

FROM BALLOTS TO BLOCKADES: THE NORMALIZATION OF PROTEST IN
LATIN AMERICAN DEMOCRACIES

By

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To my mom, dad, and brother, for their unwavering love and support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

November 8, 2012 began as an uneventful day in Argentine politics. In a country well known for its economic and political instability over the years, there were no pivotal elections approaching or economic crises erupting. No controversial votes would be cast in the Chamber of Deputies or Senate, nor did anyone anticipate an important announcement by President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. Put simply, November 8, 2012 seemed to be an unremarkable day in the history of Argentine democracy. It remained that way until Argentines got off work.

At 7 o'clock that evening, hundreds of thousands of seemingly average citizens armed with pots and pans, homemade signs, and catchy anti-government chants took to the streets of Buenos Aires and cities across the country to protest against the current administration. Within fifteen minutes, *9 de Julio*, the widest avenue in the world at fourteen lanes across, was inundated with protestors for block after block, and the famous *Plaza de Mayo*—the site of so many seminal moments in the nation's political history—was a pulsating sea of angry protestors. Indignant attendees voiced their dismay over President Kirchner's rumored desire to reform the constitution and run for a third term, high perceived levels of insecurity and government corruption, and troubling signs of increasing inflation, amid alleged attempts by the government to manipulate official economic statistics.

According to newspaper reports, the event—dubbed “8N” for its ubiquitous Twitter hash tag, which began to appear a few days earlier announcing the 7 p.m. gathering—was one of the largest anti-government rallies since the country’s return to democracy in 1983, and marked the climax of growing discontent with a president that had only one year earlier garnered a healthy fifty-four percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential election.¹ By 9 pm, the mass demonstration was over. While the protestors’ motivations were diverse, the rally’s organizing forces mysterious, and the exact number of protestors hotly debated (estimates for Buenos Aires alone ranged from 70,000 to 700,000 by the government and opposition, respectively),² one thing was clear – *lots* of Argentines had decided to take to the streets to effect change in their democracy, in an incredibly organized and succinct way.

While 8N was perhaps the most dramatic example, it was only one event in an avalanche of contentious episodes in Argentine politics during the final months of 2012. On September 13, another massive *cacerolazo* had erupted in the capital city, as thousands of *porteños* converged on the Plaza de Mayo to voice many of the same grievances regarding the current government’s performance. Not even two weeks after 8N, on November 20, union leaders called for the first general strike of Kirchner’s presidency, as truck drivers, public transit workers, and farmers alike stayed home from work and transformed the bustling city streets of Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Córdoba into ghost towns. On Monday December 3, rival subway worker’s unions clashed in a

¹ Clarín 2012: http://www.clarin.com/politica/multitudinaria-protesta-Gobierno_0_807519384.html;

Página 12 2012: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-207606-2012-11-11.html>

Página 12 2012: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-207606-2012-11-11.html>

² La Nación 2012: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1525179-para-la-federal-fueron-solo-70000-personas>

heated debate over salary demands at a stop for the D-Line—an outcome of the on-going conflict regarding plans to transfer the subway system from the national government to the Buenos Aires city government in 2013—resulting in the closure of all subway lines and forcing the city’s one million daily metro passengers to seek alternative modes of transportation.

While there is considerable variation in Latin America in the levels of enthusiasm for contentious politics, protest has frequently served as a vital form of political expression in countries across the region—particularly since democracy’s “third wave” began to spread throughout Latin America in the 1970s and 80s (e.g. Eckstein 2001, Boulding 2010, Bellinger and Arce 2011, Machado et al. 2012, Arce and Mangonnet 2012). From marching against low wages, high gas prices, or run-down schools, to clamoring for democracy in the face of repressive authoritarian rule; from demanding the truth about war crimes committed under dictatorships, to organizing roadblocks in the name of indigenous autonomy, it seems that myriad important issues and events in the region’s recent history have been defined by instances of “politics in the streets.”

In Bolivia, thousands of demonstrators called for and eventually achieved the deposal of a sitting president in 2003, and contentious participation has further crystallized as a common form of political voice in the country under the presidency of Evo Morales. The police riots in Ecuador in October 2010 offer yet another example of contentious politics having significant consequences for a Latin American regime, as hundreds of policemen angered by a reduction in government-paid bonuses threatened violence against the president, only to be restrained eventually by the military. The student protests for education reform in Chile had dire consequences for President

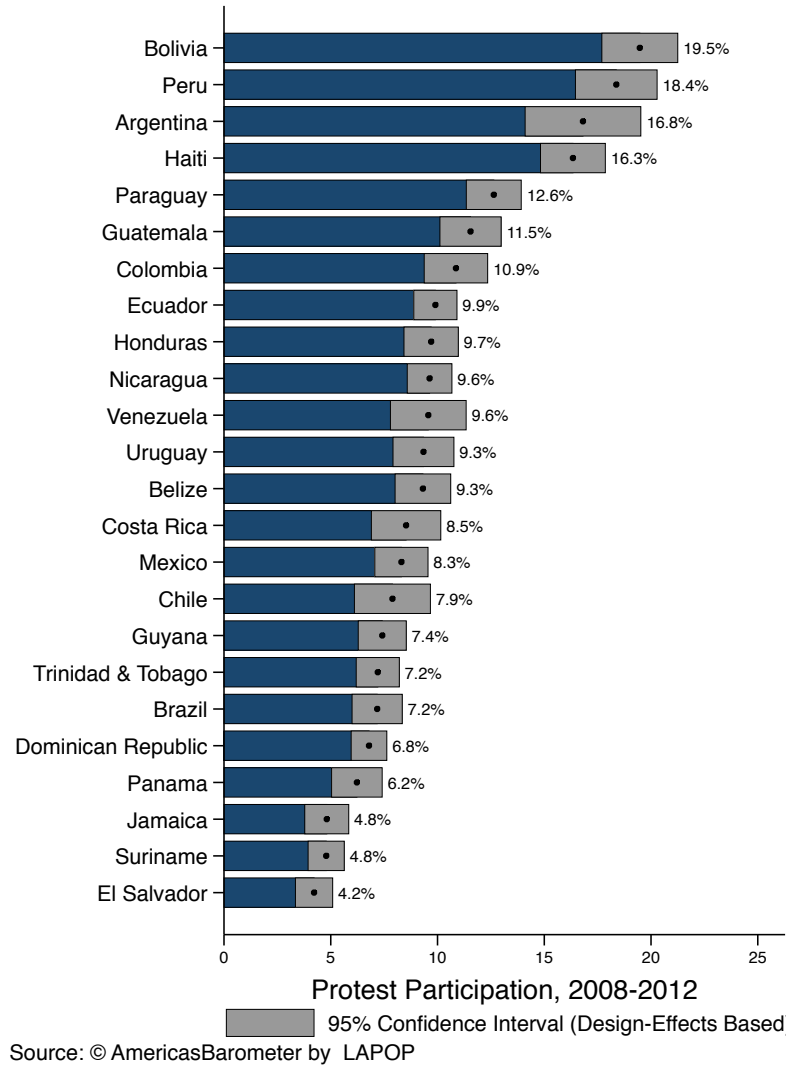
Sebastian Piñera's approval ratings, and offer evidence that even one of the region's more docile democracies historically is not immune to episodes of intense organized contention. Finally, ongoing street protests in Brazil that have centered on the exorbitant costs of staging the 2014 World Cup amid decaying transportation infrastructure, public schools, and hospitals, have recently cast a contentious light on the world's most prominent sporting spectacle.

This anecdotal evidence of heightened protest participation finds further support in recent survey data from the region. According to the findings from the 2008-2012 AmericasBarometer surveys, conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) hosted by Vanderbilt University, nearly twenty percent of respondents (all voting age) have reported participating in a protest during the prior year to the survey in Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru, while more than one in ten citizens had protested in Haiti, Guatemala, Colombia, and Paraguay (Figure 1.1). In all of these countries, rates of protest have rivaled those of "conventional" participation—e.g. joining a political party or volunteering for a political campaign (LAPOP 2008-2012).

However, not all Latin American democracies are as suffused with protests as these examples suggest. While protest seems to be a relatively common form of political voice in several Latin American regimes, it remains comparatively uncommon in countries like Panama, El Salvador, and Costa Rica (LAPOP 2008-2012; see Figure 1.1). In fact, in each of these countries fewer than six percent of respondents reported protesting in 2010. It seems that for every Latin American country that is engulfed in intense cycles of protest, there is another where contentious tactics are seldom utilized, and citizen participation is primarily channeled through formal political institutions.

