LEGITIMACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN NATIONS

John A. Booth
University of North Texas
booth@unt.edu

and

Mitchell A. Seligson
Vanderbilt University
mitchell.a.seligson@vanderbilt.edu

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Abstract

Much research on political legitimacy has reported a widespread decline in support for institutions in industrial democracies. Despite falling legitimacy there have been no failures of such regimes, contrary to the expectation that participation by disgruntled citizens might destabilize regimes with low popular support. The literature's conventional hypotheses are linear: declining legitimacy should reduce conventional participation and raise protest behavior. We suggest an alternative hypothesis of a U-shaped relationship: in democracies citizens with both low and high legitimacy will participate at high levels. Citizens may also participate in alternative arenas outside conventional national-system channels. We employ 2004 survey data on 12,000 respondents collected by the Latin American Public Opinion Project. We examine six modes of legitimacy in eight Latin American nations where legitimacy norms vary widely and some on dimensions citizens' evaluations are low. We explore the legitimacy dimensions' effects on six modes of political participation. We find that the standard linear hypotheses are rarely confirmed. Rather, the predominant legitimacy-participation relationship is U-shaped. We conclude that in democracies citizens with low support norms can and do work for change within the system through elections and campaigns. They also seek alternative arenas for participation in civil society, community, or local government. These activities do not threaten political system stability.

LEGITIMACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

IN EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN NATIONS[1]

The essence of *democracy*, according to the word's etymology[2] 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

[1] This paper is drawn extensively from Chapter 5 of *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Political Support and Democracy in Eight Nations* (Booth and Seligson 2009).
[2] In its Greek root, "democracy" derives from *demos,* which refers to the people, and *kratos,* meaning rule. That is, democracy literally means rule by the people (Held 2001).
[3] For an excellent discussion and bibliography of the classical literature, see Pateman (Pateman 1970).

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]

[4]Norris (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 system and strengthen it, while disaffected citizens withdraw without weakening it.

The second argument is that citizens with low legitimacy values would more likely engage in unconventional or protest participation. "It is widely believed that political cynicism fuels protest activity" (Norris 1999a: 261).[5] This posits a linear and positive relationship between low political support and engaging in outside-of-channels participation and protest. Thus, *citizens disaffected from democratic principles or institutions may protest or rebel, but supportive or neutral citizens generally do neither.* In sum, large amounts of protest or confrontational participation motivated by low support for democracy or an elected regime's institutions could overtax them and provoke their decay. Low support and protest could encourage or contribute to elite efforts to overthrow democratic rulers or institutions.

We believe that most prior research has suffered from three main limitations. First, these major hypotheses about legitimacy's behavioral effects have tended to dichotomize participation by focusing mainly either on participation within channels (voting or party activism) or outside of channels (protest or, more commonly studied, support for protest). While thus recognizing that political participation has many dimensions, prior research has so far not systematically accommodated the full range and complexity of citizens' involvement and the multiple arenas in which it may occur. Nor has it yet fully explored multiple legitimacy dimensions' effects.

Second, even though major prior studies of legitimacy's effects on participation such as Norris (Norris 1999a) and Dalton (2004) have recognized legitimacy's multiple dimensionality, they have nevertheless tended to examine only the effect of support for institutions on

[5] See, however, a new argument by Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst (Norris, Walgrave and Van Aelst 2005), arguing that the theory that disaffection with the political system leads to protest "receives little, if any, support from the available systematic empirical studies of the survey evidence."

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 participation modes might have no effect on participation at all while in others the impact could be important (Booth and Seligson 2005).

Third, the simple linear-positive assumptions cited above from the literature understate the possible range of legitimacy-participation effects by ignoring sharp differences of participation in diverse contexts. In a pilot study for this project we discovered that Costa Ricans with low support were far from passive (Booth and Seligson 2005). They often participated in political arenas *other than* those afforded by formal, within-channel national institutions such as elections and partisan-campaign activism. Rather, they engaged in protests, civil society, activities such as communal improvement efforts.

Fourth, we distrust the assumptions of simple linearity made by most previous researchers. Why, we ask, would highly disaffected citizens of a democracy become inert or drop out of the political arena? We hypothesize that at least some disgruntled citizens, rather than doing nothing at all, would likely work for change within the system or strive to change the system. In contrast to those who feel indifferent about institutions, citizens who either *intensely approve or intensely disapprove* of government may each become more engaged citizens.

[6] In contrast, studies more attuned to the dimensionality of legitimacy (e.g., Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Canache 2002; Rose, Shin and Munro 1999) have focused their impact studies on other *political attitudes* – sometimes support for participation or protest – rather than on participation itself.

[7] See Booth and Seligson (2009, Chapter 2) for a detailed discussion of the dimensionality of legitimacy and the operationalization of the measures we employ for each dimension.

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 drop out of national system politics. Repression, after all, seeks straightforwardly to discourage participation and demand-

[8] Contrast this with a country that is highly repressive, where deterrents to all forms of participation can be so great as to stunt virtually any citizen activity. The low levels of protest behavior and other indeplendent participation (i.e., not mobilized by the state) in the Stalinist Soviet Union or Nazi Germany illustrate the impact of extreme repression.

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 more than those who feel satisfied on those dimensions. But for citizens to go further and rebel against a regime seems likely to require not only that they view their regime as deeply unsatisfactory but also as so repressive as to block less risky means of seeking redress (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008).

