

LEGITIMACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN NATIONS

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and

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The essence of *democracy*, according to the word's etymology² and to classics of democratic theory, is *citizen participation in the rule of a political community*. Albeit central to the definition of democracy, political participation and its possible effects have long presented political scientists with what we call the Goldilocks conundrum — how much and what kinds of participation are neither too much, nor too little, but just right. On the one hand, many observers in the “too much” camp have expressed fears that excessive participation might overtax the capacity of states to manage it or respond effectively and thereby undermine political stability or produce bad policy (Almond and Verba 1963, Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975, Huntington 1968, Schumpeter 1943).³ Those in the “too little” camp, worry that low legitimacy might generate either too little system-reinforcing participation, too much protest, or too little supportive social and political capital for the health of democracies (Nye, Zelikow and King 1997, Pharr and Putnam 2000a, Putnam 2000, 2002, Van Deth 1997).

These contending worries about participation and democracy — fears of both too much and too little participation for the good of democracy — focus attention directly on legitimacy. Scholars have long theorized that legitimacy, citizen support for government, plays a central role in the stability of democracies ((Dalton 2004, Easton 1965, 1975, Lipset 1961, Norris 2002, 1999c). Scholars have measured declines in political legitimacy in advanced industrial

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democracies in recent decades (Citrin 1974, Finkel, Muller and Seligson 1989, Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003, Miller 1974, Norris 1999, Nye 1997, Nye and Zelikow 1997, Nye, Zelikow and King 1997, Pharr and Putnam 2000a, Pharr, Putnam and Dalton 2000c, Warren 1999).

Public intellectuals and academics have often expressed concern that democracy might decline or break down because of declining legitimacy. These findings and arguments force us to ask: Does legitimacy matter for political participation and for democracy, and if so, how does it matter?

Legitimacy certainly *should* matter considerably in new or unconsolidated democracies such as the eight Latin American nations we study here. One would expect higher levels of public support for the political system (community, regime, institutions, and performance) to generate micro-level behaviors and attitudes that strengthen democratic regimes. Concomitantly, low legitimacy should weaken democracies. Support for government should increase citizens' willingness to comply with the law, their support for democracy, voluntary compliance with government, and various forms of political participation, and contribute to the consolidation of democratic regimes (Diamond 1999). Expressed from the negative side, some theorize (Barnes and Kaase 1979, Kornberg and Clarke 1983) that low legitimacy could generate protest, unrest, and rebellion. According to Dalton (Dalton 2004), "... public opinion has a practical impact on politics....[I]f democracy relies on the participation of citizens as a basis of legitimacy and to produce representative decisions, then decreasing involvement as a consequence of distrust can harm the democratic process."⁴

⁴Norris (2002) and Przeworski, et al. (2000) both challenge this received wisdom. Norris holds that not all evidence reveals clear patterns of legitimacy decline despite claims to the contrary. Meanwhile Przeworski et al. hold that no democracy with GDP per capita larger than \$6055 in 1975 has ever broken down, meaning that at a certain level of development democratization is irreversible, rendering attitudes about legitimacy essentially without effect.

In order to confront the puzzle of legitimacy's effects, we must ask whether and what kind of low or declining legitimacy might erode or undermine democracy. We have shown elsewhere (Booth and Seligson 2009, 2005) that legitimacy norms (political support) in eight Latin American nations takes various dimensions. These include a sense of political community, commitment to democratic regime principles, support for regime institutions, support for local government, evaluation of political actors, and evaluation of regime performance. We ask here: what are and where can we find the effects of these various legitimacy dimensions on citizens' behavior? *Do some types of low legitimacy levels increase anti-system behaviors while decreasing within-system participation vital for democracy? Do low levels of certain types of support shape political participation or institutions in specific ways that might ultimately, undermine political stability?*

