

# THE FEARFUL CITIZEN: CRIME AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

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## Abstract

This article shows that while the impact of crime victimization on support for democracy is sensitive to question wording, the influence of fear of crime on this attitude is consistent and immune to measurement effects. We construe this as evidence that fear of crime has greater attitudinal consequences for democratic support than crime victimization. We show that fear of crime is affected by actual individual and contextual levels of crime victimization as well as evaluations of regime performance. Finally, and consistent with the affective intelligence literature, we find that crime fails to activate people's surveillance systems in countries that exhibit very low levels of it (typically, where less than 10% of respondents report to have been victims of crime). It is only in countries that have significant crime victimization where fear of it becomes a factor affecting support for democracy.

**Keywords:** fear of crime - support for democracy - emotion and politics - political attitudes - multilevel analysis

## Resumen

Este artículo muestra que el impacto de la victimización por crimen en el apoyo a la democracia está condicionado por los efectos de

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fraseo (es decir, por la manera como se mide este apoyo). Sin embargo, la influencia del miedo al crimen en el apoyo a la democracia es consistente e inmune a los efectos de medición. Lo anterior sugiere que el miedo al crimen tiene una mayor consecuencia actitudinal en este apoyo que la victimización por crimen. Mostramos que el miedo al crimen está afectado por niveles de victimización individual y contextual así como por evaluaciones del desempeño del régimen político. Finalmente, y consistente con la literatura sobre la inteligencia afectiva, encontramos que el crimen no activa los sistemas de vigilancia de la gente en países donde los niveles de criminalidad son muy bajos (típicamente, donde menos del 10% de los entrevistados asegura haber sido víctima de un acto delincencial). Es solo en países donde existen altos niveles de victimización donde el miedo al crimen se convierte en un factor que afecta el apoyo a la democracia. A un nivel más teórico, el presente trabajo resalta la importancia de las emociones en la formación de actitudes políticas.

**Palabras clave:** miedo al crimen - apoyo a la democracia - emociones y política - actitudes políticas - análisis multinivel

### The Fearful Citizen: Crime and Support for Democracy in Latin America

The provision of public safety is one of the core functions of government. In many places, however, governments fail at this basic task. In Latin America, in particular, the state has been largely incapable of providing citizen security (Casas-Zamora, 2013; Costa, 2012; Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo-PNUD, 2013). Dammert (2013:79), citing statistics from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), reports that half of the top twenty countries with the highest homicide rates in the world are located in Latin America. Less violent crime is also pervasive (PNUD, 2013). The reasons for this rise remain highly contested, as many interpretations have been advanced: rapid economic change, rapid urbanization, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies, the legacies of state violence, and the demands of transnational criminal networks, among others

(Casas-Zamora, 2013; Chillier and Varela, 2009; Cruz, 2011; Dammert, 2013; LaFree and Tseloni, 2006; Pearce, 2010; Portes and Roberts, 2005).

This crime wave has fostered a deep sense of fear among Latin American populations, particularly among women (Casas-Zamora, 2013:31; Dammert, 2012). Not surprisingly, citizens in many places cite crime as the most important issue facing their countries.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the political consequences of the feelings of insecurity in Latin America have not been thoroughly explored. While it is usually used as another predictor in studies that try to determine the impact of crime on support for democracy, it is not generally given specific attention and therefore it is not properly theorized.

The main question we address here is whether the widespread delinquency in Latin America leads citizens to reject the idea of democracy. Answering this question requires revisiting the larger issue of the attitudinal bases of support for democracy in transitional societies. The study of mass support for democracy is important because, as Inglehart (2003) has demonstrated, this support is correlated with actual levels of democracy. In other words, individual support for democracy tends to be weaker in countries that exhibit lower levels of democracy. But as Casas-Zamora (2013:11) and Cruz (2011), among others, have noted, crime itself can be a product of democracy's deficiencies in addressing the needs of significant segments of the population and dealing with the legacies of authoritarian rule. Crime can also lead many to reject rule of law and embrace police tactics that can foster the violation of human rights (Malone, 2010-2011; Malone, 2012). In this sense, crime can further undermine the very conditions that are necessary for stronger citizen endorsement of democracy.

The early literature on mass support for democracy debated whether this attitude was anchored on performance

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<sup>3</sup> In 12 of the 18 countries surveyed by the Latinobarómetro in 2010, crime was cited as the most important issue facing the country (Costa 2012:7).

considerations or deep-seated values (Bratton and Mattes, 2001; Gibson, 1996; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart, 2003; Mattes and Bratton, 2007; Mishler and Rose, 1996). Today, at least when one discusses the Latin American case, one cannot examine the bases of support for democracy without accounting for the impact of citizen insecurity on this attitude. To the extent that crime elicits strong negative emotions, the crisis of citizen insecurity in Latin America also allows us to theorize one dimension that was virtually absent in early treatments of support for democracy, namely the role of emotions. Disputing the idea that rational calculations and cognitive effects are the primary drivers of political attitudes, some public opinion scholars argue that emotions influence which factors are judged and how much weight they are given when individuals make political decisions (Demertzis, 2013; Marcus, 2000; Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, and MacKuen, 2007; Rusting, 1998). In this paper we show that fear of crime—measured by feelings of insecurity—has a consistent impact in the levels of support for democracy. We argue that fear of crime should not be construed as an “irrational emotion” for it is driven—as shown below—by both actual experiences with crime and assessments of regime performance. But fear of crime taps an emotional response that is seldom explored in the literature of mass support for democracy. We find here that fear of crime has no impact on attitudes towards democracy in countries that exhibit very low crime victimization (typically, less than 10% of self-reported victimization), but it does in countries where self-reported crime victimization rates exceed 15%. This finding cannot easily be explained if one sees fear of crime as only expressing performance evaluations. But if one construes this fear as also an emotional response, then standard theories of emotions and politics would provide an explanation for this discrepancy.

