



Papers from the AmericasBarometer

Small Grants and Data Award Recipients 2011

Quality of Democracy, Crime Victimization, and the Resilience of Political Culture in the Americas: Outline and Test of a Theory

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Note: The analysis in this paper is based on data from the AmericasBarometer of the Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University; the data can be found at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php>. Funding for the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer mainly came from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other important sources of support were the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Vanderbilt University. The opinions and analysis in this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors, and do not represent the conclusions of the Latin American Public Opinion Project or the U.S. Agency for International Development.

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Abstract

The idea that the upsurge in crime and violence in Latin America since the mid-1980s erodes the values, attitudes, and preferences deemed essential to democracy is a conclusion advanced by journalists and scholars, often with little supporting evidence. More problematic is the implicit assumption that crime affects all components of political culture equally, and that the crime effect is equal in all political environments. To address these limitations, we draw on the literatures on the quality of democracy and the attitudinal foundations of democracy to outline a theory that predicts that the corrosive effects of crime victimization on political culture will be comparatively low in high quality democracies, moderate in intermediate regimes, and pronounced in weak democracies. Using data for 20 countries in the 2010 AmericasBarometer surveys, we show that people's commitment to the rule of law and their support for democracy is less vulnerable to the victimization effect in strong democracies, compared to intermediate and weak democracies, as predicted. Contrary to expectation, some features of mass political culture, such as people's trust in neighbors and in state institutions, are sensitive to the victimization effect, even in the more consolidated democratic regimes. Evidence that victimization reduces some democratic attitudes more than others, and the findings that show that the magnitude of the crime effect is mediated by the structural context suggest new directions in the study of crime, violence, and democracy in the Americas.

**Quality of Democracy, Crime Victimization, and the Resilience of
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Common sense alone suggests that the upsurge in crime and violence that has afflicted every country in Latin America from the 1980s onward is likely to threaten the stability of democratic regimes and undermine the prospects of democratic consolidation, especially in a region where the quality of democracy is recognized as fragile, incomplete, and prone to reversals. Crime is thought to undermine democratic systems through many avenues, among them its presumed tendency to erode the values, attitudes, and preferences many analysts consider necessary to the emergence and consolidation of democracy.

The argument that crime promotes illiberal political dispositions is a popular theme among both scholars and journalists, yet the widely accepted conclusion rests on a thin empirical base and a poorly developed conceptual model. A review of the literature on this topic shows that the number of empirical studies that support the notion that crime promotes anti-democratic attitudes is hardly proportional to the emphasis the relationship has received in the media and in scholarly publications. More fundamental than the lack of evidence is the failure to specify the conditions under which the crime effect is expected to obtain. The causal association between crime victimization and anti-democratic attitudes has, apparently, been treated as so self-evident as to warrant little specification. Moreover, blanket assertions that the crime surge erodes democratic political culture implicitly endorse the assumption that the victimization effect, if it exists, is constant across qualitatively different socio-political contexts, and constant with respect to every attitudinal component of political culture.

This study develops a conceptual framework that specifies the structural conditions under which the negative crime effect on political culture is expected to occur, and identifies which attitudes are likely to be more susceptible. The proposed theory draws from the literature

¹ The authors thank the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), Director Mitchell Seligson, for making the data widely available. For more information on the LAPOP surveys, see: <<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>>.

on the attitudinal foundations of democracy and the transition to democracy in Latin America to predict that the resilience of political culture varies in accord with the quality of democracy. Specifically, the crime effect on anti-democratic attitudes is expected to have a negligible effect in highly consolidated regimes, a moderate effect in intermediate regimes, and pronounced effect in the more fragile and less consolidated democracies.

We subject the hypothesis to empirical test using the 2010 Americas Barometer political opinion surveys carried by the Latin American Political Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University, under the direction of political scientist Mitchell Seligson. The questionnaire, applied in 18 countries in Latin America and in the United States and Canada, not only tells us whether respondents were victim of a crime during the previous year, but also includes response items that serve as operational definitions of three concepts considered fundamental to the stability and deepening of democracy: people's commitment to the rule of law, their trust in neighbors and state institutions, and the degree to which they support democracy as a form of government. An overview of the attitudinal foundations of democracy in the next section establishes the basis for developing and testing a theory of crime, democratic consolidation, and political culture.

The Attitudinal Foundations of Democracy

After decades of neglect, the notion that values, attitudes, and beliefs shape democratic institutions has recently undergone something of a renaissance (Almond 1993: ix), as is evident in the work by Harrison (2005), Huntington (1996), Inkeles (1997) and Inglehart and Levinson (1997). To one degree or another, the various formulations represent a return to issues that Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963:1) addressed some fifty years ago in *The Civic Culture*, a landmark study that explored "the political culture of democracy and ...the social structure and processes that sustain it." Their book was the first systematic attempt to explain democratic outcomes with cultural variables using a comparative survey research methodology based on quantitative measures of the independent variable. The work attracted the attention of

generations of scholars who have replicated the findings, criticized the conceptualizations, and refined the theory (Laitin 1995).

Writing at about the same time as Almond and Verba, Lipset's (1959) analysis of the social requisites of democracy stressed economic factors, but noted, in addition, that it was prosperity that gave rise to positive social and cultural changes, such as a willingness to compromise. Echoing these early formulations, many analysts agree that consolidated democracy presupposes (or is embedded in) a "civic culture" characterized by strong commitments to basic democratic principles, high levels of mutual trust, and a prevalence of participatory norms. Moderation, civility, and tolerance of opposing views also figure among the attitudes and values associated with liberal democratic regimes. More generally, political culture refers to "people's predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of its country, and the role of the self in that system" (Diamond 1993:8).

Later studies of the former Soviet Union (Gibson 1996) and empirical analyses of the World Values Survey (Inglehart and Welzel 2006) concluded that the key elements of the democratic process, such as protection of human rights and the existence of legitimate opposition parties, rely on a prior sense of acceptance and forbearance toward groups with whom one disagrees, as well as the existence of values that give rise to the protection of freedom of speech. By demonstrating that certain societies are characterized by a relatively strong and durable set of cognitive orientations, Inglehart (1998:1221) claims to confirm Almond and Verba's basic thesis, yet having done so more persuasively by analyzing a much larger data set (World Values Survey) that contained data that extended over many years.

When Almond and Verba (1963:18) spoke of political culture, they referred to "the political system as internalized in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population." Andreas Schedler (2001:85) more recently offered a straightforward way to express the importance of cognitive dispositions when he wrote that "democracy is at risk" unless all major political players develop the attitudinal foundations of democratic governance, by which he meant "the normative motives, strategic rationality, and cognitive perceptions required to sustain a liberal-democratic regime." The subservience to the rule of law by "the political

echelons" is considered the *sine qua non* of democratic governance (Mirsky 1993). Put another way, most would agree that democracy "settles down as 'the only game in town,' only if (and as long as) actors decide to play by its basic rules." Democracy thus requires the rule of law in the sense of routinized behavior in which the norms, procedures, and expectations of democracy conform to written and unwritten rules of the game (Rustow 1970). This rule of exclusion, which equates democratic consolidation with the absence of antidemocratic behavior forms the core of what many authors have come to call "behavioral consolidation" (Linz and Stepan 1996:5-6; Gunther et al. 1995:7).