Theories about Legitimacy and Political Participation

Two related yet somewhat contradictory arguments hold that both conventional and unconventional participation might operate to either strengthen or weaken regimes. The first argument contends that citizens who strongly support regimes would more likely participate conventionally within institutional channels, and vice versa. "Much commentary assumes that if people have little confidence in the core institutions of representative democracy... they will be reluctant to participate in the democratic process, producing apathy" (Norris 2002). Within-system participation would tend to reinforce and stabilize extant institutions. Politically unsupportive citizens would pose no threat to regime institutions because they would make few demands upon the government. In essence, these arguments posit a linear and positive relationship between support and within-channels political activism: *Institutionally supportive*

citizens engage within the syst

participation, while and ignoring other legitimacy dimensions' effects.⁶ Here, in contrast, we examine legitimacy as the multidimensional phenomenon we have empirically found it to be in the eight nations we study, and we systematically examine their effects on six modes of political participation.⁷ We do this because we theorize that not all dimensions of legitimacy should affect each mode of participation in the same way. Indeed, for some legitimacy dimensions and participationD.1r(ine tall-.7(nr224.7(tionati em)8noJ-12. 7014D.000-1 Tc-.0001 Tw9(Hercts onsix icipationD.1

In more technical terms, prior evidence (Booth and Seligson 2005) and the logic articulated above suggest that in a democracy, some legitimacy-participation functions might well be U-shaped. This relationship would likely exist, we believe, in formally democratic polities such as those in this study. It would especially prevail in a country with a good human rights climate such as Costa Rica.⁸ To our knowledge, other than our own pilot study neither theory nor empirical research has considered this possibility of a curvilinear participation-legitimacy relationship. Nor has theory explored what factors cause disaffected or disaffected citizens to choose from a menu of five possible options — increasing their involvement in national-system politics (the behavior we characterize with the U-curve label), dropping out of national-system politics, changing their participation from national-system politics to organizational or communal arenas, adopting protest, or choosing to rebel.

We theorize that a citizen's prospect of experiencing repression by the regime might well shape such choices. Citizens who perceive themselves as living in a democracy and who thus do not expect repression would be likely to participate within system channels and/or to protest whether they were satisfied *or* disgruntled citizens. In other words, the non-repressive context allows many kinds of participation to take place free of significant fear of the consequences of that participation. Indeed, democracy formally invites citizen demand-making so that, absent fear of repression, a disgruntled person might simultaneously use both within-system channels and protest to express demands and concerns to government. We believe that individuals, whether disgruntled or satisfied, participate in diverse activities, often simultaneously. In contrast, fear of repression might affect one's decision whether to engage in or

making among those who disapprove of a regime (Arendt 1966). One logical and safe response to such a situation (and one consistent with the intentions of a repressive government) would be for a disgruntled citizen simply to withdraw from political participation.

Full abstinence from participation, however, would not satisfy the needs of many citizens. Most people, whether supportive of their regime or not, have interests that might benefit from collective action and cooperation with others. Thus, whether in repressive regimes or not (but more likely especially in repressive ones), citizens may shift participation arenas away from national-system politics to engage in local, communal and civil society activism. In a prescient comment on a series of studies on political participation in Latin America in the 1970s, when much of the region was gripped by dictatorships, anthropologist Richard Adams argued that citizens did not stop participating but merely shifted the arena of that participation away from the national level, where the costs of repression were high, to the local level where they could “get away with it” (Adams 1979). Citizens at the local level can work with their neighbors and local officials, network, and engage in collective problem solving below the radar of a repressive regime.⁹ Our discovery and inclusion of a local dimension of legitimacy allows us to provide a direct test of this theory. Citizens disgruntled about regime performance or actors may, of course,

protest or withdraw from participation (Arendt 1966). One logical and safe response to such a situation (and one consistent with the intentions of a repressive government) would be for a disgruntled citizen simply to withdraw from political participation.

that most citizens would take advantage of within-institution channels (voting, contacting officials, party activism). Their behavior might thus reinforce the system's institutions. In contrast, a larger share of citizens discontented with the democratic regime or institutions could affect national participation levels, for example, by depressing overall voter turnout rates or shifting participation to alternate arenas. Not all such participation need threaten extant political institutions, however. Both civil society engagement and community improvement activism can be very salutary for political institutions. Of course, the presence of large proportions of citizens disaffected with regime principles, performance, or institutions could also elevate protest, support for anti-system parties, and confrontational participation. With a high ratio of activist and antidemocratic malcontents to system supporters, the likelihood of protest or rebellion might increase. The protests could also encourage antidemocratic elites to conspire against system stability on the assumption that they might enjoy mass backing in a moment of turmoil.