Existing research on the role of crime on mass attitudes towards democracy in Latin America tends to show that while the impact of feelings of insecurity on democratic at-

titudes is strong and consistent, the effect of self-reported crime victimization on this support is more contested. For instance, when support for democracy is defined as regime preference,<sup>4</sup> crime victimization seems to have no effect on this choice (Ceobanu, Wood, and Ribeiro, 2010:72-73; Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2010:459; Pérez, 2003-4:644, but see Bateson, 2010, who does find a significant association). When democracy is measured as agreement with its Churchillian definition,<sup>5</sup> some find that being a victim of crime has no effect on this attitude (Bateson, 2010; Pérez, 2011) but others do find a significant impact of crime victimization on support for democracy (Casas-Zamora, 2013). Crime victimization has also been found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction with democracy (Ceobanu, Wood, and Ribeiro, 2010; Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2010), political legitimacy (Carreras, 2013), increased political participation (Bateson, 2012), and support for rule of law (Malone, 2010). We revisit this issue and show here that while the impact of crime victimization on support for democracy is indeed sensitive to question wording (i.e. how support for democracy is measured), fear of crime is not. We confirm previous studies that show an association between fear of crime and democratic attitudes, and we confirm existing literature (Dammert, 2012; Garofalo, 1979; Rotker, 2002; Skogan, 1987) by showing that this fear is driven by actual victimization, both individual and contextual (city or municipality levels of crime), as well as by assessments of the political system. Moreover, we show that fear of crime has a greater impact on support for democracy in countries with significant levels of self-reported crime victimization than in countries that exhibit very low degrees of crime victimization. Thus, we argue that while crime victimization per se might not have a consistently significant direct influence on support for de-

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<sup>4</sup> "Democracy is preferable to any other form of government." Full wording of the question is provided later in the text.

<sup>5</sup> "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?"

mocracy (or at least in some ways of measuring it), it is a significant driver of feelings of insecurity, and therefore its impact on support for democracy is extremely important.

In this paper we theorize the relationship between fear of crime (a negative emotion) and support for democracy by arguing that significant levels of crime victimization trigger a surveillance system that leads people to assign a significant weight to this fear when assessing political choices. We do not dispute—and in fact show—that fear of crime is also driven by assessments of the larger political regime. But we do choose to stress in this article the emotional content of this fear for three main reasons. First, the literature has already explored the connection between performance evaluations and support for democracy. Second, very little work exists on the impact of emotions and related mechanisms on support for democracy. Finally, relying on an emotion-driven explanation, we can make sense of the finding that fear of crime does not have a significant impact on support for democracy in countries that exhibit very low levels of self-reported crime victimization.

The data analysis relies on a multilevel mixed-effects research design that includes country- and individual-level effects on support for democracy. Like previous multilevel analyses (Ceobanu, Wood, and Ribeiro, 2010; Fernandez and Kuenzi, 2010), we include country-level variables that examine the impact of economic development and homicide rates on support for democracy. Given that we identify some question-wording effects in this support, we utilize two different ways of measuring support for democracy. We control for the influence of other variables traditionally associated with the study of this support, such as economic and political performance, political efficacy, and interpersonal trust. We use a comprehensive data set from the 2012 round of the America Barometer to analyze these associations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Data come from the America Barometer survey conducted in 2012 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University. In all the 23 countries included in this analysis (Belize, Canada, and the United States were not

## The Role of Emotions in Politics

Although there is a long intellectual tradition that links emotions with politics (Elster, 1999), it is only relatively recently that the role of emotions in determining political attitudes has received the attention it deserves (Redlawsk, 2006). Those who study the impact of emotions on political choices tend to approach this study from two different perspectives: one that examines how emotions interact with personality traits and another that studies how people experience different emotional reactions to contemporary events (Marcus, 2000). This paper fits into the second approach, for it seeks to understand how emotional responses to the current crime wave affect attitudes towards democracy.

In a path breaking study, Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000) argue that ordinary people possess two emotional systems: a dispositional one that processes people's normal reactions to events and a surveillance system that manages their attention to new and threatening conditions. In this approach, which came to be known as "affective intelligence theory" (MacKuen, Marcus, Neuman, and Keele, 2007; Marcus, 2003; Marcus, MacKuen, and Neuman, 2011), the dispositional system relies on emotions such as enthusiasm and aversion whereas the surveillance system is activated by anxiety, fear, or uncertainty, "to signal that something about the world is not routine and that conscious attention is necessary" (Marcus, MacKuen, and Neuman, 2011:324). When people deal with familiar conditions, they pay less explicit attention to their environment and tend to rely on existing predispositions to make political choices. In the presence of anxiety, people pay close attention to the environment and give more weight to negative information (Cassino and Lodge, 2007:106). More importantly, emo-

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included), nationally representative surveys of voting age adults were conducted using a multi-stage probabilistic design and stratified by major regions of the country, size of municipality and urban and rural areas. For a full description of the methodology see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ab2012/AB-2012-Tech-Info-12.18.12.pdf>

tions can be used directly as information. Thus, “a negative mood can be used as a factor in deciding that an object is bad, regardless of whether the mood has anything to do with the object” (Cassino and Lodge, 2007:106). This view is endorsed by Brader (2011:202), who argues that negative feelings lead to negative judgments. All things being equal, anxiety triggers a desire for political change (Nardulli and Kuklinski, 2007:316). Based on these insights, we expect that people who become anxious because of crime would blame the existing political regime for it and reject democracy accordingly. In fact, the negative political consequences of crime would affect *any* political regime. In this paper we focus on the impact on crime on support for democracy because the overwhelming majority of Latin American governments claim to be democracies, and are generally perceived to be so, even if only of the electoral kind or with serious flaws (PNUD, 2004:78). To the extent that Latin American governments claim to be democracies, people fearful of crime will tend to blame their regime for their inability to deal with the source of their fears and therefore will tend to reject it.

There is an additional mechanism that links emotions and support/rejection of democracy. Fear focuses a person’s attention on the potential threat and, as Brader (2011:195) writes, “directs attention selectively toward the threat and ways of removing it.” Accordingly, fearful and anxious citizens are more likely to pay greater attention to—and therefore be more persuaded by—proposals that offer “quick fixes” to the crime situation, such as those usually associated with authoritarian iron-fist policies. We agree with Malone’s (2012:17) contention that many citizens feel they are in a “security trap,” which leads to “increasing public support for undemocratic measures.” In other words, fear of crime makes citizens more amenable to antidemocratic messages.

What is important here is that crime triggers an emotional response that has political consequences. Under normal conditions, when citizens are engaging only their



dispositional emotional systems, crime can be seen as a random occurrence, an event that was perhaps triggered by the individual's own carelessness, with no political consequences. In a context where crime is prevalent, as it is the case of most of Latin America today, people's surveillance emotional system is activated and—as a consequence—fear of crime becomes an important piece of information in evaluating the political regime.

Existing work on the political consequences of fear and anxiety argues that these emotions prompt citizens to reconsider their political predispositions (Brader, 2011:205). Fear can also lead to a "securitization" of political processes, a situation that seems to be emerging in Latin America again. As Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1997) argue, securitization is a situation where an issue is perceived as an existential threat and therefore merits reactions that are outside the normal bounds of political procedure. For this reason, it is understandable to see why fear of crime leads many to reject existing political arrangements and support military coups to deal with it (Casas-Zamora, 2013:45). We do not argue that the mechanisms linking crime and democratic attitudes are rooted exclusively in emotional and social-psychological responses, for we acknowledge that standard performance-based considerations also apply. But the role of performance evaluations on attitudinal support for democracy has been widely explored. We stress here the emotional mechanisms that crime also triggers. If fear of crime were processed exclusively as an indicator of the performance of the political system, its impact on support for democracy would be found across countries. However, and as we show here, fear of crime has a negative impact on support for democracy only in countries with significant levels of individual crime victimization and not in those with very low levels of it.