High levels of trust have been linked to stable democracy, as Inglehart (1988) demonstrated in his analysis of the World Values survey, a theme which he elaborated on in subsequent publications (e.g., Inglehart and Welzel 2003). Inglehart (1988:1215) concludes that societies characterized by high levels of interpersonal trust and tolerance are more likely to adopt and maintain democratic institutions than those countries whose publics lack such attitudes. Trust is conducive to the emergence of networks of voluntary associations and citizen organizations, creating the conditions for social integration, public awareness, and democratic stability (Newton 2001). The propensity to trust others, in Inglehart's (1988:1215) view, is "shaped by the historical experiences of given peoples and therefore subject to change," although interpersonal nonetheless shows impressive stability over time, and "tends to be a relatively enduring cultural characteristic."

Mass support for democracy is similarly deemed essential to the maintenance and resilience of political systems to the extent that popular commitment to the principles of democracy is what enables democratic regimes to withstand and overcome moments of crisis when they arise (Schedler 2001). The argument is predicated on the observation that public support for democracy is a feature of consolidated democratic systems (Diamond 1999; Linz and Stepan 1996), and on the assumption that popular support is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for democratic institutions to emerge (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 2006). The idea that a stable democracy requires a belief in the legitimacy of democracy is a "cardinal tenet of empirical democratic theory" (Diamond 1993:13). The genuine, non-instrumental, intrinsic support for democracy by political elites as well as citizens thus constitutes an important,

perhaps defining element of a high quality democracy (see Diamond 1999; Linz and Stepan 1996). Consolidation is indicated when a majority of citizens believe that democracy is the best form of government in principle and that it is the most suitable for their country. Diamond (1999:69) is so bold as to posit a specific threshold, arguing that democratic consolidation is evident when more than 70 percent of the mass public consistently believes that democracy is preferable to any other form of government. A low level of support for democracy, alternatively, sets the stage for political instability inasmuch as the climate of political attitudes held by the masses often determines the “degrees of freedom within which elites can act” (Seligson and Booth, 2009:2).

Whereas numerous studies address the political relevance of attitudes and behaviors in existing democracies, a more challenging question concerns the relationship between political culture and the emergence of democracy in the first place. Almond and Verba (1963) expected that countries with high levels of civic attitudes would be more likely to adopt and sustain democracy over time compared to countries with low levels. In keeping with this view, Gibson and Duch (1994) and others (e.g., Welzel and Inglehart 2001) understand political culture as a driving force in democratization, arguing that civic values put political elites under popular pressure to institutionalize democratic rules (Welzel, Inglehart and Klingerman 2003:342), compelling dissidents to campaign for holding free elections (see Foweraker and Landman 1997).

The causal direction of the relationship between political culture and democracy has nonetheless been questioned. Along with Rustow (1970) and others (e.g. Jackman and Miller 1998), Muller and Seligson (1994:635), reverse the direction of causality on the grounds that “the hypothesis that democracy causes civic culture would seem *a priori* to be as plausible as the hypothesis that civic culture causes democracy.” Almond himself (1980:29) responded to the counterhypothesis, also raised earlier by Barry (1978), claiming that the relationship between civic culture and democracy entailed reciprocal causation such that political culture is “both an independent and a dependent variable, as causing structure and as being caused by it.”

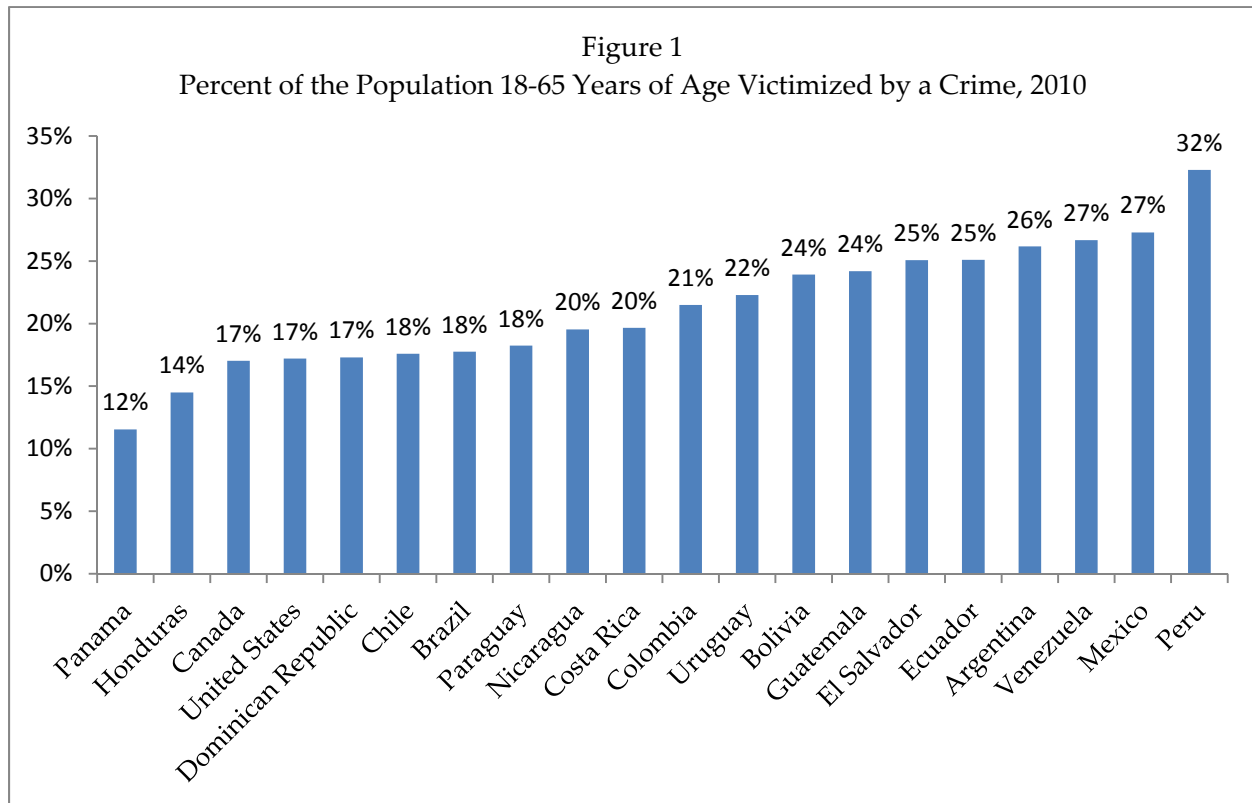
The debate about ultimate causation is not likely to be put to rest any time soon, yet the importance of values and attitudes to democracy remains an accepted premise, whatever one’s

position on the matter. To the extent that a democratic political culture is considered integral to the stability of a democratic system and, by extension, essential to the deepening of democracy, it is not surprising that the erosion of liberal attitudes and values thought to be caused by the upsurge in criminality has become something of a leitmotif in studies of the political consequences of crime and violence in Latin America.

Crime Victimization and Political Culture

The increase in crime and violence that has taken place in nearly every country in the Latin American region since the mid-1980s is reflected in the rising number of homicides recorded per 100,000 persons. By 2002, the homicide rate in Latin America reached 23.2, four times greater than in the United States, and higher, even, than the rate observed in the countries of West and Central Africa (Waiselfisz 2008). The regional average nonetheless disguises considerable variation across countries. Circa 2005, homicide rates were especially high in Colombia (52.6), El Salvador (48.8), Venezuela (30.1), but were below 10 in Costa Rica (6.6), Argentina (5.8), the Dominican Republic (2003), Chile (5.4) and Uruguay (4.5).