Data

The data for this study come from national-sample surveys of eight Latin American nations: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia.

comprised approximately 1,500 voting-age citizens in each nation and had a total merged sample size of 12,401.¹¹

public officials, and communal activism.¹² Multiple measures of participation in four different types of organizations also provided an index of civil society activism.¹³ Finally, we employed a single item on protest participati

within which one resides (again, operationalized as dummies for rural/small town and small, medium, large and capital city).

Beyond this basic list of predictors, we include several attitudes and experiences that theory argues or prior research reveals influence participation in politics. These include the respondent's level of contact with the news media, level of political information (basic knowledge), interpersonal trust, level of satisfaction with one's life, having been a victim of a crime or bribe solicitation by a public official in the past year, and whether one fears crime in one's own neighborhood.

We also utilize several contextual variables indicative of important static and dynamic aspects of national political and economic life. To capture the absolute and the shifting natures of regime performance, we employ both static and dynamic measures of performance at the system level in our analyses. A classic theory holds that at higher levels of macro-level economic development citizens should participate more in politics (Lipset 1961), although recent evidence suggests that this theory may be incorrect (Krishna 2008). At the level of economic performance alone, we employ both gross national product (GNP) per capita in absolute terms and changes in GNP per capita over time. We also consider economic distribution in terms of income inequality. Economic success in terms of positive GNP performance, if not translated into the distribution of wealth, could affect citizens' resource levels and improve their capacity to take part in politics. In addition, we wanted to measure the how broad social conditions such as macro-level education and health conditions might enable participation. Finally, because higher levels of systemic democracy should also encourage and facilitate participation, we include measures of political rights and liberties, government effectiveness, the rule of law, political stability, and the long-term history of democracy.

There are three main difficulties in using contextual variables in regression analysis: collinearity among the measures, applying the proper statistical techniques, and dealing with static versus dynamic contextual effects. We employ a set of both static and dynamic context measures (which we have determined are not collinear) for hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) as the appropriate statistical technique to evaluate context-to-individual effects. Finally, in order to identify and control for the impact of national context on participation as needed in the analysis, we developed national dummy variables (coded 0 and 1) for each of the nations in our pooled sample.

Analysis and Results: Legitimacy's Effects on Participation

Our analysis began with a variable-by-variable effort to determine, using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), the impact of each of nine context variables (Appendix C) on each mode of political participation in our sample, controlled for all the other individual-level variables.¹⁶ This effort yielded not a single significant contextual effect. We cannot conclude from this exercise, however, that context does not matter at all. Rather, given the standard that we have set for finding significant context level predictors, and our relatively small number of cases, we simply did not find any. We therefore conduct the remainder of the analysis employing ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis on the individual (micro-level variables only).

Because one may not reasonably ignore national context in pooled-sample studies, however, in our OLS regression models we included dummies for seven countries, using Costa Rica, the longest standing democracy, as the reference case. Our purpose in including these dummies was not to focus on context per se. Rather, by including the country dummy variables

¹⁶ HLM is required to assess the impact of second order (contextual or system-level) variables on the model because ordinary least squares regression tends to overstate the impact of such factors on the model. We analyzed their impact one at a time because the small number of cases (eight nations) allows too few degrees of freedom to consider more than one second-order variable at a time.

we could control for this possibility, filter out possibly confounding national-level effects, and insure that the legitimacy-participation relationships we sought to understand are robust.