Moreover, further variation in protest levels can be found *within* countries, as in the high protest country of Bolivia, where demonstrations are almost a daily occurrence in El Alto, but far less common only a dozen kilometers away in La Paz.

Figure 1.1 Variation in Protest Participation across Latin America, 2008-2012³



³ These numbers represent the percentage of individuals in each country that claimed to have participated in a protest march or demonstration during the previous year in 2008, 2010, and 2012.

With this variation in mind, the following questions motivate my dissertation:
Why does protest surface as a common form of political participation in certain contexts, but not others? Further, can we identify common factors at the national and sub-national levels to explain variation in protest across polities?

A Roadmap

In following chapter, I will review existing work from the contentious politics literature, particularly that which speaks to the basic question of “Why do people protest?” Then, I discuss the more specific challenges related to explaining varying levels of protest participation across contexts. Following this discussion, I propose my own explanation of variation in contentious politics in Latin American democracies – one that focuses on the link between representative political institutions and individual-level political behaviors. The chapter concludes with a discussion of my methodological approach to testing this theoretical perspective.

This dissertation’s third chapter will be its first empirical one, focusing on the cross-national determinants of protest participation in Latin America democracies. In this chapter, I use multi-level modeling techniques to evaluate how second-level institutional characteristics interact with individual-level indicators of civic engagement to explain protest behaviors. By testing my own theory against contending paradigms from the contentious politics literature, this chapter offers one of the most thorough cross-national empirical studies of the determinants of contentious participation to date. Indeed, rather than finding support for dominant grievance-based explanations of protest or theoretical

perspectives couched solely within the resource mobilization or political opportunities traditions, I find that an interactive relationship between institutional context and civic engagement best explains why individuals across Latin America choose to protest.

Chapter Four will begin the discussion of Argentina, as I attempt to trace the institutional roots of protest participation in that case from Carlos Menem's election in 1989 to the current Fernández de Kirchner government. I then narrow my focus to the provinces of Mendoza, Buenos Aires, and San Luis, drawing on dozens of interviews with citizen activists, movement organizers, and politicians. These interviews were conducted from March to June 2013 with support from a dissertation grant from the National Science Foundation (SES-1263807). In this particular chapter, I utilize the comparative method (Lijphart 1971) to examine how distinct institutional characteristics in each province have produced different trends in terms of protest participation. Through the interview process, I obtain a qualitative, nuanced perspective of protest in each province, as I endeavor to gain firsthand knowledge of how citizens view the political regimes they inhabit, and how those views govern their behaviors.

In the fifth chapter, I proceed to analyze variation in protest activity across Argentine provinces. Using two sources of protest events data, I trace how characteristics of subnational democracies related to electoral competition and executive dominance produce different protest outcomes over the past twenty years. This chapter thus uses time series analytical tools and Poisson regression to observe how changes in political institutions might lead to shifts in protest activity over time, uncovering a curvilinear relationship between subnational democracy and contentious politics that echoes findings from the cross-national analysis.

This dissertation ends with a chapter on the implications and conclusions to be drawn from its findings, and avenues for future research. Few scholars have examined the consequences of varying levels of institutional quality for mass political participation in third wave democracies, making the research findings of this dissertation an important addition to our understanding of important political phenomena in the region. By connecting a growing trend in mass political behavior to specific features of Latin American democratic institutions, this dissertation sheds light on the ways in which political institutions shape how citizens engage the political system they inhabit. Further, I argue the key finding that intermediate levels of democratic quality—i.e. suboptimal institutions coupled with a highly mobilized citizenry—spur high levels of contentious activity at the national and subnational levels, calls for a recalibration of the received wisdom on the nexus between political institutions and contentious politics.

In focusing on protest, this dissertation also speaks to a topic that is currently highly relevant to regimes outside the region under consideration. Given recent political upheaval in the Middle East, riots across Southern Europe, elevated protest participation in China and Russia, and the emergence of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the U.S., this project will speak to a more universal audience, contributing to a growing dialogue on a type of political participation that seems increasingly important in regimes of all types. The lessons drawn from Argentina and Latin America are certainly germane to other societies that are experiencing similar cycles of contentious politics, therefore making the findings from this dissertation relevant to students of protest and political behavior across the world.

CHAPTER II

EXPLAINING PROTEST: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CONTEXTUAL AND INDIVIDUAL LEVEL FACTORS

"The looting is not about hunger. They are stealing alcoholic beverages. This is a political matter."

- Argentine Interior Minister Ramón Mestre, December 2011⁴

Empirical work on variation in protest across countries has been limited, primarily owing to problems related to data availability. However, theoretical work and single-case studies on the roots of protest politics abound, offering rich source material for any budding project on the sources of protest participation. In this section, I attempt to provide a basic sketch of the current theoretical and empirical landscape, beginning with classic approaches and finishing with the latest frontiers in scholarly work on contentious politics. But first, this section begins with a brief treatment of the concept of “contentious politics,” laying the foundation for the rest of the literature review and the theory sections.

Concept Formation: On “Contentious Politics”

Generally, protest has fallen under the conceptual umbrella of “contentious politics,” a term coined nearly forty years ago to describe “disruptive,” or at least extra-

⁴ New York Times, 2001: www.nytimes.com/2001/12/20/world/reeling-from-riots-argentina-declares-a-state-of-siege.html

institutional, political behaviors (Tilly 1978). Therefore, to answer any question related to protest, one must first arrive at a clear conceptualization of what “contentious politics” actually means (which is easier said than done), and then decide where the phenomena of interest lie within that conceptual framework.

Since contentious politics emerged as a burgeoning new field of study in the 1960s, the term has been used to describe a vast array of “unconventional” forms of political behavior, such that the term itself has become somewhat vague. Indeed, “contentious politics” has come to encompass work on civil wars and ethnic conflict, social movements, mass demonstrations, strikes, and revolution and democratization – in other words, a category of political phenomena seemingly alike in their unconventionality, but dissimilar in virtually every other aspect.

Despite its nebulosity, scholars have continued to pursue a more parsimonious conceptualization of contentious politics, mostly for the purposes of cross-country comparison. For in-depth conceptual work on contentious politics, there is no better source than Charles Tilly, whose pioneering work on protest, revolutions, and social movements in European states has paced the literature for decades. Throughout his illustrious career, Tilly made contributions to virtually every sub-section of the contentious politics literature, making him one of the most important social scientists of the last half-century, and the unofficial guardian of the term “contentious politics,” along with his frequent co-authors Douglas McAdam and Sidney Tarrow. In their 2001 piece on the state of the literature, McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow define the term “contentious politics” as:

“... episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.” (2001; p. 438)

According to McAdam et al. (2007), contentious politics is characterized by three critical factors: 1) interactions, 2) claims, and 3) governments. The term “interactions” describes the cluster of political actors who join together to make particular “claims”—i.e., “calls for action on the part of some object that would, if realized, affect that object’s interests” (p. 261, McAdam et al. 2009). These claims are by definition either directed at actors within “governments,” the third crucial property of contentious politics, or have important consequences for governments as third parties. Oftentimes, according to McAdam et al. (2009), contentious politics entails citizens utilizing confrontational tactics directed at non-confrontational government entities, such as “routine public administration, organization of elections, military conscription, tax collection, appointment of officials, and disbursement of funds” (p. 262). However, the extent and nature of contentious politics are strongly conditioned by characteristics of political regimes.

Given the diverse nature of “contentious politics,” it would seem necessary to take a few steps down on the “ladder of abstraction” (Sartori 1970), as it relates to this particular dissertation project. Thus, in an effort to produce and empirically test a “middle range” theory (LaPalombara 1968), this dissertation will focus on a subset of contentious politics: public protests and demonstrations by civilians targeted at government actors in democratic polities. This particular conceptualization excludes civil war, intra-institutional contention, and democratization or revolution, all of which fall within the

purview of contentious politics according to Tilly and his associates. The primary rationale for limiting my focus to this particular type of contentious politics lies in this dissertation's focus on Latin America's developing democracies. In contemporary Latin America (outside of Cuba), democracy is the dominant type of political regime, rendering democratization unnecessary and attempts at revolution nearly obsolete. Moreover, none of the Latin American countries examined here are currently experiencing civil war or prolonged militarized conflict.⁵ Thus, I confine my approach to studying these phenomena to political claims made via extra-institutional methods, aimed at actors within the regime in an effort to induce political reform.