Troubling as the homicide estimates in some countries surely are, the fact remains that murder is a rare event, at least compared to other types of crime. In the course of their daily lives, people in Latin America are far less likely to be murdered compared to being robbed or assaulted. Estimates of the proportion of the population victimized by a crime in 2010, depicted in Figure 1, vary from 12 percent in Panama to 32 percent in Peru. Sad as it is to say, crime and violence “could arguably be considered the central—if not defining—problem in contemporary Latin America as it faces the new millennium” (Davis 2006:178).



So numerous are the mechanisms by which criminal activity can influence politics and the state that here we limit our focus to four themes commonly found in the literature. One line of reasoning focuses on people's fragile commitment to the rule of law, arguing that victims of crime, and people who live in fear of becoming a victim, are inclined to endorse "neo-populist" leaders who come to power riding waves of popular enthusiasm, and who use decree and plebiscitary powers to bypass the legislature, the courts, and other institutions that might otherwise check their authority (Carlin 2006:51; O'Donnell 1994; Weyland 1996). In countries where state institutions are weak, accountability is low, and the political system is sporadically dominated by military-backed dictators and populist demagogues, the insecurity people suffer in their daily lives, especially in urban areas, inclines them to favor get tough (*mano dura*) policies, extralegal actions, and vigilante justice. "As crime rates soar, opportunistic leaders in these nations sometimes disparage their developing justice systems" on the grounds "that they could confront criminals decisively if only they were not fettered by the law" (Malone 2010-11:60).

In the eyes of a worried and impatient populace, the perception that democratic regimes are incapable of providing security to its citizens motivates people to favor an authoritarian alternative as a means to contend with the rise in criminality. In Central America, victims of crime are more likely to endorse the idea that it is acceptable for authorities to circumvent the law in order to catch criminals (Malone 2010-11). The authoritarian reflex is a profound threat to democracy if only because a democratic system presumes the notion of a “state bound by law and excluding arbitrary decisions not based on rules” (Linz 1993). Democracy requires law and order, but not in the “repressive terms purveyed by populist demagogues” (Diamond 1999:90).

A second often-cited consequence of criminality is the erosion of social capital, defined as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam 1993:167). Social capital is generated and provides benefits through membership in social networks or structures at different levels, ranging from the household to the market place and political system (Portes 1998). When crime and violence prevail, norms of trust and reciprocity are replaced by the “war of all against all,” undermining community-based organizations and other social networks (Ayres 1998:8; Moser and McIlwaine 2006; Rotker 2001). Gang activity similarly decreases existing community social capital, primarily through reducing trust and communication as a result of fear and stigmatization (Winton 2004).

The literature on the political consequences of crime commonly invokes a third theme, namely the importance of people’s expressed support for democracy as a form of government. In settings where crime is a priority concern, increases in perceptions of insecurity associated with criminality are associated with decreases in public support for democracy (Bailey and Flores-Macías 2007). The crime epidemic has led many citizens to dismiss their country’s judicial system as hopelessly ineffective, corrupt, and unfair (Malone 2010; Pérez 2003). In Latin America, people who have been a victim of crime are more likely to express dissatisfaction with “the way democracy works” in their country, although victimization had no effect on their “preference for democracy” as a political system (Ceobano, Wood, and Ribeiro 2010). Other studies (Cruz 2003; 2008; Seligson and Azpuru 2001) point to the negative consequences of

crime victimization on people's support for democratic institutions in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Given that the rise in crime and violence figures among the more troubling trends to afflict people and institutions in contemporary Latin America, a worrisome feature of the existing literature on the political consequences of criminality is, on the one hand, the striking paucity of hard empirical evidence, at least in relation to the significance of the issue (see Bergman 2006), and, on the other hand, the virtual absence of any attempt to explicitly frame analyses and interpret findings in relation to democratic theory.

The Quality of Democracy and the Resilience of Political Culture

Following the wave of democratization in Latin America since the 1980s and the dilemmas encountered in the post-transition era, analysts have searched for ways to describe the incomplete nature of democratic consolidation in the region. The adjectives chosen to modify the noun "democracy" – guided, tutelary, fragile, immature, uncertain, illiberal, low-intensity, among many others – comprise an astonishingly long list of descriptors. In one examination of the literature, Collier and Levitsky (1997) refer to over 550 examples of democracy "with adjective," wryly noting that the list of subtypes comprised many times more entries than the number of countries being analyzed. The presumptive structural deficits associated with each diminished sub-type "cover fields as diverse as government performance, public administration, judicial systems, party systems, interest groups, civil society, political culture, and styles of decision making. In all these and many other areas, most Latin American democracies look 'underdeveloped' by comparison with the 'advanced democracies'" (Schedler 1998:100).

Adjectives aside, all conceptualizations of sub-types have in common an implicit reference to the initial conception of democracy, the "root concept" from which every subtype is a diminished instance. The root concept is a consolidated, or high quality, democracy, which, in Weber's sense of ideal-type, exists nowhere in the real world yet is approximated, to varying degrees, in the United States, Canada, in the countries of Western Europe, and in a handful of

countries in Latin America (e.g., Costa Rica and Uruguay). The next section presents our own typological, and uses the adjectives “strong,” “intermediate,” and “weak” to classify democracies in the Americas.

There would be little point in paying attention to the quality of democracy if the corrosive effects of crime victimization were of the same intensity in all socio-political contexts. Indeed, many studies that document the counter-democratic effects of crime implicitly invoke such an assumption simply by failing to theorize or empirically explore the idea that context matters, i.e., that the quality of democracy mediates the relationship between crime and political culture.

Outline of a Theory

A much-cited definition of a consolidated democracy is simply one that is “likely to endure” (O’Donnell 1996:37). A high quality democracy is therefore one that is immune to the threat of authoritarian regression, at least in the long term. In the face of a serious challenge, shock or threat to democracy, effective resistance prevents loss of democratic credentials. “This includes those instances where the suspension of certain freedoms and perhaps even of electoral politics and civilian rule has been genuinely regarded as an undesirable aberration,” even by the very perpetrators (Burnell and Calvert 1999:4). Neutralizing disloyal players and countering processes that would otherwise undermine democracy is signal characteristic of a deep democratic system (Schedler 1998). Consolidation means the routinized and predictable patterns of political behavior and the existence of dependable structures for establishing authoritative and proficient structures for mediating political conflicts (Diamond 1999:77). The competition of divergent interests are resolved peacefully through institutionalized processes that adhere to the rule of law, that respect individual rights, and that require a culture of trust, tolerance, and civility, as well as a shared commitment to democracy (Diamond 2008:155-6). In a word, a fully developed liberal democratic system is resilient.

Resilience is a concept explicitly developed by C.S. Holling (1973) and his colleagues (Gunderson and Holling 2002) to study social-ecological systems. Resilience, *sensu* Holling et al. is the capacity of a system to absorb a disturbance and reorganize so as to retain essentially the same function, structure, and feedbacks. Two specific interpretations of this term can be found

in the literature (Carpenter, Brock and Ludwig 2002:202). One refers to the maximum amplitude of a disturbance that allows the system to retain its integrity. The other interpretation refers to the time needed to return to its original state. A disturbance of sufficient intensity, one that exceeds the capacity for reorganization and therefore the threshold of stability, can flip the system into another regime of behavior – i.e., into a different stability domain.² The approach recognizes the interplay of persistence and change, accepts that a given system can have multiple stability domains, and promotes a research agenda that seeks to identify the moment when the magnitude and pace of a disturbance (internal or external) exceeds the system's resilience capacity.