While we stress here an emotional mechanism to understand the relationship between citizen insecurity and support for democracy, there are some alternative explanations

that need to be acknowledged. In the social psychological tradition, crime victimization can lead people to reject democracy because it increases their perception of threat, and this makes people more susceptible to endorse authoritarian alternatives. For instance, Stenner (2005:8) argues that antidemocratic predispositions can be triggered by "changing conditions of threat," especially when they affect people's "normative order." But she also concludes that authoritarianism seems to be a lasting personality trait (Stenner, 2005:326). In some cases, authoritarian reactions are seen as the result of aggressiveness against deviants, against those who flout societal norms and conventions (Altemeyer, 1981). Others (Inglehart, 1997) suggest that authoritarian reactions are triggered by societal and cultural changes caused by rapid modernization and the desire to seek predictability. While these mechanisms are plausible, they rely on more demanding assumptions to be operative, being personality traits (Altemeyer, 1981; Stenner, 2005), or swift societal change (Inglehart, 1997).

Alternatively, the effect of crime on support for democracy can be seen as the result of performance assessments, not social psychological dynamics. A large body of literature argues that support for democracy is performance-driven (*inter alia*, Carlin and Singer, 2011; Carrión, 2008; Bratton and Mattes, 2001). Crime can thus trigger the rejection of democracy for the state's inability to deliver security, a public good. Crime can be a signal of system failure that may lead many to reject democracy. While this view can indeed include crime as a performance variable, doing so underplays the strong emotional aspects associated with crime, especially in contexts where crime is widespread. Moreover, if fear of crime is perceived only as a performance variable, then its effect on support for democracy should not depend on the context, i.e. on the existing levels of crime victimization. We show here that, indeed, the effect of fear on support for democracy is not statistically significant in countries with very low crime.

## National Contexts and the Individual

Voters may look at the situation of violent crime in their countries, even if they were not directly affected by it, and assess the political regime accordingly. Alternatively, voters may be driven primarily by their direct personal experience with crime. Other national factors can affect individual levels of support for democracy. For instance, countries with a higher level of economic development may exhibit more content citizens because they believe democracy is delivering prosperity. Residents in poorer countries, on the other hand, may have a lesser attachment to a political regime that is exhibiting serious performance limitations. This is consistent with modernization theory and its variants (Inglehart, 1997) that suggest a nation's level of economic development is associated with democracy. GDP per capita is likely also an indicator of state strength so this variable sheds some light on the way to which a greater state presence is associated with higher levels of support for democracy. The multilevel model we develop to examine the impact of crime on democracy includes country-level variables that try to control for the severity of crime (measured as homicide rates present in 2012) and level of economic development in 2012 (measured as Growth Domestic Product per capita in US dollars).

## Control Variables: Political Efficacy, Interpersonal Trust, Economic, and Political Performance

In addition to the standard socio-demographic controls (age, education, gender, interest in politics), research on mass attitudes towards democracy offers a series of factors that need to be controlled for when one studies the impact of crime on this support. Political efficacy measures the degree to which citizens feel that they understand and have influence over the political process. The literature (Balch, 1974) distinguishes between "internal efficacy" (ability to understand politics) and "external efficacy" (a sense that people

in government care about what citizens think). We hypothesize that people who exhibit higher levels of political efficacy, both internal and external, will be more likely to support democracy.<sup>7</sup>

Another factor that is frequently offered in the literature as a predictor of this support is interpersonal trust. In the social capital tradition (Putnam, 1993), interpersonal trust is seen as an emerging property of social systems that enjoy widespread associational networks. Newton (2001) and Inglehart (2003) find that countries with higher levels of interpersonal trust tend to have higher levels of support for democracy. We control for this factor accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

To account for the large body of work which argues that citizens' attitudes and preferences are largely determined by rational calculations, i.e. economic concerns (Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Fiorina, 1981; Kiewit, 1983; Lewis-Beck, 1988), we control for economic voting. In the standard formulation, voters make political choices driven by assessments of the economy, granting support when they are satisfied with economic conditions but withdrawing it when they find economy sour. Some argue that what matters to voters is whether their personal economy (or the country's economy) is improving in relation to the immediate past, in what is described as "retrospective voting" (Fiorina, 1981). An additional debate developed in relation to the focus of attention of economic assessments. For some, the important variable to consider was the condition of the country's economy ("sociotropic voting") not the individual's pocket-book (Kinder and Kiewit, 1981). Thus, we control for retro-

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<sup>7</sup> We measure the respondent's sense of efficacy by using two 7-point scale questions. Internal efficacy: "You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country." External efficacy: "Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think." Responses were rescaled to vary from 0 to 100.

<sup>8</sup> Interpersonal trust is measured by a 7-point scale question that asks agreement with the following statement: "And speaking of the people from around here, would you say that people in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy...?" Responses were rescaled to vary from 0 to 100.

spective and current assessments of the national economy and the respondent's personal economic situation.<sup>9</sup>

## Data and Research Design

To reiterate, we test whether self-reported crime victimization and fear of crime (measured by feelings of insecurity) affect attitudinal support for democracy. Given that previous research shows some inconsistent results regarding this relationship, we test our models using two dependent variables, which offer alternative ways of measuring endorsement of democracy. The first variable measures agreement with its Churchillian definition:

*Support for democracy (SFD).* This is a 7-point scale question that probes the respondent's level of agreement with the following statement: "Changing the subject again, democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?" The responses were rescaled to range from 0 (no support) to 100 (high support for democracy).

The second dependent variable measures support for democracy by asking respondents to make a regime choice. We refer to this second way of measuring endorsement of democracy as "regime preference for democracy."

*Regime preference for democracy (RPD).* To measure regime choice we use the following question: "Now changing the subject... Which of the following statements do you agree with the most: (1) For people like me it doesn't matter whether a government is democratic or non-democratic, OR (2) De-

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<sup>9</sup> These questions were worded as follows: (1) How would you describe the country's economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? (2) Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago? (3) How would you describe your overall economic situation? Would you say that it is very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad? (4) Do you think that your economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago? Responses were recoded and rescaled so that they would vary from 0 (negative assessments) to 100 (positive assessments).

mocracy is preferable to any other form of government, OR (3) Under some circumstances an authoritarian government may be preferable to a democratic one." The variable was recoded so that responses will range from the authoritarian choice ("under some circumstances an authoritarian government may be preferable...") to the democratic one ("democracy is preferable..."). The neutral choice ("for people like me...") was placed between these two regime alternatives.

