

Review of: "Soccer fans, stadium attendance, and interpersonal trust in the Mexican population"

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This paper examines the relationship between soccer fandom in Mexico and social capital. In particular it tests two hypotheses – thscribed by Putnamat fans of a particular team have more social capital via interpersonal trust than non-fans, and that those who attend games in person have more interpersonal trust as well.

The paper begins with a brief literature review about social capital and interpersonal trust. This could be expanded in two ways. First, there is no description about why "bridging" relationships are important. This relates to the benefit of learning new information outside of your normal groups and can help with adaptability. The author may want to explore a bit more about what we should expect in terms of soccer fans. Those who follow teams and attend games in groups may be expected to have higher levels of "bonding" while the fact that game attendance exposes you to new people may result in more "bridging" relationships as well. Another aspect of the literature review that could use more elaboration is the observation that there tends to be low levels of interpersonal trust in Latin America. Why is this? Does it relate to the fact that there are high levels of crime and corruption victimization in the region? Does that also affect residents' willingness to attend games and other activities? There are important questions related to the phenomenon under investigation.

In testing the two main hypotheses, there are some weaknesses in the research design. The hypotheses are tested using a survey instrument, but it is not clear what the sample actually represents. The author describes the sample as one collected via social networks, but the only specific attributes reported are a relative balance in terms of reported sex, and a fairly young age range (nearly 70% below the age of 40). Can we assume that beyond these attributes that the sample is on average more educated, wealthy, and ethnically diverse? In the conclusion the author acknowledges that uncollected information on income would be helpful, but there are other demographics as well that would serve both as important control variables as well as necessary information for understanding what the sample is like and to what kind of population we might reasonably draw inferences.

The statistical tests themselves may not be appropriate. The construction of the variables could be more specific, but essentially it appears that we have a mix of nominal and ordinal variables. The author describes conducting cross tabulation and t-tests. It seems like the more appropriate statistical test would be a chi-squared along with some measure of strength of association, such as a Cramer's V or Tau-B. Given that the research is non-experimental, it would be preferable to test the hypotheses using multivariate regression which controls for a number of confounding factors typically used in survey-based research.

The author finds little support for the hypotheses, but this may be because the dependent variable does not accurately reflect the type of trust that might be affected by fan participation, as well as weaknesses in terms omitted variable bias.

The author is encouraged to conduct another survey in which more information is collected in terms of factors that might reasonably predict both fan participation and interpersonal trust in general, and then to use this information in more sophisticated multivariate analyses.