A final theoretical issue involves the distribution of legitimacy norms among the population. When most people share high institutional or regime legitimacy norms, we expect

[9]Civil society activism can, of course, provide a vehicle for challenging repressive regimes, but that is only one of its potential functions (Booth and Richard 1998, 1998, Edwards, Foley and Diani 2001, Foley 1996)

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.[10] Conducted in 2004 using a large battery of identical questions, the samples

[10] This study draws on the continuing series of surveys collected by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University, a project of the Center for the Americas at Vanderbilt. The 2004 series of surveys used in this paper were funded with the generous support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Margaret Sarles, Bruce Kay and Eric Kite in the "Office of Democracy and Governance" of USAID, supported by Maria Barrón in the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, secured the funding. Critical to the project's success was the cooperation of the many individuals and institutions in the countries studied. These include, for Mexico, Jorge Buendía and Alejandro Moreno, Departamento de Ciencia Política, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM); for Guatemala, Dinorah Azpuru and Juan Pablo Pira, Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES); for El Salvador and Honduras, Ricardo Córdova, Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo (FUNDAUNGO), José Miguel Cruz, Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUDOP) de la Universidad Centroamericana, UCA, and Siddhartha Baviskar, University of Pittsburgh; for Nicaragua, Luis

comprised approximately 1,500 voting-age citizens in each nation and had a total merged sample size of 12,401.[11]

Variables in the analysis

We employ several measures of political participation as out dependent variables. Since the 1970s scholars have found participation to be multidimensional (Booth and Seligson 1978, 1976, 1978, Norris 2002, Verba and Nie 1972, Verba, Nie and Kim 1971). In order to identify and measure the empirical dimensions (usually referred to as modes) of participation in our eight countries, we factor analyzed thirteen civic engagement items and identified four modes of political participation: registration to vote and voting, partisan-campaign activism, contacting

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Serra and Pedro López Ruiz, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA); for Costa Rica, Luis Rosero-Bixby, Universidad de Costa Rica and Jorge Vargas, Programa Estado de la Nación; for Panamá, Marco A**.** Gandásegui hijo, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos (CELA) and Orlando J. Pérez, Central Michigan University; for Colombia, Carlos Lemoine, Centro Nacional de Consultoría (CNC), and Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Raga, University of Pittsburgh. Polibio Córdova, CEDATOS/Gallup, Ecuador, provided excellent guidance on sample design for all of the teams. We thank the graduate assistants at the University of Pittsburgh who were responsible for auditing the quality of the data that we received from each country team: Miguel García, Sawa Omori, and Rosario Queirolo. At Vanderbilt University, Dinorah Azpuru, Abby Córdova and Daniel Moreno were responsible for cleaning the merged database. Miguel Gómez, formerly of the Universidad de Costa Rica, provided excellent advice on the questionnaire design. Finally, we wish to thank the 12,401 individuals in these eight countries who answered our questions. Without their cooperation, this study would not have been possible.

[11] The sample design involved multi-stage stratification by country, and then substratification within each country by major geographic region in order to increase precision (minimum of five regions per country, representing the major geographic divisions and taking care not to exclude remote regions). To accommodate language minorities, we developed an English version of the questionnaire for use on the Honduran Bay Islands, and translations of the questionnaire in five Mayan languages for Guatemala. For further precision, we subdivided each of the country-level strata into urban and rural subsamples because we wanted to be certain that the samples were indeed nationally representative, and, moreover, the inclusion of the rural poor was essential for a comprehensive picture of legitimacy and participation. The sample design also anticipated that some selected households could be empty ("blanks") or that selected respondents might refuse to cooperate and thus leave us too small sample. As a result, in each country an estimate of non-coverage was included and we oversampled to compensate for the expected losses. In the end, because the actual sample N by country deviated somewhat from 1,500, we have introduced a post hoc weighting factor to correct for this small variation. The next stage in the sample design involved determining the neighborhoods in which the interviews would take place. We referred to these as primary sampling units (PSUs). We obtained census maps from each country's respective census bureaus and, using population data segments, randomly selected the maps from within each stratum, and then randomly selected the segments for interviews so that voting-aged adults in each country had an equal and known probability of being selected. Finally, we selected housing units within a PSU (using the census maps and locally updated information), with a cluster size of eight interviews in each urban PSU and 12 in each rural PSU. We allowed larger clusters in rural areas than in urban areas because of the far lower housing density in the former, and the increased travel time covering smaller clusters would require. Once the household was selected, we employed a quota sampling methodology at the level of the household, based on age and sex, again determined by the most recent census data for each country.

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 participation, a direct measure of unconventional political activity. We developed indexes for each of these six items and converted them into a scale ranging from zero to 100.[14] These six measures are our dependent variables for the analysis: voting-registration, contacting public officials, partisanship-campaigning, contacting public officials, civil society activism, and protest (see Appendix B for details on the participation indices.)