By stressing adaptive and system-maintaining processes (Gunderson and Holling 2002), the resilience framework is conceptually more useful than the more linear concept of "vulnerability," as proposed by intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations (2003) and the World Bank (2000)³. The concept of resilience has advanced understanding of the capacity of ecological systems to experience change (or not), and as a means to conceptualize the adaptive capacity of human social organization (Scheffer et al. 2002).

We can appropriate the concept of resilience and apply it, metaphorically, to democratic systems as a way to characterize a fundamental difference between high and low quality democratic regimes. In keeping with the image of democracy as depicted by Diamond, Schedler, O'Donnell and others, consolidated democracies are more resilient and thus able to endure, whereas diminished democracies are less resilient and thus more fragile and subject to breakdown.

² Eskstein (1988:82), in his cultural theory of political change, expressed the same idea over twenty years ago when he wrote that "contextual changes can be so considerable or rapid or both that neither pattern maintaining changes nor changes that gradually relax cultural rigidity to deal with social fluidity are possible."

³ The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs offers the following definition: 'In essence, vulnerability can be seen as a state of high exposure to certain risks and uncertainties, in combination with a reduced ability to protect or defend oneself against those risks and uncertainties and cope with their negative consequences. It exists at all levels and dimensions of society and forms an integral part of the human condition, affecting both individuals and society as a whole' (UN, 2003: 14). See also Kirby (2004).

Democracies are not all the same, of course: systems of representation, the division of powers, and the bundle of rights and obligations conferred by citizenship differ among regimes. These differences influence their capacity to process conflicts, and therefore the resilience of democracy. "Democracy is sustainable when its institutional framework promotes normatively desirable and politically desired objectives, but also when these institutions are adept at handling crises that occur when such objectives are not being fulfilled" (Przeworski et al. 2000:128-9).⁴ Diamond (2011) uses the concept of resilience in his analysis of the political consequences of the global recession that began in 2008, noting that governments have come and gone but democracy has remained. "Voters punished incumbent leaders and parties who performed poorly, either because they were dragged down into the global economic undertow or because they had otherwise done a poor job of meeting voters' expectations for good governance, or perhaps for both reasons" (Diamond 2011:23). His review of electoral politics in a time of global economic turmoil underscores "the resilience of democratic politics" and accountability in the "more strongly rooted democracies."

Hypotheses

From these overarching principles, we can move toward greater specificity by conceptualizing the various institutionalized domains that are potentially affected by a particular disturbance. While there are many ways to accomplish this, Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration broadly suggests three domains pertinent to our present purpose: the structure of legitimation (the norms and rules that regulate how we interact with one another), the structure of domination (allocative and authoritative resources that are distributed among social actors to facilitate goal-oriented action), and structures of signification (the interpretations and meanings that people use to make sense of their experience). When we descend the ladder of abstraction another step to focus on the values and attitudes that comprise political culture, we are, in effect, narrowing the analytical focus to the structures of legitimation and signification.

⁴ The capacity of democratic systems to withstand the effects of an economic downturn is among the frequently studied external disturbances (e.g., Przeworski et al. 2000; Seligson and Smith 2010).

From the proposed theory of consolidation and resilience we derive hypotheses which anticipate that the degree of democratic consolidation mediates crime effects on political culture. Political culture in strong democracies is less responsive to disturbance compared to political culture in weak democracies. Specifically, *the magnitude of the negative effect of crime victimization on people's commitment to the rule of law, their degree of trust, and their loyalty to democracy as a political system will be low in strong democracies, moderate in intermediate democracies, and high in weak democracies.*⁵

A corollary to the general proposition that the resilience of political culture varies according to the quality of democracy puts a finer point on the argument by recognizing that, even within a given level of consolidation, some components of political culture are likely to be more mutable than others.

Stable and Mutable Components of Political Culture

Values, beliefs, and cognitive orientations have their roots in tradition and collective myths, as well as institutional experience and political learning. But they are also reconfigured by historical events (e.g., the mobilization of social groups), personal experience (such as crime victimization and encounters with the judicial system), the deliberate actions of political leaders, and international factors, such as the diffusion of democratic values (Diamond 1993:416-17). Hence, one may accept that the institutional context – e.g., a high level of democratic consolidation – enhances the degree to which values and attitudes are stable in the face of disturbance, yet we do not expect that an institutional analysis alone is sufficient to understand the resilience of political culture, nor do we assume that all cognitive orientations behave in the same way.

The relative stability/mutability of the political values and attitudes is a topic that finds expression in the literature on political culture, but the issue is put forth more as a passing

⁵ The notion that structural contexts mediate crime effects on political culture is anticipated by Malone (2010) who predicted different effects among countries in Central America, depending on the longevity of the democratic regime, the level of crime, and the state of justice institutions; and Diamond (1999:90) when he noted, more or less in passing, that “crime is a serious problem in both rich, established democracies and new or unconsolidated ones. But in the latter countries, it may threaten democracy itself...”

assertion than a developed idea. cursory mentions are strikingly equivocal if only because they commonly speak to both stability and mutability but without further specification. In this vein, Diamond (1993:412; 432) equates political culture with “a geological structure with sedimentary deposits from many historical ages and events” (emphasis on persistence), yet goes on to append a footnote noting that “fleeting opinions and attitudes” are also shaped by factors from different historical moments (emphasis on mutability). In his contribution to the *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought* (Clarke and Foweraker 2001), Inglehart (2001:521) engages the same dilemma when he writes that the values, beliefs and skills of mass publics “are learned, not genetic, but they are relatively central and enduring so that they change slowly, largely through inter-generational population replacement.” Yet political culture, he adds, is also “shaped by first-hand experience.” Similarly, even though three decades of research since *The Civic Culture* conclude that the “cognitive, attitudinal, and evaluational dimensions of political culture are fairly ‘plastic’... deeper values and normative commitments have been shown to be more enduring and to change more slowly” (Diamond 1999:164).

Vague assertions about the stability and mutability of political culture fail to specify which values and attitudes are plastic and which are enduring, and why. If, as Diamond notes (1999:161) “prominent theories of democracy, both classical and modern, claim that democracy requires a distinctive set of political values and orientations from its citizens,” – the list includes moderation, tolerance, civility, efficacy, accommodation, cooperation, bargaining, among others – it is legitimate to ask whether each of these orientations are equally plastic or persistent, that is, whether they are equally responsive to disturbance (in this case, crime victimization). Intuition may suggest that their respective responsiveness to the effects of life experiences varies, yet the current state of theory provides little guidance to make relative judgments in this regard.

A notable exception to the general lack of specificity can be found in studies of people’s belief in the legitimacy of democracy, a belief that can be held at two levels. One level concerns loyalty to the principle of democracy. The concept (preference for democracy, PFD) is measured by a question that asks survey respondents to indicate whether they think “democracy is preferable to any other form of government,” or if “under some circumstances an authoritarian

government may be preferable to a democratic one.” The other level (satisfaction with democracy, SWD) concerns people’s evaluation of “the way democracy works” in their country. The meaning of both concepts and their respective operational definitions has been the subject of debate (Canache et al. 2001; Ceobano, Wood and Ribeiro 2010).