Classic Explanations of Protest

For decades, scholars in the social sciences have sought to explain the emergence of mass protest movements. In particular, the topic received a considerable uptick in scholarly activity during and immediately after the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. during the 1960s, and with the beginning of the Third Wave of democratization in the early 1970s (Huntington 1990). While the literature has certainly evolved over time, as some theoretical traditions have faded while others have consolidated as powerful

⁵ While there have certainly been exceptions to these statements over the past thirty years – the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, and the FARC in Colombia spring to mind – it seems that democracy has consolidated in Latin America to the extent that the debate has largely shifted from examining its *durability* to an increased focus on its *quality* throughout the region (e.g. Smith 2005, Levitsky and Murillo 2005, Levine and Molina 2011). Even when democratic norms and processes appear to be under assault (e.g. Chávez's Venezuela), leaders often appeal to democratic ideals to sell constitutional reforms and infringements on political rights (Rodríguez-Vargas 2013). Moreover, the most notable militarized political conflicts have begun to fade in recent years, with the demise of the Sendero Luminoso and weakening of the FARC.

explanatory tools, many of the contending paradigms emerged contemporaneously, making for a useful comparison of the contributions and drawbacks of each theoretical approach. In this section, I briefly summarize what is an incredibly multifarious literature, touching on disaffected radicalism, resource mobilization, and political opportunities, among other theoretical traditions in the larger contentious politics literature. I then proceed to review the existing work on the Latin American context, and recent empirical treatments of the question of “Why do people protest?” across political regimes.

Disaffected Radicalism

Popular during the 1960s and 1970s, the “disaffected radicalism” thesis holds that protest is a response to extreme deprivation, and constitutes a rejection of the key representative institutions of the political system (Gurr 1970, Jenkins 1983, Dalton and van Sickle 2005). According to this line of thought, widespread political protest is a threat to the legitimacy of democracies, as citizens express discontent not with particular leaders or issues, but with the political system itself (Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aeslt 2005). Gurr’s *Why Men Rebel* (1970) offers the classic articulation of this perspective, as the author argues that relative social and economic deprivation greatly increase the likelihood that mass protest will occur as an expression of discontent. According to Gurr, contentious forms of participation can emerge as viable options when citizens face “shifts” in grievances—e.g. an uptick in dire economic circumstances, racial oppression, or widespread government corruption (see also: Gusfield 1968). Put simply, it is the grievance itself that serves as the primary catalyst in producing mass protest, as

frustration and alienation incite violent, anti-state participation, which can in turn destabilize political systems.

According to this view of contentious politics as anti-state radicalism, protest substitutes for conventional participation (Muller 1979). That is, protestors generally come from destitute socioeconomic backgrounds, and do not take part in the political process through conventional channels like voting, party membership, and civic associations. Other scholars have drawn the connection between macro-level economic conditions—e.g. income and land inequality—and violent participation, asserting that protest can take root due to relative deprivation in poor countries (Muller and Seligson 1987).

Resource Mobilization

Simultaneously, another significant literature began to gain traction in the 1960s and 70s based not on shifting grievances and relative deprivation, but the socioeconomic factors that underpin the formation and sustainability of social movements. Scholars adhering to this particular approach were classified under the banner of “resource mobilization theory”—or the idea that the primary determinants of whether or not social movements emerge and are successful lie in a particular movement’s access to organizational resources. For scholars adhering to this school of thought, grievances are viewed as a constant, while the driving mechanism behind movement formation is related to a change in how easy it is for “political entrepreneurs” to spread their message and mobilize support (Jenkins 1983; McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977).

In particular, the resource mobilization school received a boon from studies on the U.S. Civil Rights movement that occurred in the 1960s. While in many ways, blacks in the U.S. encountered the same grievances they had faced during the decades preceding this time period, access to organizational resources changed drastically in the direct lead-up to the Civil Rights movement. Indeed, it seemed that increased urbanization, the growth of historically black universities, and an expanding black middle class, led to the removal of traditional paternalistic social relations between (particularly Southern) whites and blacks, and paved the way for a thriving national movement (McAdam 1982; Jenkins 1983). In sum, according to Jenkins, “the formation of movements is linked to improvements in the status of aggrieved groups, not because of grievances... but because these changes reduce the costs of mobilization and improve the likelihood of success.” (p. 532; 1983).

Political Opportunities

The growing emphasis on non-grievance related determinants of protest eventually expanded into other areas beyond organizational resources—most notably, a focus on how political regimes influence the opportunities available to potential contentious actors. The “political opportunity structures” approach to the study of protest—i.e., the idea that a particular movement’s potential for mobilizing support and acquiring influence depends in large part on political context (e.g. Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978, 2006; Kitschelt 1986; Brockett 1991; Meyer 2004)—thus offers another approach to understanding how protest movements emerge and evolve, and how particular tactics take root in a given society.

Specifically, scholars operating within this theoretical construct seek to uncover the contextual mechanisms that allow previously unexpressed grievances to blossom. This might entail a focus on processes of democratization and political liberalization, or within existing democracies on the role of political parties, labor unions, or important legal decisions in structuring potential protest activity (McAdam 1982; Kitschelt 1986). Others have sought to compare regimes characterized by different levels of democratic “openness,” as several scholars have posited a curvilinear relationship between political openness and protest (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978, 2006). According to this logic, protest movements arise and flourish more frequently in moderately open regimes, where opposition is tolerated and widespread but representative institutions are not fully facilitative, than in regimes at either end of the openness spectrum (Tilly 1978; Muller and Seligson 1987).

Latin American Accounts

Moving on from the classic literature and zeroing in on contemporary explanations of protest, the comparatively high levels of protest in certain Latin American countries have not gone unnoticed by social scientists, who have spent a great deal of time studying particular episodes of mobilization in the post-transition era. In the mid-1990s, the scholarly consensus held that protest in Latin America would quiet down following the tumultuous transition period of the 1980s, as political parties came to replace social movements as the most important vehicles for participation (e.g. Hipsher 1996; Eckstein 2001). However, numerous case studies of specific episodes of protest have found no such evidence of this predicted downturn. For example, we have studies of

social movements organized by the economic victims of neoliberal policies in Argentina and Peru (Auyero 2005; Levitsky and Murillo 2005; Arce 2008) and works on the rise of indigenous protest groups in Mexico, Central America, Ecuador and Bolivia (Yashar 1999; Jung 2003; Lazar 2006). In sum, students of political science, sociology, and anthropology alike have documented the persistence of mass protest in countries across Latin America, focusing on a diverse array of political actors and contexts.

However, as revealed by the pieces cited above, most of the research on protest in the region has dealt with particular movements or episodes of mass mobilization, favoring specific explanations over general ones.⁶ While this tendency raises obvious problems of generalizability, it has also reinforced the notion that instances of protest mobilization can be traced to a unique situation or set of grievances. Even comparative work on neoliberalism or economic crisis as a cause of mass mobilization essentially homes in on a specific type of policy-related complaint or injustice as the driving force behind movement formation, rather than making broader claims about the conditions that seem to give way to high levels of protest activity in some countries but not others (e.g. Vilas 2005, Levitsky and Murillo 2005, Silva 2009).

Recent Cross-National Studies on Protest Participation

In recent cross-national, quantitative work on the determinants of protest participation, theories focusing on specific grievances and political extremism have been widely rejected as invalid or at least not generalizable explanations of protest, as empirical evidence from primarily Western Europe and the U.S. (and some developing countries via the World Values Survey) has revealed that protestors are often educated,

⁶ With the notable exception of Machado et al. 2012, which is discussed below.

middle-class citizens who seek to effect political change through non-traditional methods—a far cry from the “disaffected radical” described by Gurr, and much closer to the predictions made by adherents to the resource mobilization and political opportunities traditions (e.g. Inglehart 1990; Norris et al. 2005; Dalton et al. 2009). According to this perspective, high levels of protest activity in a given polity are the result not of extreme poverty or dissatisfaction with the regime, but of 1) the opportunities offered by political freedom in advanced democracies, 2) the post-materialist desire for self-expression, and 3) increased access to resources for mobilization in developed democracies. An important implication of this argument is that perhaps we should observe the highest levels of protest participation in the *most* democratic contexts, contrary to the prior notion that protest arose from dire political and economic circumstances.