We model political participation using the following independent variables, all of which have been either theorized or demonstrated empirically to affect political. We begin with legitimacy norms, citizens' evaluations of various aspects of performance of government and the political system participation (see Appendix A for details on these items). Our data set contained twenty-three items of support and evaluation for multiple referents ranging from the type of regime to the performance of institutions and political actors at the national and local level. The questions included referents that would capture aspects of what Easton's (Easton 1965, 1975) seminal work referred to as diffuse and specific dimensions of legitimacy, and incorporated items covering the dimensions of legitimacy identified by Norris and colleagues (Dalton 1999, Klingemann 1999, Norris 1999a, 1999c, 1999) and confirmed by our own previous research on

[12] Following Verba and Nie (Verba and Nie 1972, Verba, Nie and Kim 1971), and our own earlier research in Latin America (Booth and Seligson 1978, Seligson and Booth 1979, 1979) we used exploratory factor analysis to examine the fourteen participation items. We ran this analysis on the pooled sample and on the eight individual countries and found the same structure. Voting was composed of reporting having voted in the most recent presidential election and being registered to vote. Contacting consists of reporting having contacted a legislator, a local official, or having petitioned the municipal government. Partisanship-campaigning consists of frequency of attendance at political party meetings, trying to persuade another person how to vote, and working on an election campaign. Communal activism consists of affirmative responses to five items concerning contributing to community problem solving activities. See exploratory factor analysis confirming dimensions in Booth and Seligson (2009: Appendix Table B.1).

[13] Civil society activism consists of frequency of attendance in four types of organizations: school-related, church-related, community-improvement, or commercial, professional or producers groups.

[14] The zero to 100 metric is used to give all six participation variables a common scale to eliminate mathematical unit effects that can distort analytical results and because it is helpful for comparison purposes between modes.

Costa Rica (Booth and Seligson 2005). We subjected these variables to confirmatory factor analysis (using maximum likelihood estimation) and found six distinct dimensions of legitimacy: perception of a political community, support for regime principles, support for institutions, evaluation of political actors, evaluation of regime performance, and support for local government. We imputed legitimacy scores on these six dimensions in order to minimize the number of missing cases on the key independent variables.[15] Anticipating that some relationships between legitimacy and participation might be curvilinear, we also calculated the squared term of each legitimacy dimension. Adding these squared-term legitimacy variables to our regression analysis allows us to determine whether each dimension of legitimacy has a quadratic (or U-shaped) relationship with each mode of political participation.

To this basic set of predictors, we added a critical control variable as to whether the respondent voted for the winner in the most recent presidential election. Research by Anderson (Anderson, *et al.* 2005) and his collaborators, shows that votes for the winner (or loser) can affect legitimacy norms and potentially strengthen the willingness of winners to participate while lowering the likelihood of losers becoming engaged in politics.

Given the strong evidence from prior research that socio-economic status shapes participation in many countries, we included a number of socio-demographic and local context variables that indicate a citizen's position in society and access to resources critical to political participation: sex, age (operationalized as age cohorts), religious affiliation (operationalized as dummies for Catholic, Protestant, none, other), formal education (entered as cohorts dummies for none, primary, secondary, college, postgraduate), personal wealth (an index of ownership of household appliances and access to basic services), and the population size of the community

[15] See Booth and Seligson (2009, 47-65) for a detailed description of index construction.

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 effects (Table 1). As anticipated, not all legitimacy norms affect all types of participation. Most importantly, in a striking finding with only a few exceptions, the main pattern of relationship between legitimacy and participation (in 31 percent of the possible 36 relationships) is U-shaped — that is, *both the most supportive and the most disaffected citizens are more active* than citizens holding middling legitimacy norms. Conversely, only one of 36 possible links between legitimacy and participation, that for political community and voting-registration is linear and positive. We emphasize: *this is the only legitimacy-participation relationship conforming to the conventional hypothesis* received from the literature.[18]

[17]Political community is the legitimacy dimension that we previously determined varied least (had the smallest standard deviation) among the respondents in all eight countries in our sample – Appendix A.

[18] For all the models summarized in Table 1 for which squared legitimacy terms proved significant their inclusion improved the models' explained variance (R-square). We have left all the squared terms in the models for comparability.

And in a final overview point before a more detailed analysis, these legitimacy-participation relationships are robust to specific country effects and to numerous other possibly intervening or confounding variables. A few country dummies stand out to isolate particular deviations in behavior (e.g., very low voting and registration in Guatemala, very high civil society engagement in Honduras, and very high protest levels in Colombia). Yet despite the inclusion of country dummies so that we can control for spurious local effects, the legitimacy influences on participation remain clearly defined and statistically significant.[19] These findings have important implications for legitimacy theory.

Voting and registration

Voting has been the form of political participation most analyzed in political science. As revealed in Table 1, all other factors held constant, legitimacy norms have little effect on voting-related behavior. The exception is that citizens who perceive a national political community register and vote more than those who do not.

Guatemalans and Panamanians register and vote significantly less than Costa Ricans, our reference case, while Nicaraguans vote more. Slightly more Catholics vote than those in our reference category (a religious preference other than Catholic, Protestant, or "none"). Sex does not affect registration and voting. Dramatically more citizens in all the age cohorts older than the youngest citizens register and vote. All the education cohorts above the least educated group vote more than that group, especially the college educated. Personal wealth very slightly increases registration and voting, as do higher levels of interpersonal trust. Greater contact with the news media and higher levels of political information increase registration and voting. Crime

[19] We first ran these regression models without country dummies (not shown to conserve space). Very few meaningful changes in legitimacy-participation effects appeared when the country dummies were added, as shown here, indicating that particular national traits have limited effect on these patterns.

victimization, fear of crime in one's own neighborhood, and being solicited for a bribe do not affect citizens' propensity to register and vote (although they affect almost all the other forms of participation). Finally, compared to residents of rural areas and small towns, the larger the city citizens live in the less likely they are to register and vote.