Some scholars (Schmidt, 1983; Dalton, 1999) contend that SWD is mainly an indicator of support for incumbent authorities, and therefore cannot be understood as a measure of loyalty to democracy *per se*. Others (Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Klingemann, 1999), noting that no reference is made to political leaders or political parties, conclude that SWD is an indicator of “system support,” a concept that refers to satisfaction with a nation’s system of government (e.g., political institutions, constitutional structure, and so on), irrespective of views regarding incumbent political authorities (Canache et al. 2001). A third interpretation (Clarke, Dutt and Kornberg 1993) remains agnostic with respect to specifics, arguing instead that SWD provides a satisfactory summary indicator that encompasses both support for incumbent authorities and system support.⁶ Whether one adopts a narrow interpretation or a more encompassing one, the more general point, and the one pertinent to this discussion, is that responses to the SWD questionnaire item appear to tap into political attitudes that are contingent in nature, be it with respect to the effectiveness of incumbent authorities, the legitimacy of system properties, or satisfaction with economic performance.

In contrast to answers to the SWD question, the PFD item prompts respondents to consider the desirability of democracy in the abstract. As a result, answers to the question presumably reflect attitudes that are less contingent on transitory circumstances. Potential ambiguity is further reduced by the inclusion of a second response option: “In certain situations, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one.” In this sense, PFD is unlike SWD, as the latter omits reference to any basis of comparison and leaves respondents “on their own” (Canache et al., 2001:511). The PFD question thus appears to tap

⁶ The debate regarding the competing interpretations of SWD can be traced to earlier work by David Easton (1965, 1975) who distinguished between diffuse and specific support for political systems. Confronting the difficulties of classifying attitudes as purely diffuse or exclusively evaluative, more recent analysts conclude, along with Clarke, Dutt and Kornberg (1993), that “those attitudes typically include both an affective and an evaluation dimension” (Anderson and Guillory, 1997:70).

into attitudes and preferences that are abstract rather than contingent, and enduring rather than transitory features of civic culture (Ceobano, Wood and Ribeiro 2010).

By underscoring the contingent nature of SWD and the abstract nature of PFD, the debate regarding measures of the legitimacy of democracy suggests that, *within levels of democratic consolidation, crime victimization will have a greater effect on reducing people's satisfaction with democracy works compared to the effect of crime victimization on their preference for democracy as a political system.* To test this and previously stated hypotheses, we use an index of the quality of democracy to classify countries as “Strong,” “Intermediate,” and “Weak” democracies.

Typology of Democratic Consolidation

Analysts have adopted dichotomous and continuous schemes to classify a political system's degree of democratization. An example of the former is the study of democracy and development by Przeworski et al. (2000), who code as democracies countries in which the president and the legislature are elected, more than one party exists, and alternation in power is possible. Their dichotomous typology allows no middle ground: countries either meet democratic criteria, or they do not. Their argument is not that there are no degrees of democracy, but, instead, that there is a “natural zero point” such that below that level political systems are qualitatively different. An example of the continuous scheme is the study by Mainwaring et al. (2001), whose use additional criteria – the degree to which a regime sponsors free and fair election, allows for adult citizenship, protects civil liberties and maintains civilian control of the military – to classify countries as democratic, semi-democratic or authoritarian. Either way, all classification schemes hinge on a prior definition of the phenomenon.⁷ Levine and Molina (2011:8) contend that the quality of any specific democracy is “determined by the extent to which citizens can participate in an informed manner in processes of free, fair, and frequent elections; influence the making of political decisions; and hold those who govern

⁷ In their analysis of citizenship and social movements in five countries, Foweraker and Landman (1997) present a method to measure rights-in-principle (the presence of legally prescribed rights) and rights-in-practice (the rights that citizens actually enjoy) and to measure the gap between the two.

accountable.” As with Mainwaring et al., the quality of democracy for Levine and Molina is a multidimensional continuum.

The definition of democratic consolidation in this study relies on Freedom House estimates of seven indicators: the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, functioning of government, freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights (see Appendix A).⁸ Principle components factor analysis confirms that the indicators are operational definitions of a single underlying conceptual dimension, with high factor loadings that range from 0.863 to 0.925. The seven measures, standardized to a common metric, are combined into a summary index that varies from 11.62 (Uruguay) to -16.15 (Venezuela). The distribution of values shown in Table 1 suggests break points for a three-category framework to classify countries, which we label “Strong Democracies” (Uruguay, Chile, Canada, United States and Costa Rica), “Intermediate Democracies” (Panama, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Brazil), and “Weak Democracies” (El Salvador, Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Honduras, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Venezuela).

Table 1: Index and Typology of Democratic Consolidation by Country

Country	Democratic Consolidation	Typology
Uruguay	11.62	Strong
Chile	11.60	
Canada	11.49	
US	10.15	
Costa Rica	9.38	
Panama	5.59	Intermediate
Dominican Republic	3.37	
Argentina	2.90	
Brazil	1.98	

⁸ The Freedom House *World Survey* provides an annual evaluation of the state of global freedom, based on two main indicators political rights and civil liberties. The content of the questionnaire is derived in large measure from relevant portions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The ratings are based on a checklist of 10 political rights questions and 15 civil liberties questions, shown in Appendix A.

Country	Democratic Consolidation	Typology
El Salvador	-0.27	
Peru	-0.67	
Mexico	-2.13	
Bolivia	-3.54	
Ecuador	-3.70	
Paraguay	-5.40	Weak
Honduras	-7.82	
Colombia	-8.57	
Guatemala	-9.67	
Nicaragua	-10.13	
Venezuela	-16.15	

Based on Freedom House indicators

Without invoking a normative judgment or assuming homogeneity within each category, the labels we apply are a way to rank order and cluster countries into meaningful groupings, as defined by the composite index of democratic consolidation. We will use the three-category scheme to classify 20 countries in the 2010 AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys. We then use this classification to estimate the magnitude of crime victimization effects on six indicators of political culture within Strong, Intermediate, and Weak democracies.

Political Culture: Data, Concepts, and Measures

The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), hosted by Vanderbilt University, was initiated over two decades ago by political scientist and current project Director, Mitchell Seligson.⁹ In 2004, LAPOP established the AmericasBarometer as multi-country, regularly conducted surveys of democratic values and behaviors in the Americas, organized by a consortium of academics and partners in the hemisphere. The most recent surveys were

⁹Additional information is available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/about.php>.

conducted in 2010 in 26 countries from North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean, thus comprising the most extensive regional survey project in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁰

The questionnaires used in the 2010 AmericasBarometer surveys contain 10 items that serve as operational definitions of 5 concepts relevant to democratic theory: rule of law, trust in neighbors, trust in political and judicial institutions, preference for democracy, and satisfaction with democracy. The primary independent variable is crime victimization, indicated by responses to the question “Have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, have you been a victim of robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threat or any other type of crime in the past 12 months?”¹¹ By specifying the intended meaning of the term “crime,” the second sentence is a substantial improvement over other surveys, such as Latinobarometro which leaves the term undefined and therefore subject to different interpretations (Wood et al. 2010).¹² Control variables include age, sex, marital status, education, and household income. Table 2 shows the definitions of each concept, and presents descriptive statistics for each indicator. Table 3 summarizes the predicted magnitude of the crime victimization effect on each dependent variable, by level of democratic consolidation.

