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FARM OWNERSHIP, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND OTHER SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN CENTRAL BRAZIL

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FARM OWNERSHIP, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND OTHER SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN CENTRAL BRAZIL*

In many countries of Latin America, around two-thirds of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood. In most of the Latin American countries agricultural exports are the primary source of the foreign exchange to finance industrial development.

Given the prominence of the agricultural sector in the economy, it is not surprising that "ownership of land is regarded as the major economic basis for the exercise of power and one of the basic conditioning factors of government."[1] Furthermore, Pierson and Gil point out that there is widespread agreement among experts that the system of landownership constitutes the outstanding economic "maladjustment" which hinders both economic growth and political progress. They assert that "monopolization of land has been in the past and is today the chief source of political power."[2]

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[1]William W. Pierson and Federico Gil, Governments of Latin America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1957), p. 378.

[2]Ibid., pp. 381-382.

However, the issue is not only one of disproportionate distribution of land, but also of the closely associated problems created by the fact that land ownership is the basis for social class distinctions and, more importantly, both economic and political power.[3]

Although a considerable amount and variety of advanced technology has been applied in Latin America, its effects have been confined mostly to urban industrial areas. Not only have rural areas been little affected by the technological advances of the industrial sector but they have also been less characterized by changes in social and political structure.

The present study intends to investigate empirically the relationship between land ownership and social participation, as well as the relationship between political participation and other forms of participation to the extent that they may be related to landownership. The data for the study were gathered in a rural area in Central Brazil.

Review of Literature and Hypotheses

In spite of the great variation in purpose, study design, and sampling procedures, one of the most consistent findings in studies of social participation has been its relationship to social class.

Teele, in a review of the correlates of urban social participation, considers the following measures: membership and participation in voluntary associations, visiting friends, visiting relatives, and

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[3] Peter Dorner, "Interpretive Synthesis and Policy Implications of Land Tenure Center and Related Research," Land Tenure Center Research Paper No. 31 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, December 1966), p. 4.

church attendance. In the case of each of these indicators, with the exception of church attendance, relationships with social class have consistently been found.[4]

Reissman, as a part of a study of the relationship between social participation, leisure, and social class in an urban setting, tried to explain "the extent and character of the participation...by the class position of the participants..."[5] He used three common class variables--income, occupation, and education--alternatively with a single sample to show that the differences in the association between participation and class indicators found in previous studies were not as crucial as the observed variations would indicate. Reissman concluded that irrespective of the variable used as an indicator of stratification, the higher class had higher participation levels.

In rural areas of the United States, various forms of social participation have also been found related to social stratification. Kaufman in his studies of stratification in rural areas found positive relationships between social position and participation.[6]

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[4]James F. Teele, "An Appraisal of Research on Social Participation," Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 6 (1965), pp. 257-267.

[5]Leonard Reissman, "Class, Leisure and Social Participation," American Sociological Review, Vol. 19 (1954), pp. 76-84. Quote found on p. 77.

[6]Political participation is discussed in: Harold Kaufman, "Prestige Classes in a New York Rural Community," in Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), Class, Status and Power (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953), pp. 190-203. Participation in rural organizations is discussed in: Harold F. Kaufman, Participation in Organized Activities in Selected Kentucky Localities (Lexington, Ky.: Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 528, 1949).

Duncan and Artis in their research in Pennsylvania reported on several types of social participation which they classified as formal, semi-formal, and informal.[7] They concluded that: "The evidence is that social participation of various types is strongly conditioned by the stratification position of the participants."[8]

Nolan pointed out that in addition to occupational groups, other variables such as education and "social reputation" provide further explanatory power.[9] However, Nolan's findings do not contradict the generally found relationship between stratification position and participation behavior.