Multiple OLS regression analysis, including several demographic, attitudinal, and experiential variables as controls, produced the following main findings as summarized in Table 1. First, and most important, legitimacy affects each mode of political participation; hence, *legitimacy clearly does matter in shaping political behavior*. Second, not all forms of legitimacy have a significant impact on participation. Among the six legitimacy dimensions we have identified, the perception of a political community affects participation the least, influencing only voting.¹⁷ In contrast, citizens' evaluation of regime performance has the most significant impacts, affecting four of six modes of participation, followed by support for local government, a dimension not included in prior research, which affects three modes of participation.

Twenty three of the 36 possible legitimacy-participation relationships examined reveal significant

Table 1. Summary of Significant Legitimacy Effects on Political Participation — OLS Models.
(Coefficients are T-scores from Appendix A Tables A.7-A.12; T-scores of 2.0 are statistically significant.)*

Independent Variable	Vote-Register	Party-Campaigning	Contact Public Officials	Communal Activism	Civil Society	Protest Participation
Political Community	2.155					
Political Community squared						
Regime Principles		-3.184				
Regime Principles squared		4.226				3.680
Regime Institutions		2.795	3.070			
Regimes Institutions squared			-2.785			
Regime Performance		-4.813		-3.443	-2.666	-2.649
Regime Performance squared		5.375		3.639	2.779	2.674
Political Actors		-4.214				
Political Actors squared		3.342				
Local Government		-6.426	-6.740	-2.251		
Local Government squared		7.999	9.178	4.297		
Mexico dummy		-4.983			-2.893	
Guatemala dummy	-8.893	.023			8.269	
El Salvador dummy		-4.599			-5.024	-5.903
Honduras dummy			-5.347	3.264	9.966	-3.133
Nicaragua dummy	3.945				3.695	3.280

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To illustrate, Figures 1 through 4 graph the U-shaped legitimacy-participation relationships (absent controls for the other variables in the model). In all four dimensions of legitimacy, more citizens among the most and least approving of the system or its performance take part in party-campaign activities than citizens in the mid-range of approval. Table 1 reveals these patterns to be robust to controls for all the other variables in the model, including national context dummies. Thus, both *strong approval of government performance* and *strong disapproval* motivate citizens to participate in electoral competition. In our eight Latin American democracies, therefore, both supportive and disaffected citizens engage more in electoral competition and partisanship than do indifferent citizens.

This finding makes sense on its face, even though prior researchers almost always predicted only the linear form of the relationship. In 2004 each of our respondents— especially

National and local contexts. Compared to the reference group of Costa Ricans, Hondurans, Panamanians, and Colombians contact officials significantly less. Compared to rural and small-town dwellers, our reference category, small city residents contact officials more (probably due to the likely presence of municipal offices in such locales), while larger-city residents contact public officials sharply less.

Older citizens contact more than the youngest cohort (no doubt because the younger citizens have yet to establish their families, develop a stake in the community, and build social capital as have their elders). Women contact public officials somewhat less than men. More educated citizens contact public officials more, a finding that does not surprise us because education is a resource on which citizens can draw when they wish to become active politically. Media exposure elevates contacting, which we expected. In contrast, political information has no effect, other influences held constant, which surprised us given the importance political information levels have been shown to have in advanced industrial democracies.

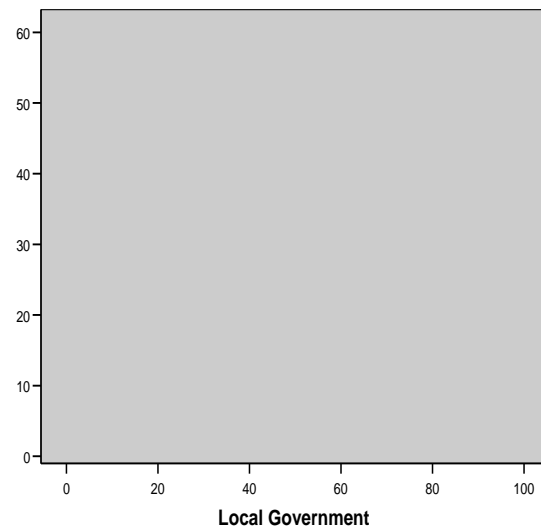
Fear of crime and both crime and corruption victimization all mobilize Latin Americans to contact public officials. But, we wonder about the direction of causality for bribe solicitation and contacting because the act of contacting an official would in itself enhance the opportunity to be solicited for a bribe.