Though an advance in our understanding of protests, this work too suffers from some flaws, especially when applied to Latin American democracies. First, empirical analyses based on the World Values Surveys (which include most of those mentioned above) do not measure protest participation with respect to a specific time period, instead relying on survey items that ask respondents if they have ever participated in a protest activity, and thus fail to gauge the current pervasiveness of contentious behaviors for a given year or time period.⁷ Second, and perhaps more importantly, the conventional understanding of protest throughout much of this work includes relatively tame forms of contention—e.g., petition-signing—as a form of protest, rather than the more aggressive,

⁷ The most recent version of the WVS questionnaire available online (2005) states that “during the last five years” has since been added to this question. However, all previous surveys—which have been used in the studies cited above—ask if respondents have ever participated in any of the enumerated activities without limiting responses to a certain time period. It would thus seem difficult to draw conclusions regarding the determinants of protest participation when one has no idea as to when the participation took place.

street-based forms of direct action that are predominant in Latin America. Finally, none of these studies has offered a comprehensive account of protest in emerging democracies, where the post-materialist conditions seen as causes of protest are less pervasive. Rather than protest being more likely where democracy is healthiest, I explore in this project the idea that it is precisely the flawed nature of many Latin American democracies that lies at the root of the region's high levels of protest

Another Answer?

Though lacking extensive empirical work, the insights from the political opportunities literature seem highly germane to explaining protest in Latin America, a region populated by numerous moderately open or "hybrid" democratic regimes (Diamond 2002). While every country in the region aside from Cuba is widely characterized as a democracy, and peaceful forms of political participation are generally tolerated and even encouraged, Latin American regimes differ substantially in how effectively their formal political institutions channel participation. In other words, these regimes are open enough that groups are capable of organizing and sustaining contentious action without fear of harsh retribution, but often lack the institutional capacity to fully incorporate citizens into the policy-making process (e.g. O'Donnell 1993; Levitsky 2002; Gibson 2006).

Recent work by Machado, Scartascini, and Tommasi (2012; see also Przeworski 2010) on institutions and street protests in Latin America offers the most relevant example of this approach being put into practice in an effort to explain cross-national variation in protest participation. In the authors' view, widespread protest is a symptom

of low quality institutions, rather than specific grievances, political freedom, or post-materialist political culture. Utilizing Latin American public opinion data from 2008 and aggregate measures of institutional quality for a set of seventeen Latin American regimes, they demonstrate that there is a strong positive correlation between institutional deficiencies and rates of protest activity, and that the individual-level characteristics of protestors differ a great deal across contexts.

In some ways, the argument I outline in the following section echoes this theoretical approach, however there are several key distinctions. Most significant is my inclusion of mass-level political engagement—or access to mobilization structures—as a critical moderating factor, rather than relying solely on institutional weaknesses to explain variation in repertoires. Indeed, without an assessment of general patterns of political engagement among a citizenry, it becomes difficult to account for those contexts where institutions are weak, but protest activity is also very low. I also examine trends in protest participation both over time and within nations, thereby providing a “baseline” for a given society and moving beyond a snap-shot, cross-sectional approach. Below, I attempt to build on the literature summarized above, remedying some of the problems associated with existing explanations.

Constructing a Theory of Protest in Latin America

The goal of this dissertation is to understand why protest is so prevalent within certain democratic contexts but not others, and how second level regime characteristics interact with individual level factors to explain protest participation. In this section, I first

address the more general challenge of explaining levels of protest across countries, given the myriad moving parts involved in such an enterprise. This leads me to my own theory of protest in the Americas – one that focuses on the importance of political institutions and patterns of civic engagement in shaping individual-level protest behaviors.

Explaining levels of protest across political contexts

All studies seeking to explain protest participation ask, at a very basic level, “Why do some people choose to protest, while others do not?” In many ways, this dissertation project is no different. At its root, this is a project that seeks to unravel why individual citizens engage their political systems in diverse ways across and within regimes. Put simply, I endeavor to explain why certain modes (or to use Tilly’s terminology, “repertoires”) of political participation are so common within certain contexts, yet infrequently utilized within other political regimes.

As seen in the literature review above, there are myriad aggregate-level economic and political factors that could influence protest behavior at the individual level. Indeed, whether they might be short-term economic crises, long-term transitions to democracy, or simply unresponsive politicians, the potential macro-level stimuli for the emergence of protest are impossibly vast. However, one might reasonably divide the contextual factors that might influence individual level protest behavior into four categories: grievances, representation, repression, and mobilizing structures. All of these four factors have been discussed at length in the protest literature, and this section will focus on how each might affect individuals’ choices to partake of contentious forms of participation—thus altering the decision-making calculus across countries and determining the extent to which protest

takes hold in a given society. I present the four categories sequentially, to approximate the process by which grievances might translate into contentious behaviors.

1. Grievances: The initial stimuli

The first, and perhaps most obvious, contextual influence on protest participation is the overriding grievance. Almost any historical treatment of a particular instance of mass mobilization attributes that movement's existence to a particular motivating complaint or criticism. Intuitively, this perspective makes a great deal of sense. If contemplating what drives an individual citizen to attend a protest demonstration or join a social movement, it seems fairly self-evident that in the absence of some sort of motivating claim, that individual would not engage in contentious political behaviors (unless to benefit some sort of political elite in a pseudo-clientelistic exchange; see Auyero 2012). When aggregated to the country level, one might therefore expect that potential grievance-producing conditions should also foment high levels of protest participation, as citizens are confronted with more fodder for contentious claim making.

When considering what contextual factors influence individual behavior, scholars must consider how the claim itself emerged, and how that claim might drive individuals to action. At the aggregate level, certain large-scale economic shocks have clearly had mobilizing effects on citizenries throughout history. For example, it would be impossible to explain the explosion of protest participation that occurred in Argentina during the 1999-2002 economic crisis, or in Spain throughout the 2008-2012 economic recession, without referencing the massive influence those national crises had on individual citizens' quality of life.

The existence of a motivating grievance is undoubtedly an important part of the “Why do people protest?” equation. Put simply, in a world devoid of grievances, individual citizens would have no reason to question or object to the actions of government. Unfortunately, no such idyllic political regime exists in the real world. Citizens of every country inevitably have reasons to expect more from their government, and even if the objective direness of the grievance might differ substantially depending on the regime—e.g., a comparison between recent pro-democracy protests in Syria and student protests in Chile—there are endless possibilities in terms of claims that might mobilize protest in different political regimes. Moreover, studies have shown over the years that in many cases, the political regimes characterized by the most ostensibly protest-inducing conditions—e.g. severe state repression, extreme poverty, or high inequality—are rarely home to the highest levels of protest (Dalton et al. 2009).

In sum, grievances matter. But to adequately explain why rates of protest participation are high in some democratic regimes and low in others, one has to go beyond grievances – indeed, there are too many cases where “extreme” grievances are present and protest does *not* result, or where “minor” grievances produce massive mobilization – to base one’s explanation entirely on these initial stimuli. While a motivating claim on the government might be *necessary* for an individual to take to the streets, it is not *sufficient*.

2. Representation: What options are there for redressing grievances?

After identifying the grievance(s), the next step in tracing the impact of context on individual-level behaviors is evaluating the representational outlets available for the

aggrieved to make claims on their government. In making this evaluation, questions abound. Is the regime a democracy, where representatives are expected to listen to constituents and voice concerns on their behalf, or is it an authoritarian regime devoid of meaningful feedback mechanisms for political leaders? If the country is a democracy, what are the most commonly utilized avenues for the airing and potential reparation of grievances? Are institutional actors generally “responsive” (Eulau and Karps 1977), or is the process of rectifying claims inefficient and/or inconsequential?

Even in democracies, the potential vehicles for pursuing the redress of grievances differ greatly depending on the nature of the grievance and the characteristics of political institutions in the regime. For example, in certain cases, citizens might seek out local municipal authorities to make their claims, while in other cases claims are directed at national actors, including legislatures, political parties, and even the executive branch. Whether in subnational or national regimes, regular elections inevitably serve as a way to voice grievances and seek a response from government in any democracy (Schumpeter 1976).

In cases where institutions serve to effectively channel citizens’ claims and eventually respond to them, one might expect that formal political institutions render contentious behaviors less necessary. However, in cases where those institutional channels do not exist, or they are ineffective in producing meaningful government action, it would seem that protest could emerge as a viable form of political expression. In other words, high quality democratic institutions should serve to diminish the need for contentious action, while low quality institutions might push individuals to explore other options for receiving the government responsiveness they desire. Indeed, democratic

institutions that *promise* viable mechanisms for representation but fail to *deliver* will likely induce higher levels of contentious politics than if there were no such representative institutions in the first place.