Finally, Wilkening and Huitt discovered that voting in elections was not related to social stratification among farmers in a Wisconsin county. However, when contact with elected officials was considered, it was found that: "Those of higher economic status and levels of living and those who are active in farm organizations are more likely to contact elected officials."[10]

In the studies cited above, a variety of measures of stratification have been used in discussions of a number of different types

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[7]Otis Dudley Duncan and Jay W. Artis, Social Stratification in a Pennsylvania Rural Community (State College, Pa.: Pennsylvania Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 543, 1951).

[8]Ibid., p. 49.

[9]Francena L. Nolan, "Relationship of 'Status Groupings' to Differences in Participation," Rural Sociology, Vol. 21 (1956), pp. 298-302.

[10]E. A. Wilkening and Ralph K. Huitt, "Political Participation Among Farmers as Related to Socio-economic Status and Perception of the Political Process," Rural Sociology, Vol. 26 (1961), pp. 395-408.

of social participation. In spite of the variety of measures used, the results indicate a marked and pervasive positive relationship between position in the social stratification system and the level of social participation among the rural population of the United States. Since these studies have all been done in the United States, their generalizations with regard to the interrelationship of stratification and participation are limited by the socio-cultural context within which they were carried out. However, with the growing interest in sociological research in other cultures, the opportunities for testing the cross-cultural validity of these generalizations are increasing. Yet data on participation in countries other than the United States are relatively scarce, and studies of participation in rural areas are even less abundant.

Dotson, in a study of participation in voluntary associations in Guadalajara, Mexico, found that the extent of participation was directly related to the income group of the inhabitants.[11]

In an investigation of differential class behavior in Denmark, Svalastoga and associates studied membership in voluntary associations by occupational group.[12] They found that participation was positively related to occupational status: 22.9 percent of unskilled workers and 69.7 percent of professionals and managers belonged to three or more voluntary associations.

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[11]Floyd Dotson, "A Note of Participation in Voluntary Organizations in a Mexican City," American Sociological Review, Vol. 18 (1953), pp. 380-386.

[12]K. Svalastoga, E. Høgh, M. Pedersen, and E. Schild, "Differential Class Behavior in Denmark," American Sociological Review, Vol. 21 (1956), pp. 435-439.

As part of a larger study, Gallagher studied affiliations with voluntary associations in a rural community in France.[13] He found that the 30 percent of the population of 800 who did not own property participated least. Gallagher then observed that full participation in community life tends to be restricted to residents with a relatively permanent stake in the community: those inhabitants who work more or less steadily in the community, have more kin there, and own property.

Benvenuti, studying a sample of Dutch farmers owning more than two hectares, concluded that in the community under investigation, political party membership was clearly correlated with size of farm.[14] And finally, Hardee reports a positive relationship between social stratification and participation in an Australian rural community.[15]

The evidence reported thus far leaves little doubt that there is a consistent positive relationship between social status and participation. But, since the information on rural areas comes from relatively developed countries, there is need for studies of rural areas in less developed countries to provide further support for this hypothesis.

The present study tests the relationships between participation and stratification for a rural area whose historical development has been markedly different from the rural areas in the United States and

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[13]Orvoell R. Gallagher, "France," in William Glaser and David Sills (eds.), The Government of Association (Totowa, New Jersey: Bedminster Press, 1966), pp. 79-84.

[14]Bruno Benvenuti, Farming in Cultural Change (Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 1962), pp. 254-255.

[15]J. Gilbert Hardee, "Social Structure and Participation in an Australian Rural Community," Rural Sociology, Vol. 26 (1961), pp. 240-251.

most of Europe. By most measures of economic and political development, the traditional social system of Brazil is less developed than any of the countries for which research has been reviewed.

In analyzing rural areas in Brazil, the present study proposes to extend the cross-cultural validity of the positive relationship between stratification and participation.

Hypothesis I: Social participation is positively related to stratification position.