Another finding of note is that wealth significantly *depresses* contacting public officials. Those who are poorer petition government more than those who are better off in our Latin American eight countries. Recall that we have already controlled for education, so this finding shows that citizens of the same level of education who are poorer are *more* likely to contact officials than richer citizens of that same level of education. We surmise this phenomenon arises from several sources. First, patron-client relationships abound in Latin American societies

(Peeler 1998, Schneider 2007), and they encourage the poor to seek resources from government. Cross-class patron-client relationships infuse parties and electoral organizations, so that officials often come into office linked to informal networks of poorer citizens by reciprocal expectations of payoffs for political support.²⁰ Second, some contacting involves seeking government expenditures for community improvement projects from which the poor — disproportionately concentrated in infrastructure-poor smaller towns, rural areas, or poor urban districts — would likely need such support more than the wealthy. Indeed, as our research conducted in the 1970s showed, such demand-making by the poor emerges out of needs that the richer elements of society simply do not have (Seligson and Booth 1979). Moreover, wealthier citizens likely have intermediaries such as lobbyists and lawyers to contact officials for them, thus somewhat masking their involvement in this activity. Finally, countries with low levels of contacting (Honduras, Panama, and Colombia) likely have legislatures and municipalities that distribute fewer resources to petitioners than does the Asamblea Legislativa of the reference country Costa Rica, which has a strong pork-barrel tradition (Booth 1998, Carey 1996).

Communal expenditure likely have patron-client relationships with officials. In contrast, countries with high levels of contacting (Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama) likely have legislatures and municipalities that distribute fewer resources to petitioners than does the Asamblea Legislativa of the reference country Costa Rica, which has a strong pork-barrel tradition (Booth 1998, Carey 1996).

that evaluation of regime performance and support for local government affect communal activism in the now-familiar U-shaped curvilinear pattern. So, once again, rather than dropping out of politics, those disgruntled with national economic performance and with local government instead direct their activism to the arena of their own communities and work to improve them. As expected, those satisfied with economic performance and local government also engage in community improvement (see Figure 7).



involved than the youngest voting-age residents. The more educated engage in more communal activism. Media contact elevates communal involvement sharply, as do crime victimization, corruption victimization and fear of crime in

Rican reference group, while Salvadorans and Panamanians are sharply less so. Residents of small towns and rural areas take part in civil society far more than residents of larger communities. Turning to demographic factors, being a Catholic or professing no religion reduces civil society activity despite the inclusion of church-related associations in the measure. Though less active in the communal improvement arena, women engage sharply more than men in the groups we measure here. This makes sense because our index includes church- and school-related organizations that fall within the Latin American traditional sphere of women's responsibilities for child-rearing and religious instruction. Other factors controlled, the poor engage more in the groups included in our measure than do their more prosperous neighbors.

Media contact and political knowledge associate with greater group activity. Persons who are more trusting and more life-satisfied engage more in organizations. Finally, being a crime or corruption victim and fearing crime mobilize citizens to take part in organizations, probably in part seeking ways to manage or overcome these problems.

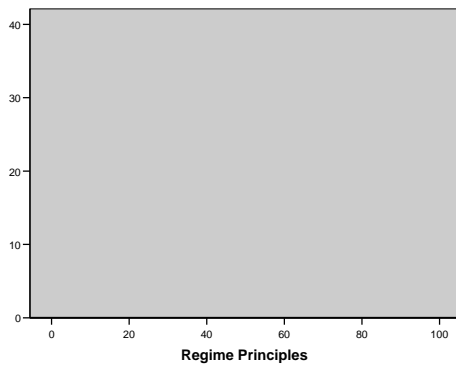
Protest participation

Many scholars regard taking part in protests as unconventional or outside-the-system political behavior. They conceive of protests as a challenge to governments and thus as the resort mainly of those alienated from the political system.²¹ By such logic, citizens with low legitimacy values would, therefore, engage more in unconventional or protest participation — a simple linear-positive relationship between low political support and protest (e.g., Norris 1999a; Canache 2002, Booth 1991, Booth *et al.*, 2006; Foley 1996). Yet we find in our survey that rather than correlating negatively with other forms of within-system participation such as voting, registration, contacting, and campaign activism, protest participation associates positively and