3. Repression: If one decides to protest, what are the consequences?

Another crucial factor to consider when evaluating how regime characteristics might condition mass level behaviors is the degree of political repression found within that context. In certain regimes, public demonstrations that challenge authority are strictly forbidden, in some cases to the extent that protesting is a crime punishable by death or imprisonment. In other contexts, institutional actors—i.e., political parties, trade unions, or individual politicians—actively work to mobilize protest participation on behalf of their interests and those of their followers. The extent to which public claims on government are allowed or even encouraged is thus an important component of any explanation of levels of contentious activity across polities (Tilly 1978; Muller and Seligson 1987).

In contexts that exhibit high levels of political repression—think Soviet Russia or North Korea—protest participation is likely to be limited generally, even if grievances are plentiful and no institutional actors are available for voicing those grievances, due to state repression of any potential challenge to the regime. Indeed, only in regimes that are at least partially open can protest movements emerge and thrive, making some minimum level of democracy often necessary for high levels of contentious politics to be present. However, if repression is used temporarily in a semi-open regime, it is possible that it

serves not to discourage protest, but to shift the strategies of protestors, pushing them to adopt more violent protest technologies (Lichbach 1987; Moore 1998).

4. Mobilizing Structures: What organizational framework is available to structure collective claim making?

Finally, the existence of mobilizing structures that can be utilized for fomenting widespread contention are crucial to the emergence of protest in a particular society. Even when high-protest conditions are otherwise in place – grievances are present, representative outlets are suboptimal, and political repression is low or sporadic – potentially contentious actors still require the organizational resources necessary to mobilize groups of citizens behind a particular cause. Without established organizational structures via labor unions, political parties, churches/religious groups, or community advocacy organizations, grievances might go unvoiced and potential movements thwarted. Scholars from the resource mobilization tradition have frequently demonstrated that these organizational apparatuses are crucial to fomenting protest activity, and that individuals with connections to mobilizing structures are the most likely protestors (Schussman and Soule 2005).

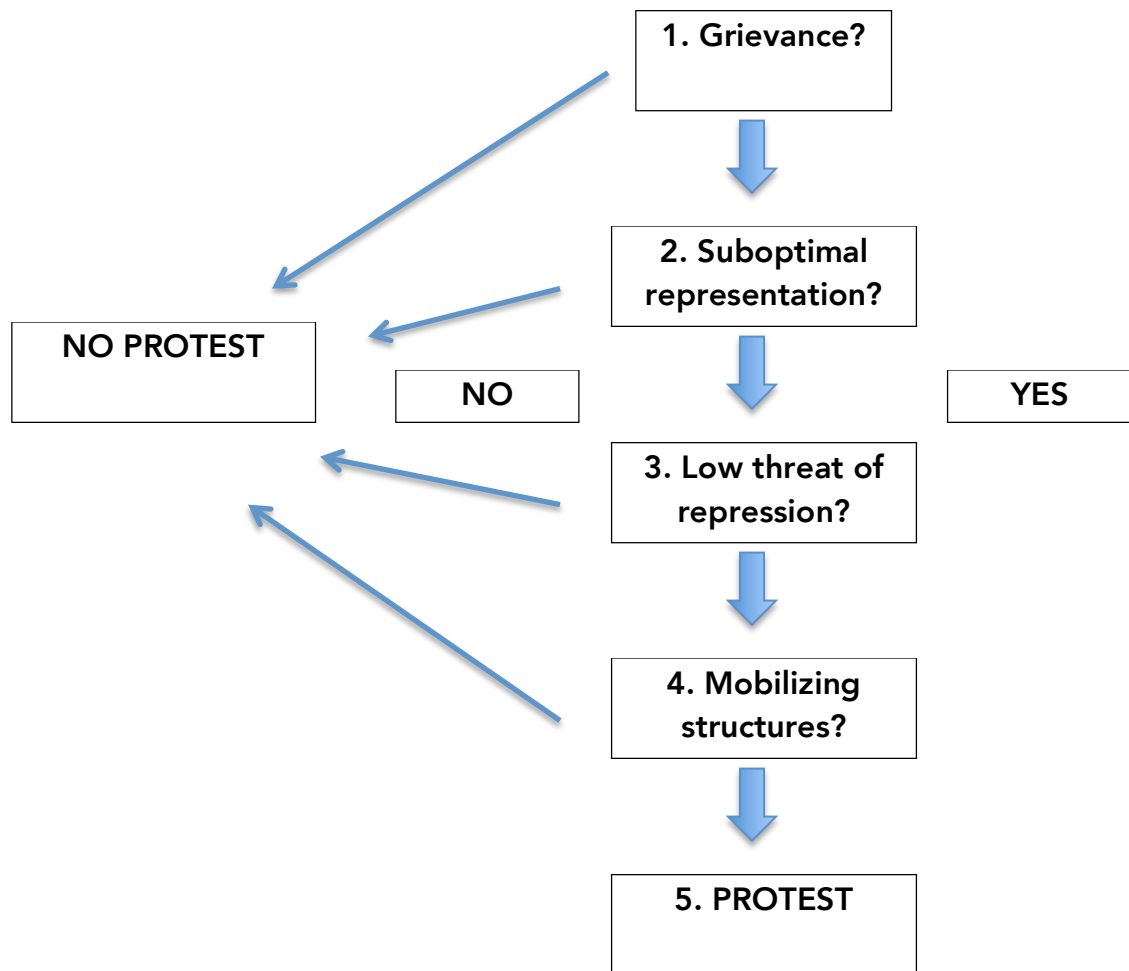
Of the four factors listed above, representation and mobilizing structures emerge as the two most likely factors explaining rates of protest participation across democratic contexts in Latin America for several reasons. First, as mentioned above, grievances themselves are rarely useful predictors of protest participation, as often times the worst grievances result in little mobilization while seemingly minor grievances can provoke massive protest participation. Second, levels of repression are very important in

explaining the differences in rates of participation across democratic and authoritarian regimes, but in democratic countries repression is by definition low. For example, though China's high levels of political repression serve to squelch protest activity domestically, whereas Greece's low levels of repression allow protest movements to flourish, these considerable differences are not as present in a region full of at least minimally democratic countries like Latin America.⁸

On the other hand, representative institutions and mobilizing structures vary greatly in Latin America, which lends considerable explanatory power to these two factors. Below, I argue that while grievances and repression should be viewed as fairly constant when considering Latin American democracies, institutions and mobilizing structures drive the vast differences we observe in terms of protest across the region.

⁸ Recent events in Venezuela might indicate a shift towards increased government repression of social movements and street demonstrations; however, the empirical analysis conducted in this dissertation extends only to 2012, when state repression was a less common occurrence in the country.

Figure 2.1. The Protest Checklist: Contextual Determinants of Protest Participation



Political Institutions, Civic Engagement, and Protest Participation in Latin America: Theory and Hypotheses

The often-sharp, cross-national variation we observe in protest participation across Latin America requires a focus on how political context interacts with individual level factors to influence the rise of contentious politics. Specifically, I argue that ineffective political institutions in nascent democratic regimes precipitate more radical

modes of political participation, as governments' ability to deliver on citizens' expectations fails to match the capacity for mobilization of increasingly active democrats. Thus, where institutional performance is low—e.g., high corruption, undisciplined political parties, and low legislative effectiveness—but political engagement via mobilizing structures is high—i.e. widespread interest in politics and participation in civil society—radical mass protest can become “normalized” owing to the inability of formal political institutions to adequately channel *and respond* to the demands of an increasingly knowledgeable and participatory citizenry.

Following this line of thought, individuals utilize protest as a means of exerting their influence more forcefully on the regime, given their lack of efficacy operating through conventional channels. When this style of demand making persists over time, protest eventually becomes an integral component of everyday political life. That is, citizens active in traditional modes of participation become the most likely protesters, and political elites attempt to mobilize contentious participation on behalf of their policy initiatives. Thus, contrary to the commonly-held notions that protest movements are either largely led by economically deprived segments of society that have long withdrawn from the political arena (e.g. Gurr's 1970 grievance-based theory), or that protest is a healthy byproduct of liberal democracy and economic development (e.g. Dalton et al. 2009), I argue that in contemporary Latin America, protest has become part of the “repertoire” (Tilly 1978) of *conventional* participation utilized by politically active citizens and elites in systems devoid of effective representative institutions.