Partisan and campaign activism

Participation in the meetings of political parties, trying to persuade others how to vote, and working on an election campaign define this mode of participation. These activities engage a citizen with the institutionalized challenges of a democratic polity and electoral competition. Thus, it does not surprise us to discover that legitimacy norms exercise a greater influence on partisan and campaign activism than any other participation mode. Table 1 reveals that greater support for regime institutions makes a simple linear-positive contribution to more partisan-campaign activism. The more interesting finding here, however, is that support for regime principles, positive evaluation of regime performance, support for political actors and support for local government each manifests a strongly curvilinear relationship with partisan-campaign activity. The relationships are U-shaped, as indicated by a strong positive association between the statistically significant squared function of each and as indicated by the statistically significant negative T-score for the linear legitimacy term.

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
Panama dummy	-4.517	2.372	-4.274		-8.039	
Colombia dummy			-3.411		2.282	7.051
Voted for presidential winner	**	7.301	3.235	2.241	3.774	
Female		-6.081	-2.978	-7.723	7.823	-3.968
Age 21-30	35.889	2.501	3.528	3.006	5.020	-2.212
Age 31-40	39.037	3.456	6.903	9.108	13.087	
Age 41-50	37.941	4.784	7.376	10.356	12.737	
Age 51-60	35.468	3.625	7.276	7.977	7.485	
Age 61-95	32.986		4.580	6.796	4.691	
Catholic	3.119				-3.401	
Protestant						
No religion					-10.269	
Primary education	2.563	2.168				
Secondary education	3.159	3.218	2.162	4.308		
College education	5.856	3.900	3.729	3.906		6.586
Postgraduate education	3.775	3.226	3.724	5.244	2.159	8.330
Wealth	2.421		-4.646		-4.471	
Media Contact	6.281	10.479	7.506	11.265	12.860	6.507
Political Information	7.928	4.472		2.896	2.551	4.304
Interpersonal Trust:	2.017	-3.271		3.885	3.472	
Life Satisfaction		-2.150	-2.187	2.870	3.181	-2.216
Victim of crime in last year?		4.904	7.686	6.311	4.944	5.055
Fear crime in neighborhood?			3.558	4.104	2.863	2.756
Solicited for bribe in last year?		5.469	7.406	4.686	4.654	3.526
Capital city resident	-4.975	-6.185	-8.101	-10.191	-7.445	1.489
Large city resident	-4.672	-4.635	-7.242	-8.659	-6.868	.164
Medium city resident	-2.297	-2.380	-3.720	-11.411	-9.440	-.566
Small city resident			2.120	-4.443	-6.329	.732
R-square	.208	.083	.070	.087	.163	.092
F	66.680	22.736	18.840	23.909	48.570	24.706

* Cells shaded in gray indicate a significant curvilinear relationship.
** Excluded from this model because this is a component of the dependent variable.

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 the opponents of the party in power — could because of living in a formal electoral democracy freely engage in electoral efforts to unseat the government without falling victim to repression. Thus in formal democracies with modest or little repression of participation (the condition of all of the nations in our sample), disaffected citizens do not drop out of electoral contention (as the linear-positive hypothesis about participation suggests) but rather embrace it. This finding is consistent with that of Norris (Norris 2002), based on her empirical investigation of survey data from a wide variety of countries around the world.

Other findings in Table 1 merit mention. In our survey data, when compared to Costa Ricans, Mexicans and Salvadorans are less party-campaign active and Panamanians more active. Having voted for the presidential winner strongly encourages engagement, as do being a male, having media contact, being a victim of crime, and experiencing official corruption. Age and

political information also increase party and campaign engagement. Negative influences include interpersonal trust, life satisfaction, and residence in larger urban areas.

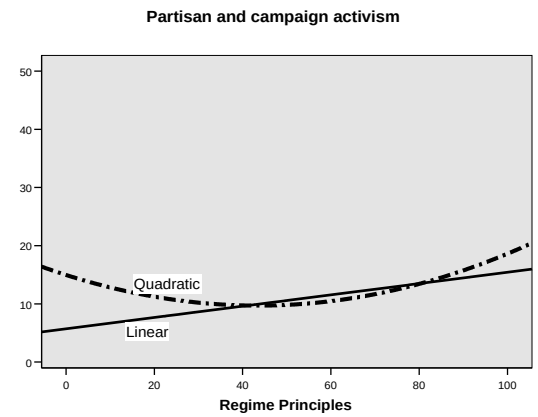

Figure 1. Linear and curvilinear relationships between support for regime principles and partisan and campaign activism

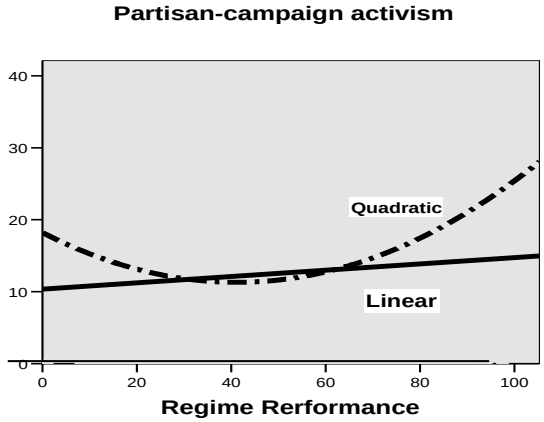

Figure 2. Linear and curvilinear relationship between support for regime performance and partisan and campaign activism