²¹ Indeed, in our early research on political participation, we referred to such actions as “unconventional” (Booth and Seligson 1979, Seligson 1979).

significantly with these activities (Pearson's $r = .21$ with partisan-campaign activity, $.18$ with contacting, and $.10$ with registration-voting). This strongly suggests that, within these formally democratic Latin American countries, protesting constitutes not a regime-challenging activity, but simply another tool that citizens employ to communicate with government.²² This finding tempers the advice of Huntington (Huntington 1968), whose perspective was taken as a warning for policy makers who might think of allowing such protests. How, then, do legitimacy norms affect protest involvement?²³ Only two have significant effects (see Table 1 and Figures 8 and 9). First, both those who are more and those who are less committed to democratic regime principles protest more. This initially surprised us because it sharply deviates from a major prediction of the legitimacy literature. Virtually all prior studies have tested only a linear relationship, and focused on the low-legitimacy respondents.²⁴ The second legitimacy dimension affecting protest behavior is the evaluation of regime economic performance, and again the relationship is U-shaped (Figure 9). Citizens who are both most dissatisfied and most satisfied with regime economic performance are more likely than the indifferent to protest.²⁵

support for regime principles (i.e., those with lower democratic norms) as well as those who express the most are prone to protest and challenge the government. On the other hand, we find those most supportive of regimes also more actively engaged in protesting. Such protests, of course, could be in favor of the regime or be opposed to it. While regime-supportive protests might counterbalance the protests of the disaffected citizens, it also would set up a situation for increased conflict.



political knowledge. Having voted for the government in power, logically, reduces protesting.
After all, why demonstrate against a government one helped elect?

Discussion and Conclusions

The relationships we have explored ha

participation. Our most striking finding is that, other factors in the models including national context held constant, ten of the thirteen significant legitimacy-participation effects proved to be not linear (negative or positive), as widely hypothesized by the literature, but U-shaped. In twelve of them, *the most supportive and the most disaffected citizens engage in politics much more than those who are indifferent*. This discovery, we argue, has important implications for the theory on legitimacy's effects because it calls into question the three main hypotheses from the literature. First, our data and analysis contradict the received wisdom that critical (low-legitimacy) citizens will not engage in politics, while the supportive (with high legitimacy values) will be more active. Here we have shown that the high-legitimacy part of the prediction is true. However, more importantly the results demonstrate that the political passivity prediction for disgruntled citizens is not true. Indeed, for citizens expressing low legitimacy norms the opposite of the predicted happens — disaffected citizens become more rather than less involved in politics. This holds both for participation within the channels of the national institutions— contacting officials, parties and campaigns — and in other political arenas outside national channels — communal activism, civil society, and protest. Norris (Norris 2002), writing of industrial democracies, uses a phrase apropos for our findings as well: “... traditional electoral agencies linking citizens and the state are far from dead. And, like the phoenix, the reinvention of civic activism allows political energies to flow through diverse alternative avenues as well as conventional channels.”

This is important because in several of our eight countries citizen participation, especially protest, has been critically important in past insurrections and civil wars when these nations were not democracies (Booth, Wade and Walker 2006). Yet, our findings, based on data from 2004 when each of our eight nations was formally democratic, demonstrate that even very high levels

of alienation (expressed as extremely low scores on various legitimacy norms) produce *more* rather than less conventional participation.