The specific mechanisms that determine how well regimes channel and respond to popular demands can be found in existing representative institutions, and include the

number and quality of political parties, the capacity of legislatures to form coalitions and enact policies, and perceived levels of corruption present in formal institutions (Kitschelt 1986; Przeworski 2010). Political institutions in Latin American democratic systems vary greatly in terms of their ability to offer a high quality representational outlet for their population, and their capacity to translate citizens’ policy preferences into government output. For example, while political parties have been relatively disciplined and predictable in countries like Chile and Costa Rica, party platforms vacillate wildly in countries like Argentina, Peru, and Ecuador. Though Brazil has in recent years demonstrated the ability to form working coalitions in Congress, gridlock has been the norm in Bolivia, with President Evo Morales and his party pitted in a constant struggle against opposition legislators.⁹ These examples highlight the extent to which regimes differ in their ability to absorb citizens’ preferences and produce representative public policy, and it is this variation that I see as critical to understanding varying levels of protest in the region.

Table 2.1. Institutional Sources of Mass Protest Participation

Institutional Characteristic	Mechanism
Party Institutionalization	Where party institutionalization is low, with inconsistent platforms and little party discipline, contentious participation is more likely, as citizens lose faith in formal modes of representation.
Legislative Effectiveness	When Congress is mired in gridlock and functional legislative coalitions fail to surface, citizens (and thus elites) might seek extra-institutional solutions.
Political Corruption	When formal institutions and politicians are delegitimized by corruption scandals, cynicism about the viability of “traditional”

⁹ A la current U.S. politics, where we certainly are seeing more protests as well.

	participation translates into protest.
Executive Dominance	Where the president holds ultimate power over important policy decisions, the opposition will be galvanized to protest due to their lack of faith in formal representation. Defenders of the president will also be motivated to take to the streets.

My focus on political engagement—via mobilizing structures like mass-based parties, labor unions, and community organizations—as a moderating variable in this process speaks to the literature on resource mobilization and protest (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978; Jenkins 1983), which argues that the formation and survival of protest movements depends in large part on the political resources available to contentious actors. While political (or “civic”) engagement might seem like a synonym for participation itself, rather than part of a causal explanation of protest, it in fact refers to the extent to which citizens are knowledgeable about and interested in political issues, and how connected they are to the types of social and political networks that can serve to foment collective action. The degree of political engagement in a given context is thus well measured by survey items used to gauge political interest and knowledge, membership in community organizations, and connectedness to political parties, via traditional or clientelistic modes of interaction. In contexts where institutions are high performing, we would expect that highly engaged citizens would participate in politics primarily through formal (or “conventional”) vehicles. However, where representative institutions are weak, I argue that high levels of political engagement give rise to

contentious modes of participation, as formal institutions do not adequately channel participation.

Table 2.2. Expectations: The Interaction between Institutions and Political Engagement

	Effective Institutions	Ineffective Institutions
High engagement	Low protest/High levels of formal participation (e.g. Uruguay, Costa Rica)	High protest/Low or ineffective formal participation (e.g. Argentina, Perú, Bolivia)
Low engagement	Low protest/Elite-dominated politics (e.g. Panama)	Low protest/Machine-style participation through formal vehicles (e.g. El Salvador, Guatemala)

Put simply, I argue that political protest is more likely to become a normalized tool of political participation in democracies where engagement among citizens is high and institutional performance is low. Where these conditions persist, contentious politics can be absorbed into a society’s repertoire of collective action and utilized regardless of the specific characteristics of the grievance being expressed, and even under conditions where institutions might have actually improved.¹⁰ Below, I outline three general hypotheses that emerge from this theoretical perspective:

Hypothesis 1: Where basic freedoms are guaranteed and citizen participation is relatively open and widespread, yet formal representative institutions fail to adequately

¹⁰ This assertion echoes Tilly (1978) and Tarrow’s (1998) work on repertoire change—i.e. that it occurs slowly, over long periods of time.

channel citizens' demands, contentious action emerges as a vital form of political participation.

Specifically, I expect that fragmented party systems, ineffective legislatures, and high corruption should correlate with high levels of contentious mobilization at the national level, as should high levels of executive dominance or weak rule of law. This first hypothesis implies an interactive relationship between the strength of representative political institutions and the degree to which citizens are engaged in political life (see Table 2.2). In other words, where democratic political institutions are weak, yet the populace is not particularly informed about or engaged in political life—e.g. there is low political interest, depressed turnout, and/or scarce participation in civic organizations—there is no reason to expect that protest movements will gain traction. Likewise, where institutions are high-functioning and the population is politically active, aggressive modes of participation are not needed for citizens to feel efficacious. However, where there are low-performing institutions *and* a high degree of political awareness and involvement among the citizenry, protest can normalize as a standard form of political voice. I address this hypothesis in Chapter III, IV, and V.

Hypothesis 2: Where formal modes of policymaking are deemed ineffective, civically engaged citizens in particular – whether through parties, unions, or NGOs – will adopt more contentious tactics than they do in high-performing democracies.

In other words, where formal policymaking institutions are seen as ineffective and inconsequential (due to any of the shortcomings enumerated above), and citizens thus cease to view them as legitimate, individuals involved in organizations within civil society are likely to adopt more radical tactics in pursuing their goals. In this vein, Machado et al. argue in their 2011 paper that actors (i.e. unions, parties, etc.) who “have little or no chance of having their interests taken into account in the formal decision-making process” are more likely to use protest to influence policymakers than organizations operating in more high-functioning democratic contexts (p. 11).¹¹ Thus, in societies where formal institutions are delegitimized, members of political organizations are forced outside of the realm of “traditional participation” and adopt more radical modes of behavior (Boulding 2010).

One important implication of this hypothesis—that political organizations and even elites utilize protest for their own ends in societies where contentious politics has normalized—is that politicians will marshal public support for their policy agenda by recruiting party members and other citizens to participate in protests. In other words, protests are used by powerful political actors to apply pressure to relevant policymakers (e.g., the president or national legislature), en lieu of more formal modes of bargaining and debate, which have been deemed ineffectual by elites themselves. Moreover, when contentious politics has achieved this degree of primacy in domestic political life, the under-the-table tactics addressed in the literature on clientelism that are utilized to drum up political support (e.g. vote-buying, conditional cash transfer payments, and patronage

¹¹ Also see Scartascini and Tommasi (2012) for a more thorough examination of institutionalized vs. non-institutionalized policymaking.

appointments) will also be used to solicit protest participation (Mangonnet and Moseley, working paper). I test this hypothesis in Chapter III.

Hypothesis 3: While institutional deficiencies can trigger protest participation in certain cases, political regimes can also become so closed off that they render contentious participation too costly.

At a certain point, the limitation of opportunities for political expression becomes so complete that individuals can neither organize themselves nor hope that potential contentious actions on their part would have any influence on policymakers. That is, where the democratic promise of representation ceases to exist, so too does the motivation to take to the streets in demand of change. The argument that bad institutions generate protest is thus limited to democratic contexts, meaning a curvilinear relationship exists between political openness and protest. This hypothesis is tested in Chapters IV and V.

Hypothesis 4: When institutions fail to improve in terms of transparency and responsiveness, protest can take hold as a standard form of political participation, akin to voting or volunteering for a political campaign.

In these so-called “social movement societies” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998), where protest is firmly entrenched in the country’s participatory culture and utilized as a primary representational vehicle, contentious behavior can become the norm among

active democrats and even political elites. In other words, once citizens who are interested and active in politics regularly utilize protest to achieve their desired end and politicians themselves mobilize protest on behalf of their policy initiatives, societies can settle on an equilibrium state where protest remains high regardless of the specific grievance. I come back to this hypothesis in Chapters IV and V.

Testing the Theory: Triangulating Measures, Levels of Analysis, and Methodological Approaches

This is a comparative dissertation, attempting to test a generalizable theory of protest across diverse political regimes to draw causal inferences regarding the role of political institutions in moderating levels of contentious political participation. However, it is not a simple cross-national comparison that will serve as the empirical basis of this project. Indeed, the primary methodological objective of this dissertation project will be to triangulate methodological approaches and data sources in an effort to provide the soundest test possible of the theoretical framework outlined above. The principal strength of triangulating methodological approaches is that by corroborating the findings from an analysis of one set of units—or one measure of a particular concept—with findings from another data source, a scholar can become more confident that the theory she claims explains the relationship between X and Y is valid and borne out in empirical data (King et al. 1994). While more specific description of methodological choices will be reserved for the coming chapters, this section will serve as a more general discussion of the methodological orientation of this dissertation.