An implication of hypothesis I pertains to the relationship between political participation and other forms of social participation. Duncan and Artis determined that various forms of participation are highly related.[16] Wilkening and Huitt specifically indicate a relationship between political participation (in terms of contacting elected officials) and being active in farm organizations.[17]

The relationship is widely accepted. Greer and Orleans state that:

> ...Although it is possible that there is something resembling a general factor of involvement or activity, these studies of personal influences and social and political involvement suggest that social integration is a pre-condition for political involvement.[18]

Testing the statement by Greer and Orleans is difficult because of the complex relationship between social stratification and all

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[16]Duncan and Artis, op. cit.

[17]Wilkening and Huitt, op. cit.

[18]Scott Greer and Peter Orleans, "Political Sociology," in Robert E. L. Faris (ed.), Handbook of Modern Sociology (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), p. 815.

forms of social participation including political participation. It is difficult to test to what extent integration is a pre-condition for political participation.[19] However, it is possible to determine the correlates of political participation with other forms of participation within social strata. If the relationship between social participation and political participation exists within social strata, we know at least that the relationship is not totally an artifact of social stratification and that social participation has a relationship with political participation, independent of stratification.

If, on the other hand, we find that controlling for social status results in the disappearance of the relationship between social and political participation, it would be premature to draw the conclusion that the Greer and Orleans statement was erroneous. It may mean only that the variance in both social and political participation was eliminated in the process of controlling for social status.[20] Further analysis would then be in order.

The relationship between participation and political participation will be tested in hypothesis II.

Hypothesis II: Within social strata, participation in the formal political system is positively related to other forms of social participation.

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[19]To determine whether social participation is a pre-condition requires introducing a time sequence in the model. This is information we do not have.

[20]See Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., Causal Inference in Nonexperimental Research (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

Data

The analyses in the present study are based on two types of samples.[21] The first sample is an area sample (N = 255), which was divided into three groups: non-owners (N = 179); those with small and medium-sized farms, viz. less than 240 hectares (N = 60); and those with large farms, viz., greater than 240 hectares (N = 16).

Since the large landowner category was too small to be used for subgroup analysis, a random sample of large landowners was drawn from lists provided by county administrators.[22] This group (N = 50) will be substituted for the large landowners (N = 16) in the area sample whenever subgroup analyses are made. Thus, "area sample" refers to the original sample (N = 179 + 60 + 16 = 255). The subgroup analyses, however, will be based on the modified sample (N = 179 + 60 + 50).

Respondents in both samples were interviewed using the same interview schedule. However, two possible sources of bias may be introduced whenever an analysis is performed on the large farm subsample.

The "area sample" is restricted to rural residents. But large landowners all maintain a town residence in addition to their rural

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[21] For a detailed discussion on the fieldwork and characteristics of the respondents, see: J. C. Van Es, E. A. Wilkening, and J. Bosco Pinto, Rural Migration in Central Brazil: A Study of Itumbiara, Goiás, Land Tenure Center (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1968).

[22] Large landowners were defined as those owning farms of more than 240 hectares. This size is locally expressed as 50 alqueries. Although somewhat arbitrary, 50 alqueries was judged by the field staff as well as by local opinion to be the lower limit of large farms. The same division is drawn by Oberg for a community in the neighboring state of Minas Gerais. See Kalervo Oberg, Chonin de Cima, A Rural Community in Minas Gerais (Rio de Janeiro, 1956).

property. Clearly, location of residence may have an impact on participation.

The timing of the interviews may also have introduced bias. An election campaign for local and statewide offices was in progress during the interviews of the fifty large landowners. This campaign may have increased the political knowledge and contact of the respondents. However, the effects of the political campaign were judged to be least pronounced for large landowners since they have a more or less continuous interest in political life.[23] Furthermore, as the following analysis will show, the differences between large landowners and the other respondents go beyond political participation, indicating that the differences between the groups are real and not an artifact of the sampling procedure.

Analysis and Findings

While sociological variables used in economically developed countries have conceptual counterparts in other cultures, the problem is to operationalize them.

In the present study, a variety of empirical referents have been developed as indicators of participation. They measure participation in the family, the polity, the economy and religion. A summation procedure was used (expressed as a proportion of applicable items whenever appropriate), in which all items were given equal weight in the indices.