This contrast over time and political context suggests something important about our general notions of political participation. Modern social science sometimes still labors in the shadow of the early giants, in this case Emile Durkheim's notions of political alienation (Durkheim, Emile 1951, Durkheim, Émile and Bradbury 1947). Durkheim argued that alienated individuals can become "anomic" and withdraw from politics. Such ideas undoubtedly shaped the widely held expectation that low legitimacy could undermine industrial democracies. Yet here in several Latin American democracies, which arguably perform much worse than do richer and better established democracies, we find disaffected citizens actively engaged in multiple arenas, not merely protesting but participating both in formal political channels and civil society. The first inclination of the frustrated citizen of a democracy, we conclude, is *not anomie and passivity*, but *engagement*. Even in deeply flawed sociopolitical systems, democracy does what it is supposed to do — it allows the critical citizen to reach out to government and others through multifaceted participation.

The second major hypothesis undermined by our findings is that citizens expressing low legitimacy norms will be more prone to protest while those of high support will protest less. Here again we have shown that legitimacy's effect on protest is similar to its effect on other participation modes (with which, it should be recalled, protest is positively correlated). Protest, contrary to widely held expectations, occurs at high levels not only among critics of regime economic performance but among its supporters as well. Finally, while we do identify two linear positive effects of legitimacy (political community on voting and regime institutions on partisan-

campaign activity), by far the predominant pattern is that of high participation by politically engaged regime supporters and critics, rather than engaged supporters and disengaged critics.

The general failure to confirm the linear hypotheses, negative and positive, combined with the predominance of U-shaped influences of legitimacy on participation provides another possible clue to the great puzzle about legitimacy's effects. To the extent that our findings may be generalized to other countries such as the industrialized democracies where much of the previous legitimacy research has been done, we speculate that the heretofore mystifying absence of detectable effects from declining support for institutions in such countries may be because legitimacy has simply not really fallen very low in such countries. As we have shown elsewhere (Booth and Seligson 2009: 229), our Latin American countries manifest relatively lower legitimacy levels, at least where comparable measures are available. Thus legitimacy levels in high-performing industrial democracies may simply not in fact have fallen low enough to have revealed the U-shaped upturn in participation among the more extreme regime critics.

In democracies, those who are unhappy with their governments' performance are free to take part in politics with little fear of repression.²⁶ What we see among the critical Latin American citizens of our surveys reveals that, rather than withdrawing from participation or turning to protest, disaffected citizens participate and do so within national institutions and such other salient arenas such as their communities and civil society. Thus, we surmise that were legitimacy levels to fall low enough, the disgruntled citizens of industrial democracies might — like our Latin Americans — become more engaged in politics and/or shift the arenas of their activism to areas not studied by previous researchers. While they may also protest more, they

²⁶ We of course recall campus shootings at Kent State and Jackson State universities and other instances of repression in the United States, and that is why we say “little fear rather than “no fear.”

thus may take part more in within-channel and non-confrontational electoral competition, demand-making, collective problem-solving and organizational activities.

Such political activities by disaffected citizens do not necessarily threaten democratic stability. For these Latin American countries, at least at the time we have surveyed them, we have found no evidence that the politically disgruntled on balance undermine democratic institutions by their participation. Rather than disrupt the democratic political game or withdraw to the sidelines, the politically discontent remain in the political game and play harder to advance their goals. Some may engage in rent-seeking contacting activities, true, but others embrace electoral competition and party activity. Some find alternative arenas for participation and there contribute to community improvement and civil society. While disaffected citizens protest more than the indifferent, highly supportive citizens also prot

campaign against the incumbent, not strive to improve their own community infrastructure, or not join organizations to promote their own interests? These are reasonable choices for political action in democratic regimes. For these reasons, we believe that the failure of prior research to uncover the curvilinear patterns found here is a result of the simple failure to have anticipated them and tested for them.

We further believe that these patterns went undetected because much prior research focused mainly on support for institutions rather than on the broader multidimensional conception of legitimacy we have been able to employ. In well-established democracies, citizens' institutional support norms tend strongly toward the positive end of the support scale. In such skewed distributions, there would be relatively few disaffected citizens and thus scant evidence of how disgruntled citizens might actually conduct themselves. In our Latin American nations, in contrast, and over multiple dimensions of legitimacy, political support manifests more diverse distributions. Some of these legitimacy means even fall in the disapproving end of the legitimacy scales.²⁸ This gave us an opportunity, not often available to previous researchers, to examine larger numbers of disaffected citizens and to consider them in more detail.