The Pearson correlation coefficient of these two variables is .20 ( $p < .0001$ ). This means that while they are positively correlated, the correlation is weak. This implies that they are tapping different dimensions of support for democracy, which is understandable given the different wording of the choices. Thus, we find it appropriate to use both to see whether crime and fear of crime affect endorsement of democracy in a consistent manner, regardless of the way we measure support for democracy.

To measure the impact of crime on democratic attitudes we use two variables. The first is individually reported *crime victimization*. The respondents were asked the following: "Now, changing the subject, 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 threats or any other type of crime in the past 12 months?" Those who answered affirmatively were assigned a score of one, and zero otherwise. The second crime-related variable is *fear of crime*. We measured fear by using the proxy variable of perception or feelings of insecurity, for which we use a 7-point scale question: "Speaking of the neighborhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe or very unsafe?" The responses were rescaled so that the resulting scale would range from 0 (very little fear of crime) to 100 (very high fear of crime). We acknowledge that this proxy is only an approximation to measuring fear of crime. But

we contend that while this question is strictly asking about feelings of insecurity and not emotions, it is difficult to argue that an affective reaction (in this case, feeling unsafe) is not an emotional response. In standard accounts of emotions and politics, feelings are indeed treated as emotions (see Marcus, 2003). Again, we admit this question could also be measuring performance assessments in addition to emotions caused by crime, but we want to focus on the emotional aspects that this question clearly probes. For the analysis that follows, all predictors—with the exception of the dichotomous variables—are centered in relation to their countries' means. We do so because it has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of multicollinearity in multilevel designs (Bickel, 2007; Paccagnella, 2006), and to simplify the interpretations of the results.

We develop four models to test the influence of crime on attitudes towards democracy, each model representing a different combination of the control variables. We test the same models with the two different versions of our dependent variable. Table 1 reports the results for the "support for democracy" variable (agreement with its Churchillian definition). The first model is our baseline model because it only includes the country-level effects, the crime variables, interpersonal trust, feelings of political efficacy, and sociodemographic variables (age, education, gender, and degree of interest in politics).<sup>10</sup> Model 2 adds variables that are associated with the "economic voting" literature: retrospective and current assessments of the country's and the respondent's economic situation. Model 3 removes the economic voting variables and replaces them with predictors that tap political performance: trust in the judiciary and

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<sup>10</sup> Education is measured by the total number of years of formal schooling. Women are assigned a score of one, and zero for men. Interest in politics is measured by asking respondents "How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none." As in previous cases, the answers were rescaled to range from 0 to 100, with the highest score denoting strong interest in politics.

Congress (or Parliament).<sup>11</sup> We also test a fully saturated model, with the inclusion of all predictors. Given that we have detected wording effects in the literature (varying results depending upon how support for democracy is measured) we test all these models with a different formulation of our dependent variable, a regime preference for democracy (Table 2).

Country-level factors that affect support for democracy may also interact with our main independent crime-related variables. For instance, it is possible that the pernicious effects of crime on democracy would be higher in countries with low levels of economic development or high homicide rates. Accordingly, we tested a number of cross-level interactions (individual crime victimization and fear of crime were interacted with each country's GDP per capita and homicide rate), but none of them emerged as statistically significant. Therefore we decided to drop them from subsequent analysis.

Given that our data come from 23 different countries, and thus have a hierarchical structure where respondents are nested within countries, multilevel analysis is our estimation of choice. Multilevel analysis allows predicting individual support for democracy adjusted for country differences, as well as predicting the national effects on support for democracy controlled by individual characteristics. Individual support for democracy in this estimation strategy is the combination of fixed effects (the covariates at both the individual and country level) and random effects from country to country. We estimate SFD using multilevel mixed-effects linear regression but we employ multilevel mixed-effect ordinal logistic regression to estimate RFD, given that it is a dependent variable with only three ordered categories. Table 1 offers the estimates of Support for Democracy (SFD)

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<sup>11</sup> Trust in the judiciary and Trust in Congress (or Parliament) are measured by two 7-point scale questions: "To what extent do you trust the justice system?" and "To what extent do you trust the National Congress? [or Parliament]" Responses were rescaled to range from 0 (low trust) to 100 (high trust).



and Table 2 displays the results of the estimation for Regime Preference for Democracy (RPD).

## Results and Discussion

Let's discuss the estimates for SFD first (Table 1). The intercept or constant for SFD is equal to 70.40 (model 1). This is the expected value of the mean of SFD when all our independent variables are set equal to their country means. Substantively, this value indicates that, on average, there is a moderate to strong support for the Churchillian definition of democracy in the 23 countries examined here. The results suggest that there is a significant effect of violent crime on levels of SFD. Respondents that reside in countries with higher rates of homicides tend to have a lower support for democracy than residents of less violent countries: an additional unit above the regional mean of rate of homicides reduces support for democracy by .119 points (model 1). However, individual crime victimization does not have a significant impact in the levels of SFD, and in the only case that it emerges as significant at the .05 level or best, it appears with the wrong sign. Fear of crime, on the other hand, consistently emerges as a negative influence on SFD, with one unit above the country mean depressing this support by 1.086 points (model 1). Another way of looking at this relationship is by examining how the predicted values of support for democracy (based on model 1 of Table 1) plot against feelings of insecurity (Figure 1). As it can be seen, the predicted value of this support is almost 73 (on the 0-100 scale) for those who feel safe in their neighborhoods but only around 68 for those who declare to feel "very unsafe" in their neighborhoods.

As the modernization theory (Inglehart, 1997) would suggest, a country's level of economic development is positively related to support for democracy. The effect, granted, is small (.001) but it is still significant in all of the models. GDP per capita is likely associated with greater state capacity and

better social programs, so we infer that the abilities of these high-income countries “to deliver the goods” account for their citizens’ greater endorsement of democracy than those who reside in low-income countries, which more likely exhibit weaker states and less comprehensive social programs.