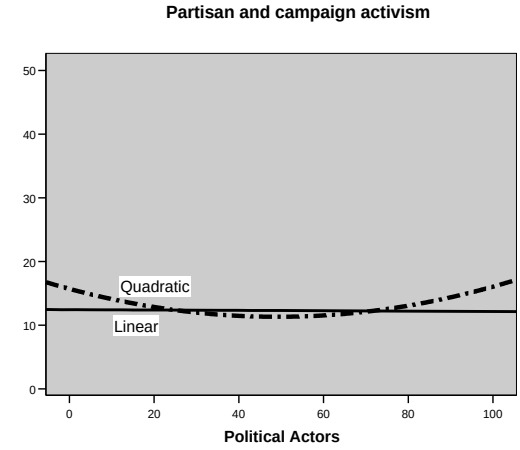

Figure 3. Linear and curvilinear relationship between support for political actors and partisan and campaign activism

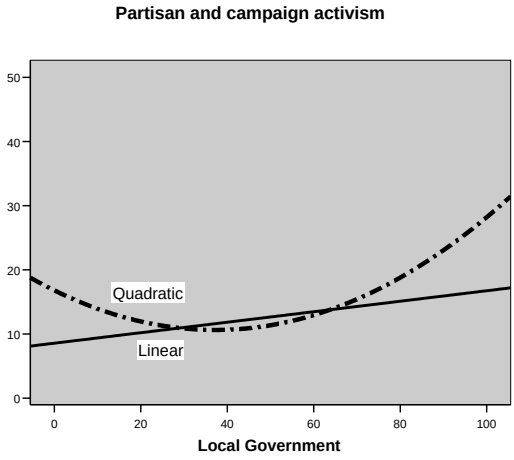

Figure 4. Linear and curvilinear relationship between support for local government and partisan and campaign activism

Contacting Public Officials

Two legitimacy factors affect the contacting of public officials, and both relationships are curvilinear (Table 1). Support for local government has a strong U-shaped effect on contacting public officials. The fact that two of the three items used to measure the contacting of public

officials involve local government actors undoubtedly enhances the strength of this relationship (see Figure 5). Those disgruntled about local government performance, even if not fighting city hall, at least contact and petition their local officials. Those who approve of local government also contact officials more.

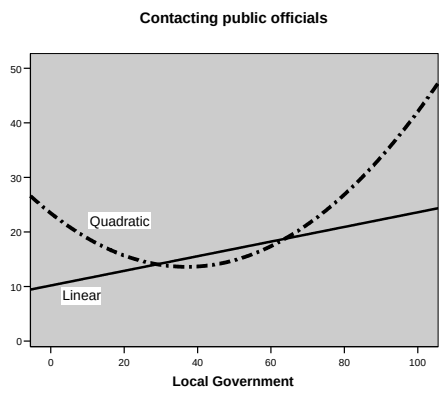

Figure 5. Linear and curvilinear relationship between support for local government and contacting public officials

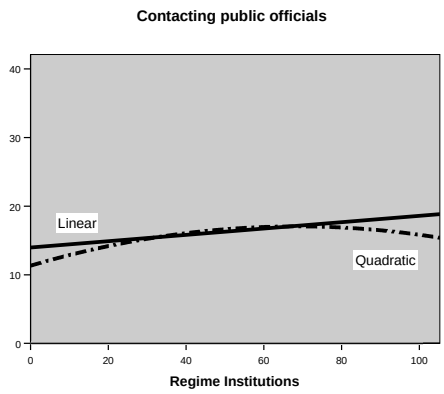

Figure 6. Linear and curvilinear relationship between support for regime institutions and contacting public officials

The unusual finding for contacting is that its curvilinear relationship with support for regime institutions constitutes an *inverted* U. While this relationship is weak, it is significant, all other factors in the model accounted for. Those who are both most critical and most supportive of the institutions of national government tend to contact public officials the least while those in the indifferent middle contact government more. This inverted-U pattern is unique for our legitimacy-participation relationships. This may indicate clientelistic behavior – direct petitioning —that has fundamental differences from other participation modes. The pattern suggests to us that contacting local officeholders and legislators likely includes a fair amount of rent-seeking behavior in which citizens indifferent to national government performance seek to advance their personal interests by lobbying.

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 activism

Citizens across Latin America — especially in poorer neighborhoods and in rural hamlets — regularly engage in community improvement activities. They raise funds for and take part in building and keeping up town plazas and playing fields. These projects repair churches and schools, install public lighting, improve drainage, bridge creeks, and repair roads. The projects directly enhance their communities and the economic chances of their residents. Table 1 reveals

[20] This literature is vast, but see, for instance Camp's (Camp 2007) bibliographic essay on clientelism, patronage, corporatism, and political recruitment in Mexico, and on other countries multiple contributors to Mainwaring and Scully (Mainwaring and Scully 1995), Mainwaring and Shugart (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997), and Wiarda and Kline (Wiarda and Kline 1996). Most observers concur that political patronship-clientelism have waned in recent decades in many countries and party systems but also note that the rise of neo-populism in Latin America may be giving such cross-class relationships new life and new forms.

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).