Finally, our findings also suggest that widely held assumptions about how disgruntled citizens might take part in politics have suffered two debilitating flaws. Too narrowly focused treatments of participation and legitimacy probably obscured the rich array of possible legitimacy-participation relationships. And skewed distributions of legitimacy in industrialized democracies may have obscured how disaffected citizens might participate in politics. We have overcome these problems and provided a more nuanced picture of how political support shapes citizen action in democracies. Citizens may be critical of their systems, but that does not make them much more likely than their supportive fellow citizens to exit the political arena or attack

²⁸ See Booth and Seligson 2009: 60.

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Appendix A. Legitimacy Variables

Variables and Dimensions of Political Legitimacy, Pooled 8-Nation Sample			
Object of support (listed from most general to most specific)	<i>Operationalization of Variables</i>	Mean	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Existence of a Political			

Support for Regime Institutions	<p>All of the following are on a 7-point scale: 0=none...7= much, transformed into 1-100):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much do you think the courts of _____ guarantee a fair trial? 2. How much do you respect the political institutions of _____? 3. How much do you think citizens' basic rights are well protected by the _____ political system? 4. How proud do you feel to live under the _____ political system? 5. How much do you think one should support the _____ political system? 6. How much do you trust the _____ [national election bureau]? 7. How much do you trust the _____ [national legislature]? 8. How much do you trust the political parties? 9. How much do you trust the Supreme Court? <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Regime Institutions mean and standard deviation</i></p>	50.76	17.08
Support for Local Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much trust do you have in the Municipality? (7 point scale: 1=none...100= much) 2. Would you say that the services that the municipality is providing the people of your canton (county) are very good (100), good (75), neither good nor bad (50), bad (25), very bad (1)? 3. Do you think that the mayor and municipal council respond to the people's demands much of the time (100), some of the time (67), seldom(33), never (1)? 4. If you had a complaint about a local problem and took it to a member of the municipal council, how much attention would be paid? Much (100), some (67), little (33), never (1)? <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Local Government mean and standard deviation</i></p>	45.62	17.39
Support for Political Actors or Authorities	<p>All on a 7-point scale (nothing=1... much = 100): Referring to the government of _____ [incumbent president], how much has that government:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fought poverty? 2. Combat government corruption? 3. Promote democratic principles? <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Political Actors mean and standard deviation</i></p>	48.84	23.19

Appendix B. Variables Employed in the OLS Regression Analysis

Variables	Description of variables and index construction	Mean	Std. Deviation
Voting and registration	Index combining having voted in most recent presidential election (no=0, yes=50) and having registered to vote (no=0, yes=50), range 0-100.	82.2889	30.23755
Party and Campaign Activism	Index combining having worked for a campaign (no=0, yes=33.33), having tried to persuade another how to vote (no=0, yes=33.33), and attendance at political party meetings (no=0... frequently =33.33), range 0-100.	12.3025	20.52927
Contact Public Officials	Index combining having contacted a legislator,		

	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.2793	.44869
	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.2271	.41895
	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.1634	.36971
	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.1159	.32013
	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.1047	.30621
	Respondent identifies self as "Catholic" (no=0, yes=1)	.6924	.46152
	Respondent identifies self as "Protestant" (no=0, yes=1)	.2051	.40382
	Respondent identifies self as having "no religion," (no=0, yes=1)	.0761	.26522
	Respondent has completed up to grade 6 (no=0, yes=1).	.2588	.43798
	Respondent has completed high school (no=0, yes=1).	.3861	.48688
	Respondent has completed college (no=0, yes=1).	.0936	.29123
Postgraduate Education	Respondent has completed R04 refr540.24 124.51 g 124.68 5464T1 g19e educ]TJET1 gfr540.02.62 54		

Appendix C. Context Variables Employed for Hierarchical Linear Modeling

System-level performance measures, eight Latin American Nations