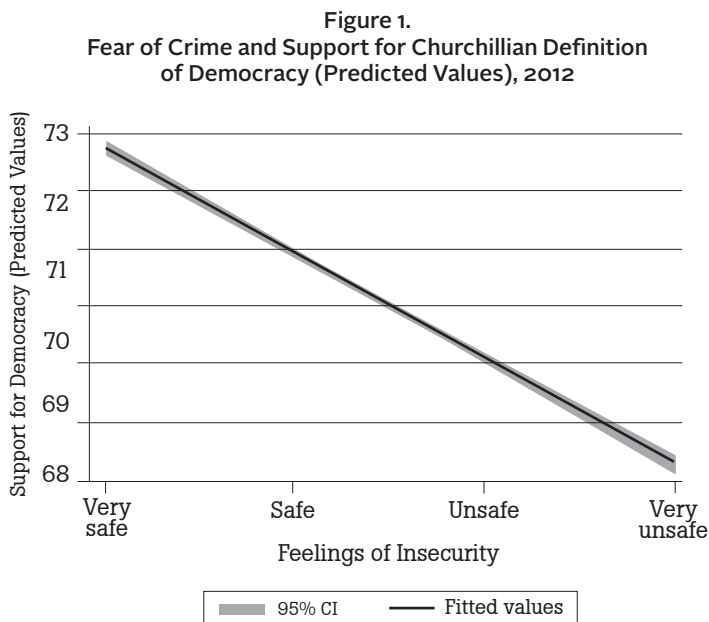
Model 2 tests the impact of economic voting variables on SFD, and the evidence offers some partial support for this view. Respondents who have retrospective evaluations of the economy that are above their country’s means (both sociotropic and egotistical) tend to display greater levels of support for democracy than those whose assessments are below the mean. Assessment of current conditions are, however, not significant or emerge with the wrong sign. In terms of the impact of political performance, we find strong and consistent support for the view that trust in institutions (in this case the judiciary and Congress) increases support for democracy (model 3). In a similar vein, feelings of internal efficacy are consistently associated with greater endorsement of democracy, meaning that people who score above their country’s means in the feeling that they understand the most important political issues of the moment have higher scores in the scale of support for democracy (feeling of external efficacy is significant in only two of the models). Finally, all the socio-demographic variables, with exception of gender, are statistically significant and in the expected direction.

**Table 1.**  
Determinants of Support for Democracy in Latin America

<b>1. Fixed Effects</b>	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Full Model
<i>Country Level</i>				
Homicide rate	-.119* (.060)	-.118* (.060)	-.117* (.061)	-.117* (.060)
GDP per capita	.001*** (.000)	.001*** (.000)	.001*** (.000)	.001*** (.000)
<i>Individual Level</i>				
Crime victimization	.574 (.398)	.533 (.403)	.779** (.402)	.730 (.406)

Fear of crime	-1.086*** (.187)	-1.05*** (.190)	-.936*** (.189)	-.931*** (.192)
Trust in the judiciary			.049*** (.006)	.052*** (.006)
Trust in Congress			-.026*** (.006)	.025*** (.006)
Evaluation of country's current economic situation		-.003 (.008)		-.010 (.008)
Retrospective evaluation of country's economic situation		.018*** (.005)		.016** (.005)
Evaluation of personal current economic situation		-.031*** (.009)		-.035*** (.009)
Retrospective evaluation of personal economic situation		.019*** (.005)		.015** (.005)
External efficacy	.368*** (.085)	.339*** (.088)	.024 (.091)	.024 (.093)
Internal efficacy	2.788*** (.094)	2.806*** (0.95)	2.784***	2.80 (.096)
Interpersonal trust	.053*** (.005)	.053*** (.006)	.048*** (.006)	.049*** (.006)
Interest in politics	.022*** (.005)	.021*** (.005)	.019*** (.005)	.019*** (.005)
Age	.143*** (.010)	.149*** (.010)	.144*** (.010)	.147*** (.011)
Education	.376*** (.040)	.399*** (.041)	.412*** (.041)	.438*** (.041)
Women	.529 (.305)	-.588 (.309)	.295 (.308)	-.334 (.312)
Constant	70.371*** (1.17)	70.320*** (1.160)	70.322*** (1.177)	70.298*** (1.167)
<b>11. Random Effects</b>	Estimate (Std. Error)	Estimate (Std. Error)	Estimate (Std. Error)	Estimate (Std. Error)
Country Variance (Constant)	30.170*** (9.052)	29.587*** (8.884)	30.512*** (9.154)	29.910*** (8.981)
Individual Variance (Residual)	723.580*** (5.732)	721.191*** (5.800)	716.023*** (5.761)	713.586*** (5.819)
Log Restricted-Likelihood	-150258.3	-145980.76	-145530.93	-141634.49
N. of cases (N. of countries)	31885(23)	30988(23)	30916(23)	30099(23)

p-values \* < .05; \*\* < .01; \*\*\* < .001. Entries are multilevel mixed-effects linear regression coefficients.



We now move to examine the determinants of regime preference for democracy (Table 2 and Figure 2). We use the same predictors and models employed to estimate SFD. The results confirm the powerful impact of emotions generated by the crime wave in Latin America on attitudes towards democracy. As was the case with SFD, fear of crime emerges as a consistent predictor of regime choice in every single model. If we compute the predicted probabilities of selecting the democratic option (“democracy is preferable”) when all the other predictor variables are held at their means (based on results of Table 2, model 1), and we plot them against fear of crime (feelings of insecurity), we can clearly see that the greater the respondent’s fear of crime, the lesser the probability of him/her selecting the democratic choice (Figure 2).

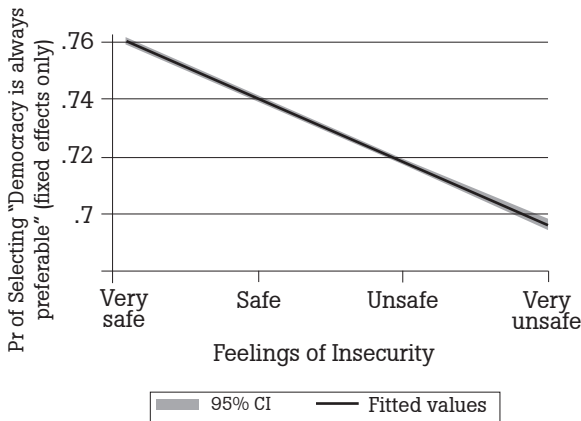
**Table 2.**  
**Determinants of Regime Preference for Democracy**  
**in Latin America**