¹⁰ The LAPOP website (www.LapopSurveys.org) contains a free and publicly available interactive program in both English and Spanish that allows analyses of all AmericasBarometer data sets.

¹¹ We use crime victimization rather than fear of crime for five reasons: fear of crime is more prevalent compared to people’s direct experience with crime; in many places fear of crime, by responding to often-exaggerated media accounts, is unrelated to the actual risk of falling victim to criminal behavior; there is a low correlation between victimization and fear of crime; fear of crime is determined by many variables, including dissatisfaction with the economy; and the direction of causality is ambiguous inasmuch as fear of crime could be the cause or the effect of lack of trust in neighbors and in state institutions (Dammert and Malone 2003).

¹² Two sources of bias are associated with the fact that respondents are asked to retrospectively search their memory for an eligible crime event that occurred during a reference period. As such, the method is subject recall error, which occurs when a respondent forgets that a crime took place during the period. The effect of recall error is to underestimate the actual number of victimizations, which is more likely for less serious, and therefore less memorable, crimes. Recall is usually accurate within three months of an incident, after which people become forgetful of the event and its details (Doebner and Lab 2005:35). A more common source of error is caused by “telescoping,” which means that respondents mistakenly bring criminal events that occurred outside the time frame into the reference period, thereby inflating the measure. In the (unlikely) event that the two effects are equal in magnitude, they have the potential to cancel each other out. The potential sources of bias are mainly relevant when the goal is to generate a valid estimate of the rate of crime victimization in a population.

Table 2: Concepts, Definitions, Codes and Descriptive Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables

Concept	Operational definition	Code	Scale	Mean	s.d.
Dependent Variables					
Rule of law	Some people say that it would be justified for the military to take power when there is a lot of crime. Do you agree?	Yes=1; No=0	0-1	0.41	0.49
	In order to catch criminals, do you believe that the authorities should always abide by the law or that occasionally they can cross the line?	Can occasionally cross the line=1 Should always abide by the law=0	0-1	0.43	0.49
Trust in neighbors	Would you say that people in this community are:	Very or somewhat trustworthy=1 Not very trustworthy or untrustworthy=0	0-1	0.66	0.47
Trust in political and judicial institutions		Composite index	5-35	19.11	6.61
	To what extent do the courts guarantee a fair trial?	Not at all=1; Very much=7	1-7	3.90	1.65
	To what extent do you trust the justice system?	Not at all=1; Very much=7	1-7	4.26	1.88
	To what extent do you trust the national government?	Not at all=1; Very much=7	1-7	3.13	1.74
	To what extent do you trust the political parties?	Not at all=1; Very much=7	1-7	3.97	1.75
	To what extent do you trust the Supreme Court?	Not at all=1; Very much=7	1-7	5.32	1.69

Table 2: Concepts, Definitions, Codes and Descriptive Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables

Concept	Operational definition	Code	Scale	Mean	s.d.
Commitment to democracy as a form of government					
	Preference for democracy (PFD): Which of the following statements do you agree with the most: (1) For people like me it doesn't matter whether a regime is democratic or non-democratic; or (2) Democracy is preferable to any other form of government; or (3) Under some circumstances an authoritarian government may be preferable to a democratic one.	Democracy preferable=1 Otherwise=0	0-1	0.79	0.41
	Satisfaction with democracy (SWD): In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in your country?	Very satisfied or satisfied=1 Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied =0	0-1	0.61	0.49
Independent Variables					
Age	In years		18-65	37.07	13.40
Sex		Male=1; Female=0	0-1	0.48	0.50
Marital status		Married=1; Otherwise=0	0-1	0.33	0.47
Education	In categories	Under high school=1; High school graduate=2; Some college=3; 2-year college=4; 4-year college=5; post graduate=6	1-5	2.55	0.93

Table 2: Concepts, Definitions, Codes and Descriptive Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables

Concept	Operational definition	Code	Scale	Mean	s.d.
Income	Monthly household income	no income=0; minimum wage=1; 1 - 2 wages=2; 2 - 3 wages =3; 3 - 5 wages=4; 5 - 7 wages=5; 7 - 8 wages=6; 8 - 12 wages=7; 12 - 15 wages=8; 15 - 20 wages=9; 20 wages +=10	0-10	4.36	2.33
Victimization	Have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, have you been a victim of robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threat or any other type of crime in the past 12 months?	Yes=1; No=0	0-1	0.21	0.41

Table 3: Predicted Relative Magnitude of Crime Victimization Effects on Dependent Variables, by Level of Democratic Consolidation

Democratic Consolidation	Dependent Variable					
	Rule of law		Trust		Popular support for democracy	
	Favor a military coup when crime is high	OK for police to cross the line to catch criminals	Interpersonal	In institutions	Preference for democracy as form of government	Satisfaction with the way democracy works
Strong	low	low	low	low	low	< low
Intermediate	intermediate	intermediate	intermediate	intermediate	intermediate	< intermediate
Weak	high	high	high	high	high	< high

Crime Victimization and the Democratic Political Culture: Empirical Test

Responses to two questions measure the degree to which people are committed to the rule of law. One asks whether they agree that “it would be justified for the military to take power when there is a lot of crime.” The other asks whether they agree that authorities can occasionally “cross the line” in order to catch criminals. By making specific reference to crime, the items relate directly to the concern with crime victimization effects. Because both dependent variables are dichotomies (1= yes; 0 = no), the appropriate multivariate statistical procedure is logistic regression, the results of which are shown in Table 4.

The reported odds ratios, which are consistently less than 1.00, indicate that, regardless of the level of democratic consolidation, the probability of endorsing the military option declines with increases in age, education, and income. The odds ratios associated with crime victimization, highlighted in column 6, show that, net of socio-demographic standing, victims of crime are more likely to accept the idea of a military coup when crime is high. The values shown in column 9 further indicate that being a victim of a crime in the previous twelve months increases the probability of accepting a military coup by 26 percent, 34 percent, and 38 percent within Strong, Intermediate, and Weak democracies, respectively.¹³

¹³ A disturbing outcome of high rates of crime in Latin America is a tendency for people to accept criminal behavior as a routine feature of daily life (Moser and McIlwaine 2006). This implies that the salience of crime victimization in people’s subjective assessments of their daily experience may be lower in high compared to low crime environments. The “routinization of crime” is an important social phenomenon, but the potential bias in the measure is less relevant to this study. This is because the direction of the effect of the bias on the dependent variables operates in favor of the null (i.e., no differences in the victimization effect on attitudes across Strong, Intermediate, and Weak democracies) rather than the research hypothesis.