Triangulating Measures of Protest Participation

The key dependent variable in this dissertation is protest—a notoriously difficult and controversial phenomenon to conceptualize and measure. As outlined above, according to the most commonly cited definition (Tilly and Tarrow 2006), protest is understood as the use of disruptive, extra-institutional techniques by actors who seek to make a particular claim, in which governments emerge as targets, initiators, or third parties of those claims. Naturally, this type of definition raises serious questions about operationalization. Almost by definition, protests do not occur on a regular schedule, nor are they officially registered and documented.

From a practical standpoint, when it comes to measuring protest, scholars interested in conducting quantitative research on the topic are left with two realistic options: 1) event counts data of protests, usually culled from newspaper articles, and 2) individual-level participation data based on surveys of citizens. This dissertation will utilize both types of data in an effort to “triangulate” and carry out a more thorough empirical evaluation of my theoretical approach and its implications, thus increasing the explanatory power of my theory. For the individual-level data, I look to the Latin American Public Opinion Project’s 2008, 2010, and 2012 AmericasBarometer surveys. Depending on the year, the AmericasBarometer covers up to twenty-six Latin American and Caribbean countries from Mexico to Argentina, and over 40,000 individual interviews. Each of these surveys included an extensive battery of questions on protest behavior, aimed to gauge whether or not citizens protested, how often they protested, and what types of tactics they tended to utilize.

As for the protest events data, I turn to datasets compiled by two separate Argentine think tanks: the *Programa de Investigación sobre el Movimiento de la Sociedad Argentina* (PIMSA) and *Nueva Mayoría*. Each of these Buenos Aires-based organizations has collected information on protest events since the early-1990s for each of the country's twenty-three provinces and its autonomous capital, and generously has granted me access to these data. Thus, these two sources offer coverage of nearly twenty years of contentious activity across twenty-four subnational units, making for a subnational protest dataset of unprecedented temporal and geographic breadth. By combining a cross-national analysis of protest participation using survey data with this subnational analysis of Argentine protest using two sources of event counts data, this dissertation will thus triangulate multiple measures of protest in conducting the quantitative portion of the analysis.

Triangulating Levels of Analysis

As mentioned in the section above, this dissertation will also combine analyses of protest participation across levels—notably, a cross-national analysis of survey data and a subnational analysis of events counts data. Testing my theoretical approach across levels of analysis is important for several reasons. By conducting a cross-national analysis, I aim to put forth a more general test of my argument, testing concepts that can potentially travel to other national contexts outside of Latin America (Sartori 1970). By carrying out an in-depth subnational analysis of protest in Argentina, this dissertation provides increased specificity regarding one particular national case, while at the same time avoiding the “whole nation bias” that can sometimes emerge in purely cross-national

studies, and shedding light on the importance of subnational political institutions in shaping individual level political behaviors in Latin America (Rokkan 1970, Snyder 2001; Fox 1994, Hiskey and Bowler 2004, Falleti 2010).

Beyond simply serving as a subnational counterpart to the cross-national analysis, recent events in Argentina make it an intriguing puzzle for students of contentious politics. Even prior to the recent surge in contentious activity during the last quarter of 2012, the contemporary political climate there has been one of heated conflict, including widespread and oftentimes violent protest. Motivated by sundry grievances throughout the past decade, Argentines have taken to the streets regularly, banging pots and pans in the Plaza de Mayo, installing roadblocks throughout the country, and occupying factory and office buildings (Auyero 2006). In 2009 alone, there were over 5,000 roadblocks nationwide, frequently bringing everyday life to a screeching halt (Nueva Mayoría). Nearly one-third of Argentines reported that they had taken part in a protest in 2008, placing Argentina second in the Americas in protest participation behind only Bolivia (LAPOP 2008).

The frequency and intensity of protests alone make Argentina a critical case in the study of protest behavior. One additional feature of Argentine democracy, though, makes it an ideal laboratory for examining the relationship between institutions and protest. Argentina is home to one of Latin America's most (in)famous federal systems, with vast differences in democratic quality found among the country's twenty-three provincial governments and autonomous capital (e.g. Chavez 2004, Spiller and Tommasi 2009). Given this variation in provincial-level political regimes and institutions, a subnational analysis of the role provincial political institutions play in shaping participatory

repertoires offers a quasi-experimental setting that will allow for tremendous analytical leverage in my efforts to uncover the institutional determinants of protest—even more so than at the country level.

Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

Finally, this dissertation will also meld the rigorous quantitative techniques alluded to above with a crucial qualitative component as well. Each of these two major methodological approaches offers clear advantages in any effort to draw causal inferences, and used complementarily provide a more well-rounded treatment of the political phenomena one seeks to explain. The quantitative approach allows for the examination of a larger number of cases and variables, permitting one to increase the amount of variance on the independent and dependent variables and control for alternative explanations (Lijphart 1971, King et al. 1994, Jackman 1985). This ability to systematically assess multiple causes and potential interaction effects (or second level effects of political institutions in the case of this dissertation) is crucial to scientific inference, and only attainable via quantitative analysis (Lieberson 1991). The large-N quantitative approach also offers a more effective means of avoiding selection bias—in the case of this dissertation, every major country in Latin America and the Caribbean minus Cuba will be included in the analysis, as well as every province in Argentina (Geddes 1990). Finally, the quantitative approach provides for probabilistic explanations, while also offering quantified estimates of uncertainty via confidence intervals and error terms (Jackman 1985, Lieberson 1991).

The qualitative approach also has its own set of distinct advantages. Through small-N comparisons of units or case studies, the qualitative approach is capable of generating valid “mid-level” concepts that are thoroughly crafted, but can also travel (Almond 1968, Sartori 1970). Through the use of specific qualitative strategies like Mill’s methods of difference and agreement (also referred to as the most-similar/different designs by Przeworski and Teune (1970)), qualitative scholars can closely compare two units in an effort to eliminate explanations or necessary and sufficient conditions (Savolainen 1994, Mahoney 2007). Qualitative approaches can also be more adept at avoiding problems regarding the quality of data, as researchers have a closer knowledge of the data with which they are working and can prevent problems like the whole-nation bias (e.g. Linz and De Miguel 1966).

To better understand the Argentine case, I have carried out interviews with four groups of actors across the country: citizen activists, journalists, local academics, and politicians. These interviews took place in the provinces of Mendoza, Buenos Aires, and San Luis and the national capital, and provide the qualitative data for three in-depth case studies of protest behavior and a more nuanced understanding of the cross-provincial quantitative analyses. Perhaps most importantly, in a case study of Argentina based primarily on how macro-level provincial factors influence aggregate levels of protest participation, these interviews provide a crucial window into the individual-level motivations underpinning citizens’ decisions to take to the streets or not and the strategic choices of opinion leaders.

Distinct institutional environments and wide variations in levels of contentious activity characterize the provinces of Mendoza, Buenos Aires, and San Luis. Mendoza is

widely viewed as one of Argentina's most democratic provinces (Chavez 2004; Gervasoni 2010; Wibbels 2005) and is home to a highly competitive political environment and high quality representative institutions. Conversely, the neighboring province of San Luis is infamous as one of the country's most authoritarian subnational political systems (Chavez 2004), with one family—the Rodríguez Saá—occupying the governorship since democratization in 1983 and controlling the only major local newspaper (Gervasoni 2010). Buenos Aires, the largest province in the country according to population, lies somewhere in between its two western counterparts with a relatively open and competitive political environment but low quality institutions. Recently, it has placed host to a number of important uprisings, including the standoff between agriculture and the Kirchner government in 2008 that produced nearly two thousand protests in Buenos Aires province alone (Cotarelo 2010). These provinces thus present an ideal opportunity to employ Mill's classic method of agreement (1843), isolating key differences in terms of political institutions while holding constant basic structural, socioeconomic, and cultural characteristics such as economic activities, development levels, and religion in an effort to parse out the causal mechanisms driving variation in protest activity across subnational political systems.

CHAPTER III

CONTENTIOUS ENGAGEMENT: UNDERSTANDING PROTEST IN LATIN AMERICAN DEMOCRACIES

In 2008, there were 5,608 roadblocks across Argentina (Nueva Mayoría 2009). In a representative national survey conducted in early 2008, one-third of Argentines reported having taken part in a protest the year prior to the survey, placing Argentina second in the Americas in protest participation behind only Bolivia (LAPOP 2008). In July, a months-long standoff between the government and the country's powerful agrarian sector over a proposed increase in export taxes on agricultural items, the issue behind many of the roadblocks, came to a head when the vice president—feeling pressure from protestors across the nation—voted *against* the government's proposal in a tie-breaking vote in the Senate.