<b>Fixed Effects</b>	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Full Model
<i>Country Level</i>				
Homicide rate	.004*** (.000)	-.004*** (.000)	-.005*** (.001)	-.000*** (.001)
GDP per capita	.000*** (.000)	.000 (.000)	-.000 (.000)	.001 (.000)
<i>Individual Level</i>				
Crime victimization	-.121*** (.034)	-.118*** (.035)	-.106** (.035)	-.089* (.035)
Fear of crime	-.062*** (.017)	-.057*** (.017)	-.058*** (.017)	-.056*** (.017)
Trust in the judiciary			.002** (.001)	.001** (.000)
Trust in Congress			.001** (.000)	.001* (.000)
Evaluation of country's current economic situation		.003*** (.001)		.002** (.001)
Retrospective evaluation of country's economic situation		.001 (.000)		.001 (.000)
Evaluation of personal current economic situation		.000 (.001)		.000 (.000)
Retrospective evaluation of personal economic situation		-.000 (.000)		-.000 (.000)
External efficacy	-.017* (.008)	-.024** (.008)	-.029*** (.008)	-.034*** (.008)
Internal efficacy	.035*** (.008)	.037*** (.009)	.034*** (.009)	.035*** (.009)
Interpersonal trust	.004*** (.001)	.004*** (.000)	.004*** (.000)	.003*** (.001)
Interest in politics	.001 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.001 (.000)	.000 (.000)
Age	.014*** (.001)	.014*** (.001)	.014*** (.001)	.015*** (.001)
Education	.032*** (.004)	.033*** (.004)	.034*** (.004)	.035*** (.004)
Women	-.015 (.027)	-.015 (.028)	-.029 (.028)	-.029 (.000)
Intercept 1	-1.979*** (.024)	-1.98*** (.026)	-2.122*** (.024)	-2.168*** (.028)
Intercept 2	-1.091*** (.021)	-1.006*** (.023)	-1.242*** (.021)	-1.287*** (.025)

Country Variance (Constant)	.095*** (.007)	.132*** (.010)	.121*** (.009)	.078*** (.006)
Log Restricted-Likelihood	-21503.665	-20920.578	-20849.45	-20316.798
N. of cases (N. of countries)	31415(23)	30543(23)	30429(23)	29631(23)

*p*-values \* $<.05$ ; \*\* $<.01$ ; \*\*\* $<.001$ . Entries are multilevel ordinal logistic regression coefficients.

**Figure 2. Fear of Crime and Regime Preference for Democracy (Predicted Probabilities), 2012**



In a similar vein and unlike what we found when we modeled support for the Churchillian definition of democracy, we find that crime victimization has a consistent impact on regime choice. People who acknowledge to have been victims of a crime in the year previous to the survey exhibit a lower probability of selecting democracy than those who were not victims. This is true in all the estimated models. This confirms that the impact of crime victimization on the endorsement of democracy is highly dependent on the way we choose to measure support for democracy. This explains the inconsistencies found in previous studies of this association.

Why is it that the effect of self-reported crime victimization on support for democracy depends on the way we measure this support? One possible explanation is that SFD, unlike RPD, does not ask the respondent to make a clear comparison between democracy and authoritarianism. Therefore, fearful citizens might not feel necessarily inclined to disagree that democracy is better than other, unnamed, forms of government, which is what SFD does. By contrast, when given the specific question whether under some circumstances an authoritarian government may be preferable to democracy (which is what RFD asks), fearful citizens might feel that, indeed, generalized crime is one of those circumstances that make authoritarianism more acceptable.

There are some other important differences in the behavior of the control variables when predicting RPD. For instance, unlike what we found in SFD, economic voting seems to have very little influence on regime choice. The only variable that emerges as significant is the evaluation of the country's current economic situation. The other important difference is that levels of interest in politics have no impact on regime choice, whereas it was a significant predictor of support for the Churchillian definition of democracy. Similarly, the coefficients associated with external efficacy, while significant, emerge with the wrong sign. Finally, it is worth noting that age, education, and interpersonal trust are again consistent predictors of the endorsement of democracy, as they were for the Churchillian definition of democracy.

### **Individual and Local Effects on Fear of Crime**

A comparative analysis of Tables 1 and 2 reveals that the impact of individual crime victimization on democratic attitudes is sensitive to wording effects. But regardless of the way we measure support for democracy, fear of crime (measured by the proxy of feelings of insecurity) is a consistent

predictor of this attitude. Based on these findings, one could conclude that actual crime victimization is not that important when examining people's attitudes towards democracy. But this view would be mistaken, as we show below.

There is an extensive literature on fear of crime in Latin America (Casas-Zamora, 2013; Dammert and Malone, 2006; Dammert, 2012; Luengas and Ruprah, 2008). This fear, indeed, seems to have reached epidemic proportions. Casas-Zamora (2013:31) reports that, in 2010, "one third of Latin Americans said they were always or almost always concerned about the possibility of being a victim of a violent crime, with 56% saying that are sometimes or only occasionally concerned." Dammert (2012) contends that fear of crime is driven by an array of factors, including economic modernization, urban segregation, institutional trust, and authoritarian discourses, at least in the Chilean case. This fear is indeed driven by a host of factors and actual crime victimization is a significant cause of it (Garofalo, 1979; Rotker, 2002; Skogan, 1987), but not the only one. Again, our intention is not to argue that fear of crime is driven exclusively or even primarily by crime victimization, only that the latter is a significant predictor of the former, and therefore that crime victimization is an important factor affecting attitudes towards democracy.

Table 3 reports the multilevel mixed-effects analysis of the predictors of fear of crime (measured as feelings of insecurity). We include in this table the two country-level variables used in previous tables, to control for national contexts. Our four main predictors of interest are individual crime victimization, a measure of the rate of crime victimization in the respondent's municipality (city) of residence,<sup>12</sup> satisfaction with the way democracy is work-

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<sup>12</sup> This rate was determined by computing the percent of individuals who were victims of crime in a given municipality (city) of residence. This rate ranges from 0 (no resident was victim of a crime in the given municipality) to 1 (all residents in the municipality were victims of a crime). About 7% of the sample resides in municipalities where no respondent reported being a victim of crime. About 30% of the sample lives in municipalities (cities) where between 10%



ing in the country, and support for the political system.<sup>13</sup> We include some sociodemographic factors as controls: the size of the town where the respondent resides (rural area, small, medium, large, and national capital), degree of interest in politics (to measure the impact of awareness of national events), age, education, and gender.

What is striking in the results reported in Table 3 is that the national rates of homicide do not have a statistically significant impact on individual levels of feelings of insecurity. This finding can be explained by a couple of reasons. First, homicide rates may be quite an unreliable indicator of violent crime as they may not uniformly or consistently be reported in all countries. Second, homicides rates may be determined by violent crime that is largely localized in few areas, such as city capitals or regions prone to violence, such as Ciudad Juarez in Mexico, and therefore do not generate fear across the nation in a uniform way. Finally, people may be more influenced by crime, even if it is petty crime, if it happens directly to them or in areas that are geographically very close to them, rather than by violent and lethal crime that occurs in more distant places. Indeed, we find here that there is a very important effect of self-reported crime victimization (both individual and local) on fear of crime. When we plot the predicted values of fear of crime against the degree of crime victimization in the municipality of residence and gender (Figure 3), we find that, first, women exhibit greater levels of fear of crime than men and, sec-

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and 20% of the residents were victims of crime. Only 1% of the sample resides in municipalities where 50% or more of respondents were victims of a crime. The correlation between individual crime and local crime is .3 (p. <.001).