Table 4: Crime Victimization Effects on Indicators of Rule of Law, Trust, and Support for Democracy in Strong, Intermediate, and Weak Democracies

Concept	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable ¹							R-sqr	Vict'n effect ⁶	Support hyp.
		Age ²	Sex ³	Marital status ⁴	Education	Income	Victim ⁵				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	8			
Binary dependent variables - Logistic Regression (odds ratio)											
Rule of law											
1.	Military coup when crime is high										Yes
	Strong Dem. ⁷	.98	.76	.96	.67	.92	1.26	7.2%	26%		
	Intermediate Dem. ⁸	.99	1.08	1.01	.91	.95	1.34	3.2%	34%		
	Weak Dem. ⁹	.99	.94	1.02	.90	.92	1.38	4.3%	38%		
2.	OK for Police to cross the line to catch criminals										Yes
	Strong Dem. ⁷	.98	1.13	.82	.83	.98	1.15	3.5%	15%		
	Intermediate Dem. ⁸	.99	1.06	.99	.91	1.02	1.39	2.0%	39%		
	Weak Dem. ⁹	.99	1.11	1.02	.97	1.01	1.46	3.5%	46%		
Trust											
3.	Interpersonal										
	Strong Dem. ⁷	1.01	1.21	.86	1.25	1.09	.66	7.2%	-34%	No	
	Intermediate Dem. ⁸	1.01	1.13	1.07	1.15	1.07	.57	5.0%	-43%		
	Weak Dem. ⁹	1.01	1.27	1.06	1.09	1.05	.69	4.0%	-31%		
Numerical dependent variable - OLS Regression Coefficient											
4.	In political and judicial institutions										
	Strong Dem. ⁷	.03	-.09	.23	.35	.08	-1.98	7.2%		No	
	Intermediate Dem. ⁸	.02	.07	-.14	.12	-.03	-1.15	7.6%			
	Weak Dem. ⁹	-.02	.05	-.16	-.47	-.08	-1.27	9.9%			

Binary dependent variable - Logistic Regression (odds ratio)										
Support for democracy										
5.	Preference for democracy as a form of government								Partial	
	Strong Dem. ⁷	1.02	1.27	.977	1.59	1.04	.96	5.8%	ns	
	Intermediate Dem. ⁸	1.01	1.01	1.046	1.13	1.01	.73	2.0%	-27.3%	
	Weak Dem. ⁹	1.01	1.01	.995	1.13	1.04	.86	2.6%	-13.6%	
6.	Satisfaction with the way democracy works								Partial	
	Strong Dem. ⁷	1.00	.94	1.072	1.030	1.02	.82	11.5%	-18.2%	
	Intermediate Dem. ⁸	1.00	1.13	1.056	.96	1.02	.69	8.0%	-30.8%	
	Weak Demo. ⁹	.99	1.069	1.10	.85	1.03	.72	6.2%	-28.5%	

¹ Statistical significance .05 or less, in bold

² In years, 18-65

³ Dummy: male=1; female=0

⁴ Dummy: single=1; married, widowed, divorced=0

⁵ Dummy: victim=1; non-victim=0

⁶ % change in probability, 1 - Exp(b)

⁷ Includes dummies (not shown): Costa Rica=0; both Chile and Uruguay=1

⁸ Includes dummies (not shown): Panama=0; Argentina, Brazil, Dominican Republic each coded =1

⁹ Includes dummies (not shown): Mexico=0; Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia, Honduras, Paraguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela each coded = 1

The same pattern is shown in the second panel in which the dependent variable is people's willingness to endorse the idea that authorities can break the rules in pursuit of criminals. In Strong democracies, victims of a crime are 15 percent more likely to believe that it is acceptable for police to cross the line. The comparable probability increases to 39 percent in Intermediate democracies, and to 46 percent in Weak democracies. The amount of variance explained is low (column 8), yet variations in the relative magnitudes of the crime effect on both indicators of public's commitment to the rule of law support the research hypothesis: The degree to which victimization promotes anti-democratic political preferences is relative low in Strong democracies, and increases in Intermediate and Weak democracies.¹⁴

The results shown in the first and second panels of Table 4 are consistent with hypotheses derived from the theory of the quality of democracy, crime victimization, and the resilience of political culture, yet the findings are also surprising. Of particular concern is the apparent fragility of people's commitment to the rule of law in Strong democracies, where fully 36 percent of respondents accept the idea of a military coup when crime is high, and where 45 percent of respondents think it is acceptable for the police to ignore the rules in pursuit of criminals. Moreover, contrary to the image of more consolidated democracies, we find that, in Strong democracies, both attitudes are sensitive to the effects of crime victimization. Compared to non-victims, people who have been subject to a criminal act sometime in the previous year are 26 percent more likely to abandon the rule of law in favor of authoritarian political alternative, and are 15 percent more likely to accept the idea that the police going after criminals can bend the rules. The commitment to the rule of law in Strong democracies (i.e., the resilience of democratic attitudes in high quality democracies) appears to be less stable than descriptions of consolidated democracies suggest.

In contrast to the measures of people's commitment to the rule of law, which make explicit reference to high crime rates and to catching criminals, the two indicators of social trust are conceptually a step removed from crime itself inasmuch as the questions do not specifically refer to crime. Victimization nonetheless has a statistically significant negative effect on

¹⁴ Tests of the statistical significance of differences in coefficients reject the null hypothesis that the effect of the victimization variable is the same across the three levels of democratic consolidation.

interpersonal trust, as shown in panel 3. Controlling for demographic characteristics and socioeconomic standing, victims of crime are less likely to say they trust their neighbors. However, when we compare the magnitude of the crime effects across levels of democratic consolidation the coefficients do not follow the predicted pattern. The degree to which victimization lowers trust is greater in Intermediate compared to Strong democracies, as anticipated, but is lowest in Weak democracies, contrary to expectation.

The second indicator of trust shifts attention from interpersonal relations to people's trust in the political and judicial institutions of the state. The measure is a composite index of responses to 5 questions that elicit the respondents' assessment of the courts and their trust in the justice system, the national government, political parties, and the Supreme Court (Table 2).¹⁵ Because the index is an interval variable, with scores that range from 5 to 35, we use Ordinary Least Squares Regression.

As in the case of interpersonal trust, the results in panel 4 show that victims of a crime are less likely to express trust in state institutions. But contrary to the predictions derived from the theory of consolidation and resilience, citizens living in Strong democracies are not comparatively less prone to the crime effect on trust. Other things being equal, being a victim of a crime reduces the trust index by 1.98 points, a coefficient that is higher in Strong democracies than the coefficients that correspond to the victimization variable in Intermediate and Weak democratic contexts.¹⁶ The 10th column in Table 5 therefore displays a "No."

Panels 5 and 6 report the crime effects on two indicators of support for democracy: people's preference for democracy as a political system (PFD) and their satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country (SWD). The results with respect to PFD show that being a victim of a crime has no effect in Strong democracies, but that preference for democracy is more vulnerable to the negative effects of crime victimization in the less consolidated

¹⁵ The result of a principle components factor analysis confirms that the 5 variables load on a single factor, with high factor scores ranging from .70 (fair trial) to .83 (trust in the Supreme Court). The index has a satisfactory Cronbach's Alpha score of .812

¹⁶ The index of trust in institutions can be broken down into two parts: trust in the judiciary and trust in political institutions. The findings based on separate analyses of the two variables do not differ appreciably from the findings based on the composite index, shown in Table 4.

democracies. Victimization reduces the probability of PFD in both Intermediate (-27.3 percent) and in Weak democracies (-13.6 percent).

The results in panel 6 indicate that satisfaction with democracy (SWD) is particularly responsive to victimization effects. The probability that people who have been the target of a criminal act in the previous year are likely to express satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country is 18 percent lower compared to non-victims. The comparable estimates for Intermediate and Weak democracies are -30.8 and -28.5 percent, respectively. Comparing the estimates in panels 5 with those in panel 6 further indicates that, within each level of democratic consolidation, the magnitude of the victimization effect on SWD is consistently higher than the magnitude of the victimization effect on PFD. The different degrees to which each measure is responsive to the effects of crime victimization is consistent with the expectation that preference for the political system democracy (PFD) is a more stable and less contingent indicator relative to satisfaction with democracy (SWD), which is more responsive to people's lived experience.