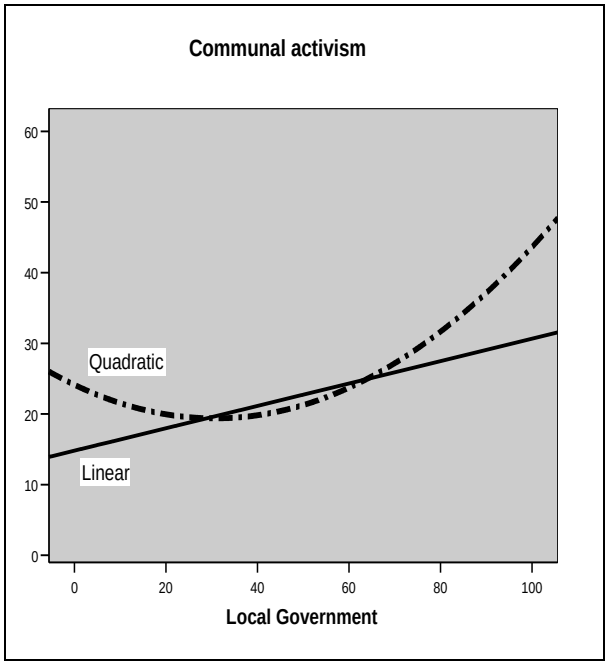

Figure 7. Linear and curvilinear relationship between support for local government and communal activism

Hondurans, who live in one of the two poorest and most rural countries in our sample, engage in communal activism significantly more than do the citizens of the other countries. Rural and small-town residents are the most active communal improvers. Women are sharply less active than men in community improvement. Not surprisingly, people age 31 or older — those with the greatest economic and personal stake in their communities — are much more

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 one's own neighborhood. Interpersonal trust and life satisfaction contribute to greater communal engagement (Uslaner and Brown 2005).

Civil society activism

Participation in organized groups constitutes our measure of civil society activism. We include in our index four kinds of associations: school, church-related, business-professional, and civic. Much of the interest in civil society and its connection to effective democracy has been sparked by Robert Putnam (Putnam 2002, 1993). Putnam's work has placed great emphasis how civil society shapes social capital and cultural values, especially interpersonal trust. Putnam's work is, however, largely silent on the impact of legitimacy norms in explaining civil society. With a single exception, our research does not indicate that Putnam's exclusion of legitimacy as a predictor much weakened his arguments. Legitimacy norms have little effect on Latin Americans' engagement in civil society (Table 1) except for regime performance. For that type of legitimacy, we do find the familiar U-shaped curvilinear relationship that has emerged for other modes of participation. Here it is statistically significant but not strong. Those who are least satisfied with the government's economic performance and those who are most satisfied tend to participate in these organizations somewhat more intensely than do citizens indifferent about economic performance. The other dimensions of legitimacy (perception of a national community, and support for regime principles, institutions, actors, and local government) do not affect civil society participation.

Other factors that stimulate engagement in civil society are the national and subnational contexts: Guatemalans, Hondurans and Nicaraguans are more group-involved than our Costa

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]

These findings suggest countervailing potentials for political protest. On the one hand, protest might contribute to destabilizing conflict because both those who express the least

[22] Note that we are not claiming that all protest behavior is of this nature. Protest activities in Bolivia in the period 2000-2005, for example, may well have been directed toward regime change.

[23] We also modeled this relationship using multinomial logistic regression (not shown to conserve space) because the dependent variable is ordered and has three response values: no protest, protest "rarely," or protest "a few times." Using "no protest" as the reference category we find that all but one of the significant predictors from OLS are also significant for the most frequent protestors. The exception is the relationship for regime principles. This essentially confirms the findings of the OLS regression, so we present the OLS results for easy comparison.

[24] In his research on aggressive political participation in Germany, Muller (Muller 1979) found what he termed a "corner correlation" as depicted by the Gamma correlation coefficient. He focused on the respondents with extremely low system support and actual participation in violent political acts.

[25] Note that in Figure 9 the linear relationship plotted appears flat, indicating no influence of economic performance legitimacy with protest. Recall, however, that the illustration in Figure 9 represents the simple relationship between the two variables uncorrected for the other variables in the regression model. The T-score for the economic performance-protest relationship is –2.649 (Table 1) indicating that with other variables accounted for the relationship is significant and negatively sloped.

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.

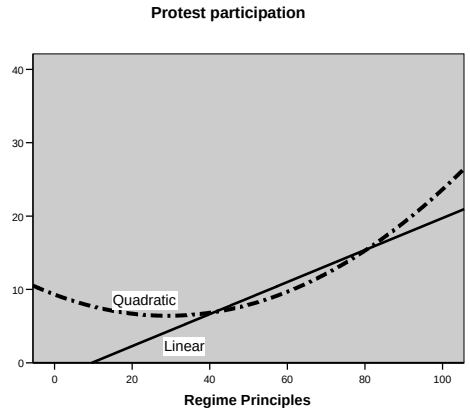

Figure 8. Linear and curvilinear relationships between support for regime principles and protest participation

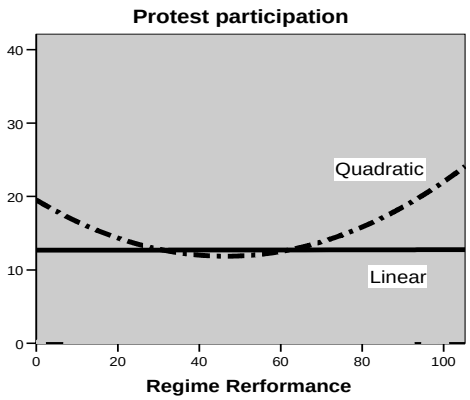

Figure 9. Linear and curvilinear relationships between support for regime performance and protest participation