<sup>13</sup> Support for the political system is a composite index based on the following 7-point scale questions that ask the extent to which the respondent "supports the political institutions of [country]", thinks "that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system", "feel proud of living under the political system", and thinks "that one should support the political system." Satisfaction with democracy was measured by asking the following question: "In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in [country]". The answers were recoded so that they would go from very dissatisfied to very satisfied.

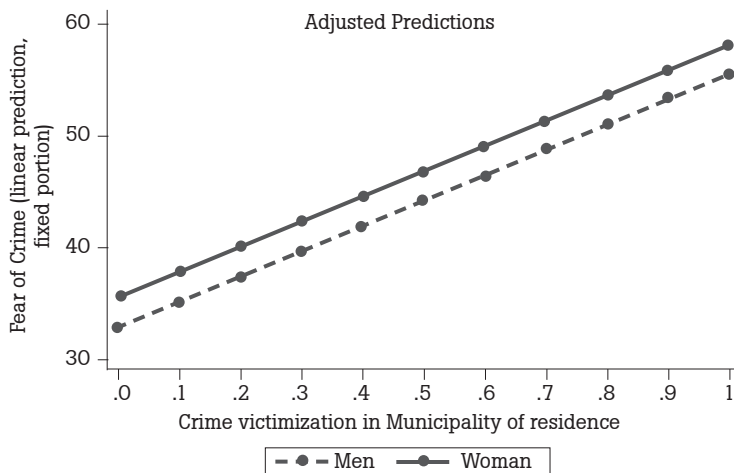
ond, fear of crime increases as the rate of crime in the municipality goes up. Figure 3 shows that women residing in municipalities that reported no crime victimization score 34 in the 0-100 scale of feelings of insecurity, whereas women residing in localities where 90% of residents reported to have been victims of crime score 57 in the same scale (values for men are 32 and 57, respectively). The results of Table 3 also show that fear of crime is driven by performance considerations. People who are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country and who have a greater degree of support for the political system have less fear of crime than those who are politically discontent. We find also that fear of crime is lower among the more educated.

Table 3.  
Determinants of Fear of Crime in Latin America, 2012

<b>Fixed Effects</b>	Coefficient	Standard Error
<i>Country Level</i>		
Homicide rate	-.024	.047
GDP per capita	-.000	.000
<i>Individual level</i>		
System Support	-.084***	.010
Satisfaction with the Way Democracy Works	-.107***	.009
Individual Crime Victimization	9.647***	.530
Percent of Crime Victimization in Municipality	22.708***	2.220
Size of Town	2.153***	.146
Interest in Politics	.004	.006
Age	-.018	.013
Education	-.291***	.053
Women	2.411***	.404
Constant	41.607***	2.449
<b>Random Effects</b>	Estimate	Std. Error
<b>Country Variance</b> (Constant)	17.929***	5.624
Individual Variance (Residual)	746.686***	7.673
Log Restricted-Likelihood	-89672.385	
N. of cases (N. of countries)	18964(23)	

p-values \* < .05; \*\* < .01; \*\*\* < .001. Entries are multilevel mixed-effects linear regression.

Figure 3.  
Fear of Crime by Local Crime Victimization and Gender  
in Latin America, 2012



### Fear of Crime and Support for Democracy in Countries with High and Low Crime

Following the existing literature (Brader, 2011; Cassino and Lodge, 2007; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000; Marcus, MacKuen, and Neuman, 2011) we argue at the outset that threatening conditions arouse fear and anxiety and trigger people's surveillance system. This makes them more attentive to the environment and more prone to give greater weight to negative information. As Nardulli and Kuklinski (2007:316) argue, anxiety also generates a disposition to embrace political change. We believe that people who are fearful of crime would blame the existing political regime, whether democratic or not. In the case of Latin America, we have shown that feelings of insecurity depress support for democracy, regardless of how this support is measured. We also show that this fear is driven, among other factors, by existing levels of self-reported crime victimization. Thus, it is plausible to hypothesize that in countries with very low

levels of crime victimization, people will not get their surveillance system activated, and therefore they will not utilize fear of crime as new information that might lead them to reject democracy. It is only in countries with significant levels of crime where the surveillance system will be activated and fear of crime will be politicized, i.e. will lead people to reject the existing political arrangement. We assess this hypothesis in this section.

In our previous analyses, we do not find a significant interaction effect between a country's homicide rate and fear of crime on support for democracy. However, this does not mean that the impact of fear of crime on levels of support for democracy is similar across countries. When we select countries based on their rates of self-reported individual crime victimization, we find that, as expected, fear of crime is an insignificant predictor of support for democracy in countries that exhibit very low levels of crime victimization (where individual crime victimization is less than 10%), but significant in countries with both middling and very high levels of self-reported crime victimization.

Table 4 reports the results of this analysis. We select three groups of countries using the self-reported levels of crime victimization found in the 2012 round of the *Barometer of the Americas*. We selected the countries with the highest levels of crime victimization (the top six, with rates ranging from 21.3% to 28.1%) and the lowest level of it (the bottom three, ranging from 6.9% to 8.5%). As comparison, we selected 5 countries with middling rates of self-reported crime victimization (rates ranging from 17.4% to 19.4%). We were not seeking to divide up the countries proportionally. We wanted to contrast countries with the lowest crime rates with those that have significantly higher rates.<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> We use the lowest three countries because they conform a "natural" grouping. The 2012 *Barometer of the Americas* survey reveals that Panama is the country with the lowest percent of respondents being victims of a crime (6.9%), followed by Guyana (8%) and Jamaica (8.5%). The next country in terms of victimization is Nicaragua, which at 13.5% is almost twice as high as Panama's.

results, reported in Table 4, confirm the expectation that fear of crime is not a significant predictor of attitudes towards democracy in low-crime countries. By contrast, fear of crime does emerge as a significant predictor of SFD and RPD in countries with middling and high levels of self-reported crime victimization. If fear of crime was measuring only performance assessments, then this finding is difficult to explain. Why would fear of crime not be used as information to assess regime preferences in countries with very low levels of crime? And why would fear of crime affect levels of support for democracy in countries such as Uruguay and Argentina—with high levels of self-reported crime but also among the top three countries in the region in terms of degree of satisfaction with the way democracy is working? If fear of crime is seen as an emotional response, then this finding becomes intelligible. According to the theory of affective intelligence, this fear would have political consequences only when people's surveillance system is activated, i.e. when crime has reached a certain threshold. This is what our analysis suggests.