With respect to both PFD and SWD, the largest crime effect is observed in Intermediate not Weak democracies. The observation that the coefficient for the victimization variable does not show a monotonic increase (from Strong, to Intermediate, to Weak democracies) is inconsistent with the pattern predicted by the theory, the test of which is based on the three-category typology of democratic consolidation. An alternative formulation (not shown) executes the same equations but collapses the Intermediate and Weak democracies into a single group. In so doing, we adopt a dichotomous classification of democracy ("Democracies" and "Others"), a design that is in keeping with the strategy used by Przeworski et al. (2000) and others (e.g., Payne 1998). The results, based on the binary classification of democratic consolidation, indicate that victims of a crime in a democratic political context are less likely to reduce their preference or satisfaction with democracy compared to victims of a crime in the "Other" category. Because these findings are generally consistent with the proposed theory, but are based on a looser test standard (a dichotomous rather than a continuous classification of the quality of democracy), the estimates in panels 5 and 6 can be interpreted as "partial" support for the hypothesis.

Reflections on Crime, Democracy, and the Resilience of Political Culture

The comparative analyses of crime and political culture in Latin America confirm the idea that an individual's personal experience as a victim of criminal behavior promotes values, attitudes, and dispositions considered counter to the cognitive orientations associated with the establishment and consolidation of democracy. The empirical results presented here thus support the widely accepted, if rarely demonstrated assertion that the upsurge in crime erodes the kind of political culture that many analysts consider foundational to a liberal democratic system. Beyond this general conclusion, and in contrast to the blanket statements often found in the literature on crime and violence, the findings show that not all cognitive orientations are equally sensitive to the crime victimization effect, and, in addition, that the magnitude of the crime effect is mediated by the structural context, as predicted by the proposed theory of the quality of democracy and the resilience of political culture.

The conceptual framework presented here draws on the literatures on democratic consolidation and political culture to specify the conditions in which crime's effect on values and attitudes is expected to be more salient. We contend that many of the assumptions that are invoked in studies of democratic consolidation and that are embedded in theories of democracy can be expressed in terms of the concept of "resilience," a term we appropriate from the literature on social-ecological systems. The framework anticipates that the corrosive effects of crime victimization on political culture will be comparatively low in highly consolidated regimes, moderate in intermediate regimes, and pronounced in weak democracies.

Empirical tests of the hypothesis used six attitudinal measures deemed important to democratic systems. The results were consistent with expectations with respect to two indicators of people's commitment to the rule of law: willingness to endorse a military coup when crime rates are high and tolerance of extra-legal behavior when authorities are in pursuit of criminals. The comparative analysis, based on tests carried out within each of the three levels of democratic consolidation, noted that the public's commitment to key principles associated with the rule of law is least vulnerable to the victimization effect in Strong democracies, compared to the magnitude of the victimization effect in Intermediate and Weak democracies. But that does not mean that political culture in high quality democratic systems is immune the

disturbance caused by crime victimization. The indicators of rule of law may be more sensitive to the effects of crime victimization in Intermediate and Weak democracies, yet crime victims are more likely than non-victims to condone the use of extra-legal methods to combat crime and apprehend criminals, even in the U.S., Canada, Uruguay, Chile and Costa Rica.

The results with respect to two measures of support for democracy – people’s preference for democracy as a political system, and their satisfaction with “the way democracy works” in their country – were partially consistent with expectations (based on a dichotomous rather than a three-category classification of democracy). The empirical analysis also supported the corollary to the theory, namely that, regardless of the context of democratization, people’s preference for democracy as a political system is a cognitive orientation that is less vulnerable to disturbance than people’s satisfaction with democracy. The analysis of the AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys thus finds full or partial support for five of the seven hypotheses derived from the theory of the quality of democracy and the resilience of political culture.

Two measures of trust – trust in neighbors and trust in political and judicial institutions—behaved in unexpected yet revealing ways. Whereas the theory of democratic resilience suggests that consolidated democracies, those systems with persistent records of effective regime performance, should be conducive of robust levels of interpersonal trust and political legitimacy, we found little support for this expectation. Crime victims expressed lower levels of interpersonal trust in all three democratic contexts. In the case of trust in the institutions of the state, the crime effect was actually largest in Strong democracies. It thus appears that the concept of trust, which has received so much attention in the literatures on social capital and regime legitimacy, is fragile and susceptible to corrosion, regardless of the degree of democratic consolidation.

The importance of values and attitudes considered necessary to the transition and consolidation of democracy has mainly found expression in studies of political elites, carried out by scholars in the field of comparative politics with an interest in third-wave democracies. The emphasis on elite-centered choices, accommodations, and strategies has meant that analysts have tended to downplay the importance of mass democratic culture and social movements and their relationship to the maintenance of democracy and to democratic governance. Foweraker

and Landman (1997:235) note that “the focus on elite decision-making, and the explicit exclusion of popular agency, suggests that the literature on democratic transitions does not address the full set of conditions for democracy.”

The political significance of mass culture has received greater attention in recent years in many areas of concern, but holds center stage in analyses of the political consequences of the upsurge in crime and violence in Latin America. This study seeks to advance our understanding of crime and politics by presenting empirical evidence of the corrosive effects of crime victimization on democratic attitudes and values, by demonstrating that the components of mass political culture are not equally sensitive to the victimization effect, and, more generally, by presenting a preliminary outline of a theory that links the quality of democracy to the resilience of political culture. Evidence that victimization affects some attitudes more than others, and that the magnitude of the crime effect is mediated by the structural context, suggests new directions in the study of crime, violence, and democracy in Latin America.

Appendix A Freedom House Indicators		
Dimension	Sub-category	Operational Definition
Political Rights	Electoral Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is the head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2) Are the national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 3) Are the electoral laws and framework fair?
	Political Pluralism and Participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system open to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2) Is there a significant opposition vote and a realistic possibility for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3) Are the people's political choices free from domination by the military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or any other powerful group? 4) Do cultural, ethnic, religious, or other minority groups have full political rights and electoral opportunities?
	Functioning of Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2) Is the government free from pervasive corruption? 3) Is the government accountable to the electorate between elections, and does it operate with openness and transparency?
Civil Rights	Freedom of Expression and Belief	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Are there free and independent media and other forms of cultural expression? (Note: In cases where the media are state controlled but offer pluralistic points of view, the survey gives the system credit.) 2) Are religious institutions and communities free to practice their faith and express themselves in public and private? 3) Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free of extensive political indoctrination? 4) Is there open and free private discussion?

	<p>Associational and Organizational Rights</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is there freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion? 2) Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations? (Note: This includes civic organizations, interest groups, foundations, etc.) 3) Are there free trade unions and peasant organizations or equivalents, and is there effective collective bargaining? Are there free professional and other private organizations?
	<p>Rule of Law</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is there an independent judiciary? 2) Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are police under direct civilian control? 3) Is there protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system? Is there freedom from war and insurgencies? 4) Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?
	<p>Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do citizens enjoy freedom of travel or choice of residence, employment, or institution of higher education? 2) Do citizens have the right to own property and establish private businesses? Is private business activity unduly influenced by government officials, the security forces, political parties/organizations, or organized crime? 3) Are there personal social freedoms, including gender equality, choice of marriage partners, and size of family? 4) Is there equality of opportunity and the absence of economic exploitation?

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