Nicaraguans and Colombians protest notably more than Costa Ricans, our reference population, while Salvadorans and Guatemalans protest less. Community size, religious affiliation, age, wealth, and interpersonal trust have little effect on protest involvement. Protest, therefore, rather than being merely a tool of the weak and the resource poor, pervades a broad array of social and demographic strata in our eight Latin American nations. Women and those expressing higher levels of life satisfaction protest less than men and the dissatisfied. Having college or postgraduate education elevate protest involvement, as do greater media contact and

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 have provided noteworthy insights into how legitimacy shapes political participation. To summarize, we have found that, while all six types of legitimacy have some impact on political participation, their respective influence on citizen action is far from uniform. Perception of a national political community and support for political actors had the least influence on participation among the legitimacy dimensions. In contrast, evaluation of regime performance and support for local government had the greatest effects, each influencing at least half the six participation modes. So while legitimacy in its multiple dimensions does not always affect all forms of citizen engagement in the polity, we have nevertheless clearly shown that *legitimacy does matter for political participation.*

The above findings make manifest that, consistent with the entire thrust of this book, *legitimacy must be studied as a multidimensional phenomenon* if we are to properly understand its importance. So much of the prior research has relied on a single support measure, and often only a single questionnaire item, to capture what we have shown is complex and multidimensional. Thus, when some prior works have concluded that "legitimacy doesn't matter," we strongly suspect that part of the problem was not to have understood or respected the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon.

Our findings go beyond proof that legitimacy does matter, or, to be more precise, that some dimensions of legitimacy matter. We have also overturned key elements of the conventional wisdom as to the nature of the relationship between legitimacy norms and political

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 protest and may thus provide a counterbalance of institutional support. Under such circumstances, protest behavior becomes another means for citizens to converse with the state and, because it comes from both critics and supporters, protest seems unlikely to undermine institutions. In sum, the heightened political engagement of the critical citizenry could affirm and strengthen political institutions rather than undermine them.

It is certainly true that within decades before our study political participation by some citizens of Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia and even Honduras took on a violent and anti-regime nature. But neither at the birth of their insurgencies nor during much of their worst political turmoil were any of these countries democracies. Indeed, in all cases but Colombia (and even there to some extent) the transition to a democratic regime and reduced political repression created an environment that eventually allowed or even encouraged broader participation. Most formerly rebellious citizens appear to have become more supportive of their

evolved (newly democratic) regimes, abandoned rebellion and embraced other modes of participation. It may, therefore, require extremely poor performance indeed by a democratic government to create so much discontent that it spawns rebellion.

Thus our tentative answer why declining legitimacy has not destabilized democracies everywhere, based on what we have found so far, is that the disaffected citizens of democratic regimes do not usually withdraw from within-system politics or turn mainly to confrontational methods. Even though institutional support has declined in many democracies, fears that the sky would fall in democratic regimes or that protest and confrontation might overwhelm governments seem overblown. Indeed, we have found considerable evidence in our Latin American democracies (some of them very young and still rather turbulent) that those who have low regard for aspects of their political systems tend not to withdraw from politics within institutions. They are just about as likely as supportive citizens to become more politically active both within national institutional channels and in alternative arenas. Protesters are as likely to be system supporters as critics.

Why did most prior research fail to detect such a distinctive phenomenon? One answer may be that these legitimacy-participation effects occur only in Latin America, and therefore our research would suffer from what is called an "external validity" problem.[27] We doubt this, at least in part because to argue that a highly disgruntled citizen in any democracy might seek to improve his or her polity by becoming politically involved just makes good sense on its face. Why, one must ask, would reasonable citizens of a democracy who are frustrated with the actions of their government's president *not* work within the electoral arena to replace that incumbent? And further, why would individuals unhappy about economic performance not

[27] An external validity problem occurs when a finding of a specific analysis derives from characteristics unique to the setting of the research or the particular dataset rather than being generalizable to all settings.

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.

the system. In fact, in democracies the disgruntled citizens' political engagement may just as likely strengthen democratic institutions as threaten them.

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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)	*Operationalization of Variables*	**Mean**	*Standard Deviation*
Existence of a Political Community	1. To what degree are you proud to be a _____? (7-point scale: recoded into a great deal =100…not at all =1). 2. To what degree do you agree that in spite of our differences, we _____s have a lot of things and values that unite us as a country? (7-point scale: , recoded into very much agree=100…very much disagree =1). *Political community mean and standard deviation*	67.40	12.29
Support for Core Regime Principles	I am going to read you a list of some actions or things that people can do to achieve their goals and political objectives. Please tell me to what degree do you approve or disapprove of people taking these actions: (10-point scale, 0= strongly disapprove; 10 = strongly approve, transformed to a 1-100 range) 1.That people participate in a legally permitted demonstration. 2. That people participate in a group that tries to resolve community problems. 3. That people work in an election campaign for a party or candidate. *Regime principles mean and standard deviation*	67.77	18.43
Regime Performance	1. How would you rate, in general, the economic situation of the country? (5-point scale: recoded into very good =100…very poor =1) 2. Do you think that over the next 12 months that the economic situation of the country will be better, the same or worse than it is now. (5-point scale: recoded into much better =100…much worse =1). *Regime Performance mean and standard deviation*	44.45	15.29

