may publicize these acts to various degrees depending on the country and circumstances.[53]

Besides supporting these Church initiatives through their tithes and fast offerings, some Chilean Latter-day Saints also aid the needy in other ways. According to Benito Baranda, an employee of the largest charity in Chile (Hogar de Cristo), Latter-day Saints were the first to join the youth relief movement after the 1997 flooding in Chile and donate their time and services for other causes as well. It is also important to note that the Latter-day Saints to whom Baranda is referring are volunteering through a Catholic organization (Hogar de Cristo). Another way in which the Chilean Church is aiding those outside the Church community is by allowing nonmembers to take free classes at the Church learning centers (see footnote 32) and to use the services of the Church's job placement and training centers (again, completely free of charge).[54]

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[52] Phone interview with Rodolfo Acevedo on March 12, 2003.

[53] You can read about the Church's disaster relief efforts and longer-term economic aid in various countries on the Internet at http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/daily/welfare, and articles are published in the Church-affiliated magazines about such assistance. However, I'm not sure in which countries the Church has tried to reach a wider audience.

[54] Anyone who comes recommended can use the services of these centers, which are paid for by members' tithes and located throughout the country. (In Santiago, there is one center in República and one in Vitacura.) Members generally get recommendations from their bishops; nonmembers must also find people to vouch for them. The Church limits the number of nonmembers to three in every group of 15 in periods of high demand, but, when there is less demand, more nonmembers can use the centers' services. These services include job placement, job training/education and small business development. In terms of job

Besides showing that the community of Latter-day Saints in Chile possesses both bonding and bridging social capital, I also want to explain how its bonding social capital bridges some of the "cleavage lines" often associated with the more "positive" form of social capital (bridging social capital). In Chile, socioeconomic differences tend to produce these cleavages, as opposed to racial conflict, for example. As described earlier, while many Church activities facilitate interaction among residents of the same neighborhood (and therefore among people with comparable socioeconomic profiles), others (especially the Church learning centers and Institutes) attract members from different parts of the city. In this environment, members from different backgrounds learn to work together and, often, to trust one another.

The Church's job placement and training centers in Chile provide a second example. The director of these centers Miguel Angel Alvear told me during our interview that, while certain centers, because of their locations, tend to attract members (and some nonmembers) from the same socioeconomic strata (generally lower or lower middle class), he purposefully tries to mix (in terms of socioeconomic strata) the groups of

placement, the centers provide access to computers, telephones, faxes, printers and copiers for those who want to look for jobs on the Internet or to draft and print their CVs. The centers also contact Chilean businesses, offering them employees who are healthy, hardworking and honest (hence the need for recommendations). Several businesses, after having good experiences with employees recommended by the centers, now contact the centers regularly when new positions need to be filled. Miguel Angel Alvear, director of these centers, also has many contacts within the Chilean business community whom he calls regularly to see about employment opportunities. However, the centers don't have any official contracts with employers (not even with businesses that have Church members in positions of authority). In terms of job training/education, the Church centers help defray the costs of taking classes by setting up discounts and scholarships through their contacts with educational institutions in Chile. Generally, the smaller, private *institutos* ("institutes") as they are known in Chile (as opposed to the larger universities) are more willing to participate since their enrollment levels are lower. The Church centers also help small businessmen apply for loans from banks and other organizations (generally foundations) in Chile by providing them with information about where they can apply, helping them fill out the forms and accompanying them to their loan interviews. In addition, the centers offer training in marketing and other business basics and encourage the small businessmen to organize themselves into unions to get benefits such as medical insurance. The centers are also considering broadening their services to include free

people he accepts into the centers at one time. As he put it, "that way, they help each other: for example, a lawyer has a friend who needs a housecleaner . . . ." In other words, Alvear is using the bonding social capital among members to bridge class differences and generate benefits for all. In fact, by facilitating networking on a much broader scale (generally networking involves personal contacts among people with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, but, in this case, it cuts across class lines), this social capital has the potential to produce substantial economic gains for the community as a whole without leading to the domination of an industry.[55]