**Table 4.**  
**Support for Democracy by Levels of Crime Victimization**

	High Levels of Crime Victimization		Middling Levels of Crime Victimization		Very Low Levels of Crime Victimization	
	SFD	RPD	SFD	RPG	SFD	RPD
Crime victimization	-.332 (.623)	-.100 (.059)	-.317 (.924)	-.047 (.079)	4.50** (1.614)	-.086 (.149)
Fear of crime	-1.226*** (.349)	-.080** (.034)	-.854* (.423)	-.097** (.002)	-1.126 (.669)	.027 (.058)
External efficacy	1.158*** (.166)	-.015 (.016)	.259 (.194)	-.003 (.017)	.463 (.290)	-.011 (.025)
Internal efficacy	2.392*** (.198)	.020 (.018)	3.405*** (.233)	.001 (.018)	2.955*** (.314)	.069** (.025)
Interpersonal trust	.060*** (.010)	.005*** (.000)	.031** (.013)	.002 (.001)	.099*** (.019)	.003 (.002)
Interest in politics	.024** (.009)	.002 (.001)	-.000 (.012)	-.001 (.001)	.002 (.016)	-.003 (.001)
Age	.163*** (.017)	.015*** (.002)	.145*** (.023)	.020*** (.002)	.115*** (.033)	.011*** (.003)
Education	.522*** (.067)	.039*** (.007)	.397*** (.089)	.033*** (.007)	.449** (.161)	.044*** (.014)

Women	1.48** (.527)	-.014 (.051)	.435 (.714)	-.077 (.063)	-.164 (.943)	-.081 (.081)
Constant	82.834*** (.695)		65.347*** (.867)		73.705*** (.981)	
Intercept 1		-2.32*** (.081)		-1.812*** (.082)		-2.445*** (.088)
Intercept 2		-1.55*** (.077)		-.929*** (.075)		-1.425*** (.080)
R-squared (Pseudo R2)	0.178	(0.026)	0.178	(0.051)	0.057	(0.014)
N. of cases	9412	9169	6646	6546	3762	3790

p-values \* $< .05$ ; \*\* $< .01$ ; \*\*\* $< .001$ . High crime countries: crime victimization rates range from 21.3% to 28.1% (Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador). Low crime countries: crime victimization rates range from 6.9% to 8.5% (Panama, Guyana, and Jamaica). Middling levels of crime: crime victimization rates range from 17.4% to 19.4% (El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela). Entries for Support for Democracy (SFD) are fixed-effects linear regression coefficients with robust standard errors. Entries for Regime Preference for Democracy (RPD) are fixed-effects ordinal logistic coefficients with robust standard errors. Dummy variables for countries are omitted from the table but were included in the statistical analysis.

## Concluding Thoughts

The early literature on mass support for democracy (Bratton and Mattes, 2001; Gibson, 1996; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart, 2003; Mishler and Rose, 1996) did not include crime-related variables in their models. This absence reflected low levels of crime existing at the time. Today it is highly problematic to study attitudes towards democracy without taking into account crime and the powerful emotions it elicits. We do not dispute that crime can be seen as a performance failure and affect citizen support for democracy accordingly. But we argue that it is erroneous to discount the emotional response that feelings of insecurity generate. Our study does not seek to reject the idea that performance considerations matter. This is a topic that has been studied and we believe it is largely settled. Our interest here is in highlighting the emotional dynamics that crime produces and how they influence support for democracy. Following the literature on affective intelligence, we argue that fear is a consistent predictor of attitudes towards democracy, but only in

contexts where crime victimization has crossed a threshold (in the case of Latin America, more than ten percent of the adult population).

This article advances our knowledge of the field in four significant ways. First, we find that the impact of individual crime victimization on support for democracy is sensitive to the way we measure this support. This explains the inconsistencies we identify in the literature. When it is measured in agreement with its Churchillian definition, crime victimization is not a significant predictor. When the choice provided is starker (choosing between authoritarianism and democracy), then individual crime victimization does emerge as a significant predictor. Perhaps direct experience with crime triggers an authoritarian preference that cannot be detected when the respondent is simply asked to proffer his/her degree of support for the idea of democracy, but it does when the democratic option is contrasted with the authoritarian one. This is an issue that merits further exploration. Second, we show that regardless of how support for democracy is measured, fear of crime emerges as a significant and consistent predictor of this attitude. From this we conclude that fear of crime has greater attitudinal impact on support of democracy than crime victimization. Third, we argue that while crime victimization per se may fail to affect support for democracy in some formulations of it, crime victimization (both individually and contextually, measured as degree of crime in the municipality of residence), is a strong predictor of fear and, as such, a factor that needs to be accounted when assessing the impact of crime on attitudes towards democracy. Finally, and consistent with the affective intelligence literature, we find that crime fails to activate people's surveillance systems in countries that exhibit very little levels of it (typically, less than 10 percent of individual crime victimization).

A necessary note of caution must be highlighted. We have examined the role of fear of crime by using a proxy variable, namely feelings of insecurity caused by crime. It is

an imperfect measure but one that allows us to explore the important role that emotions play in the determination of regime preference. Further research on different measures of emotional responses to crime is necessary to further our knowledge of this issue. It would be important, for instance, to use a larger set of questions to measure a broader range of emotional responses, focusing not only on fear but also on anxiety, anger, and disgust, and see how they relate to support for democracy.

We have also uncovered some additional findings. We find evidence that countries with stronger state presence and lower poverty rates (which higher GDP per capita suggests) tend to produce citizens who are more inclined to support democracy than countries with weaker states and higher poverty. Similarly, we find that, consistently, higher interpersonal trust, greater interest in politics, and higher trust in the judiciary and Congress increase citizen support for democracy.

Our results suggest that Latin American societies are facing a serious social issue that is already having political repercussions. The state's rampant failure to provide citizen security can lead many to endorse solutions that although appearing to deliver "safety" and "security" in the short term may end up increasing human insecurity in the medium and long term. There is a scholarly debate about the impact of democracy on crime. A number of approaches argue that democratic rule can conquer crime over time. Although the evidence in favor of this thesis is slim (Dammert, 2013; LaFree and Tseloni, 2006), Latin American democracies may not have the luxury to wait and see whether they would turn out all right "in the long term." The inability of politicians to approach crime as a threat to human security and democracy—and not just as a "policing" problem—could have lasting consequences for the viability and quality of democracy in the region, for it may end up undermining the public support that democracies need for their own survival.



Our research finds inconsistent results in relation to how self-reported crime victimization affects attitudinal support for democracy. This is an area that merits further research. The low correlation between support for the Churchillian definition of democracy and regime preference for democracy suggests that democratic support is not a unidimensional attitude, and therefore needs to be unpacked. In this study, self-reported crime victimization shows consistent association with lower levels of regime preference for democracy. Other studies fail to uncover this association. We believe that there is much work needed to settle the issue. But we do find strong evidence that fear of crime lowers support for democracy regardless of how this support is measured. Future research should explore whether this fear has also an impact on other attitudes such as political trust, presidential approval, political participation, vote choice, and even ideological leanings.

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