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[23] See: Belden H. Paulson, "Local Political Patterns in Northeast Brazil: A Community Case Study," Land Tenure Center Research Paper No. 12 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, August 1964), especially pp. 39-40.

The items included in the indices were previously analyzed individually. They behaved essentially similarly when analyzed by social stratification category.[24] Given the small number of items included in the indexes, it was felt that this was the most meaningful procedure that could be followed in the index construction.

Since it is generally recognized that landownership is the most important determinant of social stratification in rural communities of Latin America, stratification categories in the present study were based on land ownership.[25] Such measures of stratification as total annual family income, type of occupation, educational level and level of living, which involve more arbitrary judgment and greater problems of comparison than farm size does, were not considered.

In order to test the first hypothesis--that social participation is positively related to social stratification position--the sample was divided into non-owners (N = 179), small- and medium-acreage owners who own less than 240 hectares (N = 60), and large-acreage owners (N = 50).

A oneway analysis of variance was performed to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the means of

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[24]Van Es, Wilkening, and Pinto, op. cit.

[25]At this point we humbly circumvent the issue of the extent to which our empirical indicator is the distinguishing characteristic of social class.

the three groups. The means, standard deviations, and the results of the analysis of variance are given in Table 1. With the exception of aid exchanged with relatives, the results of Table 1 clearly show the consistent relationship between social participation indexes and farm size. Hypothesis 1 is supported and the positive relationship between social participation and social stratification is reaffirmed.

In order to test the second hypothesis--that within social strata, participation in the formal political system is positively related to other forms of social participation--a multiple correlation coefficient between the dependent variable, political participation, and all other variables mentioned in Table 1 was computed. Both for "knowledge of officeholders" and for "contact with officeholders," the multiple correlation coefficient is 0.56.

However, some of the independent variables included in this analysis were highly interrelated. A second analysis was performed in which the independent variables were selected according to two criteria: (1) they should include one variable from family visits, one from exchange of aid, one from participation in farm organizations, and religious participation; (2) the variables should be correlated with the dependent variable and to a lesser degree related to each other.

It was decided to select the following independent variables: visits with relatives, aid exchanged with friends, participation in farm organizations, in extension activities, and in religious

Table 1. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and F Values for Participation Indexes by Farm Ownership.

Participation Index	Non-Owners		Owners: Small and Medium Size Farms		Owners: Large Farms		Analysis of Variance	
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	Sig.Level
Relatives Residing in County (0-10)[a]	5.27	2.54	6.28	2.55	6.50	2.13	6.986	.001
Visits of Relatives (0-10)	6.57	3.50	8.29	2.97	8.70	3.14	11.292	.001
Aid Exchanged with Parents (0-10)	4.01	3.37	4.87	3.11	5.69	3.43	5.438	.005
Aid Exchanged with Relatives (0-10)	3.82	3.22	3.64	3.02	4.26	3.08	.553	.576
Aid Exchanged with Friends (0-10)	3.41	3.03	3.40	2.64	4.78	3.18	4.030	.019
Knowledge of Farm Organization and Extension Programs (0-3)	.35	.60	.67	.80	.74	.75	9.572	.001
Participation in Farm Organization and Extension Programs (0-2)	.15	.43	.57	.81	1.32	1.13	59.01	.001
Total Participation in Farm Organization and Extension Programs[b] (0-5)	.49	.84	1.23	1.36	1.94	1.68	34.612	.001
Knowledge of Political Office Holders (0-6)	2.36	1.49	3.87	1.74	4.82	1.90	53.338	.001
Contact with Political Office Holders (0-6)	.70	.94	1.80	1.38	2.98	1.67	77.347	.001
Religious Participation (0-3)	1.53	.90	1.73	.99	1.98	.80	5.301	.005

a The figures in parentheses indicate the possible range of the index.
b Summation of two previous indexes.

activities.[26] The dependent variables are knowledge of political officeholders and contacts with political officeholders.