Support for Regime Institutions	All of the following are on a 7-point scale: 0=none…7= much, transformed into 1-100): 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? *Regime Institutions mean and standard deviation*	50.76	17.08
Support for Local Government	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)? *Local Government mean and standard deviation*	45.62	17.39
Support for Political Actors or Authorities	All on a 7-point scale (nothing=1… much = 100): Referring to the government of_____[incumbent president], how much has that government: 1. Fought poverty? 2. Combat government corruption? 3. Promote democratic principles? *Political Actors mean and standard deviation*	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, contacted a municipal council member, or petitioned the municipal government (no=0, yes=33.33 for each), range 0-100.	16.3131	26.88707
Communal Activism	Index combining having taken part in five different community improvement related activities (no =0, yes=20 for each), range 0-100.	22.0355	33,71316
Civil Society Activism	Index combining measures of frequency of attendance at meetings of church-related, school-related, civic, and professional groups; range 0-100.	25.4122	20.14634
Protest Participation	Reported having participated in a protest in the last year (no=0, at least once =50, more than once=100).	12.7073	31.65453
Perceive a Political Community	Index based on combining replies to two items: range 0-100.	67.6197	12.10331
Political Community squared	Perceive a Political Community index squared and renormed (divided by 100) to provide a range 0-100.	47.1890	14.69137
Support Regime (democratic) Principles	range 0-100.	68.0328	18.31352
Regime Principles squared	Support Regime (democratic) Principles index squared and renormed (divided by 100) to provide a range 0-100.	49.6382	22.79315
Support for Regime Institutions	range 0-100.	50.8752	17.08621
Regime Institutions squared	Support for Regime Institutions index squared and renormed (divided by 100) to provide a range 0-100.	28.8020	17.34798
Support for Regime Performance	range 0-100.	44.5340	15.36688
Regime Performance squared	Support for Regime Performance index squared and renormed (divided by 100) to provide a range 0-100.	22.1940	14.61228
Support for Political Actors	range 0-100.	49.0900	23.16019
Political Actors squared	Support for Political Actors index squared and renormed (divided by 100) to provide a range 0-100.	29.4617	23.01898
Support for Local Government	range 0-100.	45.7660	17.37405
Local Government squared	Support for Local Government index squared and renormed (divided by 100) to provide a range 0-100.	23.9636	16.62489
Female	Respondent is a male =0, female =1.	.5105	.49991

Age 21-30	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.2793	.44869
Age 31-40	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.2271	.41895
Age 41-50	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.1634	.36971
Age 51-60	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.1159	.32013
Age 61-95	Respondent of age 21-30 years (no=0, yes=1).	.1047	.30621
Catholic	Respondent identifies self as “Catholic” (no=0, yes=1)	.6924	.46152
Protestant	Respondent identifies self as “Protestant” (no=0, yes=1)	.2051	.40382
No religion	Respondent identiies self as having “no religion,” (no=0, yes=1)	.0761	.26522
Primary Education	Respondent has completed up to grade 6 (no=0, yes=1).	.2588	.43798
Secondary Education	Respondent has completed high school (no=0, yes=1).	.3861	.48688
College Education	Respondent has completed college (no=0, yes=1).	.0936	.29123
Postgraduate Education	Respondent has completed postgraduate education (no=0, yes=1).	.0441	.20537
Wealth		5.0209	3.34345
News Media Exposure		56.4247	25.45211
Score on political information quiz		54.8519	27.43443
Interpersonal Trust:		2.8250	.96742
Life Satisfaction, low to high		3.2828	.76376
Victimized by crime in last year		15.2461	35.94833
Fear of crime in one's neighborhood		2.29	.995
Solicited for bribe by public employee		.05	.213
Capital City Resident	(no=0, yes=1)	.2441	.42957
Large City Resident	(no=0, yes=1)	.1084	.31096
Medium City Resident	(no=0, yes=1)	.1544	.36132
Small City Resident	(no=0, yes=1)	.1494	.35648

Appendix C. Context Variables Employed for Hierarchical Linear Modeling

System-level performance measures, eight Latin American Nations									
	Human Develop-ment Index (HDI) 2003	**Percent Change in UNDP HDI 1975-2003**	**Gross Domestic Product Per cap. 2003**	**Percent GDP per capita change 1990-2003**	**GDP per capita (PPP) 2003**	**Vanhanen mean Democracy Score 1900-1989**	**World Bank Govern-ment Effective-ness**	**Gini Index of Income Inequal-ity**	**Freedom House – combined and scale polarity reversed**
Mexico	0.814	1.18	6121	16.8	9168	2.05	61.9	54.6	10.00
Guatemala	0.663	1.30	2009	13.2	4148	2.52	32	59.87	6.00
El Salvador	0.722	1.22	2277	25.2	4781	2.54	35.6	53.2	9.00
Honduras	0.667	1.29	1001	2.4	2665	2.53	27.3	55	8.00
Nicaragua	0.69	1.18	745	10.8	3262	3.19	17.5	43.11	8.00
C.Rica	0.838	1.12	4352	31.2	9606	8.81	66.5	46.5	11.00
Panama	0.804	1.13	4319	28.8	6854	4.69	53.6	56.4	11.00
Colombia	0.785	1.19	1764	4.8	6702	4.2	45.4	57.6	6.00

Sources: United Nations Development Program (United Nations Development Program 2005), (World Bank 2005) Vanhanen (Vanhanen 1997).