Defining "community" more broadly as the Church worldwide, the Church's missionary work provides another example of how bonding social capital can bridge cleavage lines. Since almost all young male Latter-day Saints (usually between the ages of 19 and 21) and some unmarried female Latter-day Saints (usually between the ages of 21 and 24) serve the Church as missionaries,[56] missionaries come from various social strata, cultures and races and often bond with each other during the missions (missionaries attend training camps together and then work together in pairs). Interestingly, this missionary work also generates bridging social capital: missionaries strive to integrate themselves into the communities in which they are proselytizing, regardless of both their backgrounds and the communities' profiles. While the missionaries' goal is to bring new members into the Mormon community, learning to interact with nonmembers with very different life experiences (than their own) produces bridging social capital.

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psychological counseling. Everyone who works at the centers, except for Miguel Angel Alvear himself, are volunteers.
[55] Several authors have cited the domination of industries by particular subgroups as a negative effect of (bonding) social capital. See Portes, p. 15, for example.

Returning to the question of what impact the Church has on Chilean society's high levels of civic disengagement and distrust, I believe we have shown the impact to be positive, contrary to popular perceptions of the Church both in Chile and worldwide. While I cannot disagree that the high levels of bonding social capital generated by the Church in Chile lead to a degree of insularity, they also help bridge some of the cleavages among members that continue to polarize the rest of Chilean society, including class differences and sentiments toward Pinochet, for example. Moreover, the Church also produces bridging social capital that makes Latter-day Saints able to trust nonmembers as well as to engage in politics (not a small feat considering the national statistics mentioned earlier). While I cannot speak to all the other ramifications of the Church's growth in Chile, I believe the Church's influence in terms of the areas mentioned above has been positive.[57]

Moreover, according to Ronald Inglehart, while transitions to democracy are marked by "low levels of subjective well-being and trust" among citizens (perhaps part of

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[56] http://www.mission.net/en/main_missionfaq.html

[57] See earlier discussion of bonding versus bridging social capital for other potential ramifications of Church growth in Chile as well as Francis Fukuyama's discussion of the Church in *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1995), pp. 290-293 and p. 4 of the Saguero Seminar Executive Summary. The increase in the number of Latter-day Saints in Chile might also lead to more social conservatism nationwide, for example. My questionnaire results showed that 93 percent of respondents believe homosexuality and premarital sex are bad or very bad, for instance, while 77 and 52 percent of Catholics living in Santiago disapprove or strongly disapprove of homosexual cohabitation and sexual relations between unmarried couples (respectively), according to the 2001 "Encuesta Nacional de Iglesia: Conferencia Episcopal de Chile" conducted by academics at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile's Sociology Institute. The authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints discourage both practices (premarital sex and homosexuality) and, according to Rodolfo Acevedo (personal interview), will in fact not allow homosexuals to be Church members. The Church is also an active supporter (in fact, the biggest supporter in the U.S.) of the Boy Scouts, which has become an increasingly socially conservative institution in recent years (personal interview with Rodolfo Acevedo and Benjamin Soskis, "Big Tent: Saving the Boy Scouts from its Supporters," *The New Republic*, 17 September 2001). It is important to note, however, that class also affects levels of conservatism, which should be taken into account when analyzing Church members' views. It is important to mention as well that I am only commenting on the Church in Chile's effect on social trust and political engagement; its effect in other localities (especially Utah) may be very different.

the explanation for the statistics mentioned at the beginning of this section), stable democracies require "a general culture of political trust" and "diffuse mass support for existing political institutions," which are best predicted by high levels of interpersonal trust and subjective well-being.[58] In a sense, then, Chilean Latter-day Saints' relative interpersonal and political trust as well as their (again, relative) sense of economic security and general well-being (see footnote 49) may contribute to the deepening of Chilean democracy.

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[58] Warren, p. 7 and Ronald Inglehart, "Trust, well-being and democracy," *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark Warren (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 97.

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