For the area sample (N = 255), the multiple correlation coefficient of "political knowledge" with the four independent variables equals 0.54. With "political contact" the same measure yields a value of 0.53. Only very small decreases in explained variance resulted from reducing the number of independent variables.

In order to test hypothesis II, the ability of other forms of participation to explain variations in political participation was determined within each subgroup. Hypothesis II will not be supported if the explanatory power within the subgroups is substantially less than is the case in the area sample.

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[26] The indexes used in the analysis were computed as follows: "Knowledge of Political Office Holder" with one point each for knowing the names of the: president, governor, federal representative, state representative, mayor, and local councilman; "Contact with Political Office Holders" with one point each for "having talked to" any of the just-mentioned officeholders; "Visits with Relatives" with one point each for exchanging visits with parents, parents-in-law, brothers and sisters, brothers- and sisters-in-law. In the last index, the total was divided by the number of applicable categories (i.e., if not married, no in-laws to visit; same when parents deceased, etc.). The score was then multiplied by ten to eliminate fractions. "Exchange Aid with Friends" was given one point each for exchanging aid with friends in the following cases: provided shelter, assistance in times of illness, helped in farming, loaning tools, lending money, and construction of house. The score was divided by the number of answered items and multiplied by ten to eliminate fractions. "Participation in Farm Organizations and Extension Programs" was given one point each for listening to Extension radio program, being acquainted with Extension Youth program, visiting extension officer in his office, membership in agricultural cooperative, and the "rural association." "Religious Participation" was given one point for knowing the religious functionary personally and visiting church at least once per month.

The results of the analysis are found in Table 2. As can be seen, they give qualified support to our hypothesis. Within each group, participation variables show a statistically significant correlation with political participation both in terms of knowledge of political officeholders and contacts with political officeholders. The strength of the relationship between social participation and political participation is greatest among the high status groups (large owners), and lowest among the lowest status group (non-owners). This is most apparent in the second column of Table 2.[27] Thus, although for each status group the relationship between social participation and political participation exists, this relationship is very weak among the non-owners while becoming quite pronounced among the large owners.

The striking differences between the tenure groups is easily explained statistically. Table 1 shows that the non-owners are especially low in farm organization and political contacts. More revealing is the magnitude of the standard deviation of those variables: it is substantially smaller for the non-owners than for the other two groups. The small standard deviations reflect the fact that the large majority of the non-owners participate very little in the organizational activities of the community.

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[27]The lower half of Table 2 contains the analysis with only three independent variables included. Among the large landowners visiting relatives showed a very high relationship with political knowledge. Eliminating visiting relatives from the analysis, however, does not affect the direction of the relationships found.

Table 2. Multiple and Partial Correlation Coefficients of Measures of Political Knowledge and Political Contacts with Participation Measures as Independent Variables.

	Multiple Correlation Coefficient		Partial Correlation Coefficient[b]			
	R[a]	Percent Variance Explained	Visits of Relatives	Aid Exchanged with Friends	Total Participation in Farm Organization	Religious Participation
Dependent Variable: Political Knowledge						
Area Sample (N = 255)	.54	29.59	.16	.20	.43	.22
Non-Owners (N = 179)	.40	16.22	.10	.26	.29	.14
Small and Medium Owners (N = 60)	.54	28.87	.00	.11	.34	.30
Large Owners (N = 50)	.76	57.71	.61	.04	.23	.04
Dependent Variable: Political Contacts						
Area Sample	.53	27.81	.18	.07	.42	.25
Non-Owners	.28	7.74	.07	.13	.21	.11
Small and Medium Owners	.59	35.01	.42	-.07	.44	.28
Large Owners	.77	59.34	.25	.01	.61	-.02
Dependent Variable: Political Knowledge						
Area Sample	.53	27.82	---[c]	.20	.43	.25
Non-Owners	.39	15.36	---	.25	.28	.15
Small and Medium Owners	.54	28.87	---	.12	.34	.30
Large Owners	.58	33.09	---	.21	.30	.38
Dependent Variable: Political Contacts						
Area Sample	.50	25.47	---	.07	.42	.27
Non-Owners	.27	7.11	---	.13	.21	.12
Small and Medium Owners	.58	33.74	---	-.05	.43	.31
Large Owners	.71	50.77	---	.13	.62	.23

a All values are significant for $p \leq .01$.

b Partial correlation coefficient between dependent and independent variable, controlling for all other independent variables in the model.

c Visits of Relatives eliminated from model; three independent variables included.

Discussion

The data take on added significance if considered within a framework of patron-client relationships, in which only the privileged participate fully in the existing organizational structure.[28] The conditions are thus created in which they function as "brokers" between local residents and the national institutions.[29] To the extent that this system operates for the benefit of the landowners, it is unlikely that they will be cooperative in substantially changing it. Increased participation of the lower classes in the existing organizations, without changing the structural aspects of the relationships, will only reinforce the present dominance of the owner classes.

In short, the findings indicate that the present structure of the rural sector does not provide the non-owners with an opportunity to effectively manage their own interests in the larger society. The virtual exclusion, purposive or not, of non-owners from social and political participation creates an environment in which they depend on more privileged community members to serve as brokers in their relations with the rest of the system. It may be inferred that this situation creates a necessity for the non-owners to find organizational

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[28] Benno Galjart, "Class and 'Following' in Rural Brazil," América Latina, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1964), pp. 3-23, and by the same author, "Old Patrons and New; Some Notes on the Consequences of Patronage for Local Development Projects," Sociologia Ruralis, Vol. 7 (1967), pp. 335-346. Galjart points at some functional aspects of the patron-client relationships and the new allegiances that may come into existence in case new organizational structures, aimed at protecting the interests of the less privileged, are formed.

[29] Eric R. Wolff, "Aspects of Group Relations in a Complex Society," in Dwight B. Heath and Richard N. Adams (eds.), Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 85-101.

forms outside the existing structure which provide them with a more direct and representative voice.

Development literature has frequently implied that a relationship exists between a predisposition to extremist policies and low levels of social participation.[30] The present study makes it clear that low status people exhibit a low level of social participation and have a low level of political contact. Since a large percentage of the rural population (over 60 percent of our sample) does not effectively participate in existing institutions, they may find it expedient to participate in movements outside the existing organizational structure.

The conditions under which mobilization into new forms of participation takes place are not well known for peasant society. The conditions under which interest-based organization arises, as specified by Dahrendorf, in industrial society would appear a good take-off point for needed research in this area.[31] He lists three types of "empirical conditions" of conflict group formation: the technical, the political, and the social conditions of organization.[32] The technical conditions of organization include such elements as leaders and articulated goals. The political conditions of organization include such elements as freedom of coalition and tolerance

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[30] See, for example, Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), and W. Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959).

[31] Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1951).

[32] Ibid., especially pp. 179-189.

of organized opposition. One of the political conditions of organization often lacking in "preindustrial societies" is, according to Dahrendorf, the "political 'citizenship rights.'"[33] Social conditions of organization, finally, include the opportunity for communication among the potential members of the interest group. The importance of social conditions was recognized by Marx in his famous statement on the nineteenth century French peasant:

> The small independent peasants constitute an enormous mass, the members of which live in the same situation, but do not enter in manifold relations with each other. Their mode of production isolates them from each other instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. This isolation is strengthened by the bad state of...means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants....Every single peasant family is almost self-sufficient...and thus gains its material of life more in exchange with nature than in intercourse with society.[34]

Research into the political participation of the rural lower classes might fruitfully include a systematic inquiry into the presence of the various conditions for conflict organization specified by Dahrendorf. One of the first priorities in such research would be the specification of both the necessary levels of attainment of these conditions and the interaction between the types of conditions. The conditions for interest group organization of the rural lower class are not likely to be expressed adequately in terms of all-or-nothing propositions.

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, cited Dahrendorf, op. cit., p. 183.