During the same year, the Argentine economy grew by about seven percent, representing yet another calendar year of impressive progress in the wake of the country's devastating 2001-2002 economic crisis (World Bank 2009). Also in 2008, Argentines celebrated twenty-five years of uninterrupted democratic rule—the longest continuous democratic run in the nation's history. According to the same 2008 survey (LAPOP), by at least one measure, Argentines ranked as the most democratic populace in Latin America—and even ahead of the United States—with eighty-seven percent of respondents viewing democracy as the best form of government.¹²

¹² While the Argentine interviews were conducted face to face, the surveys in the United States were carried out online. Argentina scored an 86.9 out of 100 in terms of support for democracy as

In many ways, 2008 was a bellwether year for Argentina from an economic and political perspective—yet paradoxically, it was also perhaps the most contentious in recent history. However, Argentina is not alone in Latin America in its enthusiasm for politics in the streets. Despite widespread belief that contentious protests would shift from being the norm to becoming the exception with the consolidation of democracy (e.g. Hipsher 1998, Eckstein 2001) and passage of purportedly demobilizing neoliberal reforms (e.g. Kurtz 2004, Oxhorn 2009), the past decade is peppered with examples of large-scale protest movements across Latin America, many of which have had important consequences for democratic politics in the region (Bellinger and Arce 2011). In 2003 and 2005 in Bolivia, thousands of demonstrators called for and eventually achieved the deposal of a sitting president, and contentious participation has further crystallized as a common form of political voice in the country during the presidency of Evo Morales. In 2011 in Chile, student protests swept across what had been thought to be one of the region's more docile countries in terms of protest, having drastic consequences for the approval ratings of President Sebastian Piñera. And, in 2013, Venezuela and Brazil assumed the spotlight—Venezuela for the mass demonstrations that occurred following the election to replace fallen president Hugo Chávez, and Brazil for the spontaneous anti-government rallies that swept the country during an important international soccer tournament.

If a casual observer of Latin American politics assumed there was a band of disgruntled demonstrators banging pots and pans on every street corner south of the Rio Grande, it would be hard to blame her. Yet the reality is that for every Latin American

the best form of government, while the U.S. average was 78.4. The difference is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level and adjusted for design effects.

country that is engulfed in intense cycles of protest, there appears another where contentious tactics are seldom utilized, and citizen participation is primarily channeled through formal political institutions. Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Panama are examples of countries where rates of protest participation seldom top five percent in cross-national surveys of the region and, the more recent episodes of contentious movements notwithstanding, Chile and Brazil have rarely registered high numbers of demonstrators either (LAPOP 2008-2012). Region wide, only eight percent of Latin Americans interviewed in 2012 reported having protested in the previous year—a relatively small portion of the overall population when compared to participation rates in other political activities (LAPOP 2012).

These highly disparate trends in protest activity across Latin America offer an important opportunity to better understand the determinants of contentious politics in a region where much of the existing research suggests we should find very little. Why has protest participation exploded in certain countries while not in others in recent years? More specifically, how do individual and country level characteristics interact to explain why some individuals protest, while others do not?

In this chapter, I try to answer these questions through a focus on the interaction between individuals' access to organizational resources and institutional context. I argue first that *ceteris paribus*, civically engaged citizens are more likely to protest than those individuals with low levels of involvement in politics. Thus one element to understanding protest across Latin America in recent years can be found in the region's socioeconomic and demographic trends that find higher percentages of educated, formally employed, and socially connected individuals than at any time in the region's history. However, this is

only part of the story. For while these citizens will channel their energies through formal modes of political participation in political systems with strong, reasonably well-functioning representative institutions, the same individuals are more likely to turn to protest when living in countries where political institutions fail to provide effective democratic representation. Conversely, such institutional failings will have little effect on a disengaged citizenry, and this therefore helps explain low levels of protest in contexts where few citizens are involved in civic life. In evaluating this interaction of institutional context and citizen engagement, Latin America offers an ideal collection of cases that vary across both of these critical dimensions.

While many studies have sought to explain which individuals protest and why, and the circumstances under which specific protest events arise, scant empirical work examines the role of an individual's institutional context in moderating individual-level propensities to protest. A key contribution of this work, then, is to highlight the interaction between institutional context and patterns in civic engagement, with respect to individuals' proclivity to engage in contentious participation. In a series of cross-national analyses of individual level survey data, I find that neither individual-level characteristics nor features of one's institutional setting alone fully explain protest behavior. Rather, only when viewed together do we have a more complete picture of why protest seems to be common in some cases but not in others.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I examine recent trends in civic engagement and the quality of democratic governance across Latin America, and how they might help explain the substantial variation in protest participation we observe across Latin American regimes. Then, I articulate my own answer to this question—

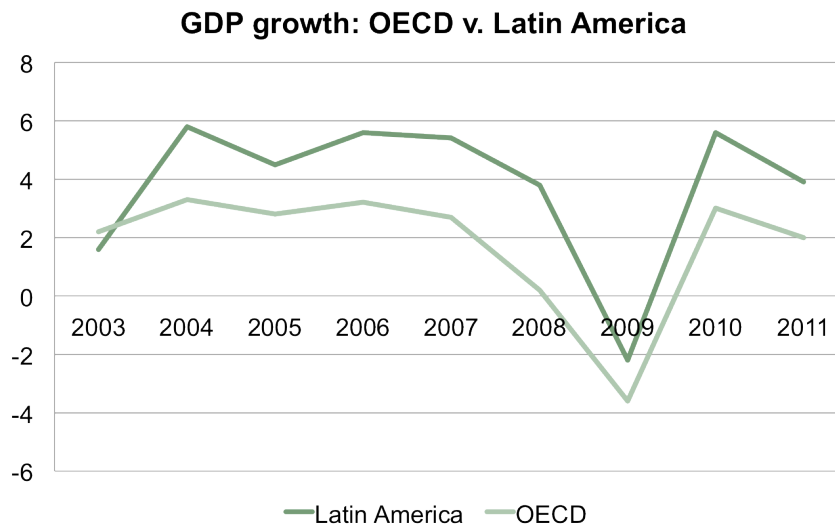
namely, that high mass-level civic engagement combined with ineffective political institutions results in heightened levels of protest participation. I proceed to outline several individual and country-level observable implications that emerge from this theoretical approach. To test this explanation, I draw on data from the AmericasBarometer surveys of Latin America and the Caribbean from 2008, 2010, and 2012. I employ multi-level statistical techniques to investigate the connection between institutional environments, civic engagement and protest participation at the individual-level across the region. I find that neither low-quality national political institutions nor individual-level trends in political engagement fully explain the immense differences we observe in terms of contentious participation across political systems. Rather, it is the volatile mix of institutions that promise representation but fail to deliver along with an engaged citizenry that seeks representation but cannot find it in the halls of government that leads them to the streets.

The Rise of Civic Engagement in Latin America

From an economic standpoint, the twenty-first century has been good to most Latin American countries. Buoyed by new trade relationships with China and other East Asian countries, Latin America's largely commodity-based economies have grown at unprecedented rates in the new millennium. From 2003-2007, Latin American countries grew at an average GDP growth rate of six percent, marking the most successful five-year period of growth in the post-war era (Ocampo 2008). In 2010, while the advanced industrialized world was still mired in a severe economic crisis, Latin American

economies expanded by about six percent (IMF 2012). More than just growth, Latin America has also made gains in terms of poverty reduction and education. The region’s poverty rate dropped from forty-four percent in 2002 to thirty-three percent in 2008 (ECLAC 2013), while the number of Latin Americans with tertiary degrees rose from nine percent in 1990 to fourteen percent in 2009 (World Bank 2013).

Figure 3.1. Recent Economic Growth in Latin America



In conjunction with these massive advances in terms of socioeconomic development, electoral democracy has finally consolidated as the only legitimate regime type in the region. Despite democratic “backslides” (Huntington 1991) in countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nicaragua (Weyland 2013), no country in the region has undergone a full-scale reverse transition to authoritarianism. Moreover, there is evidence that Latin Americans have become more active democrats in recent years. According to cross-national surveys, Latin Americans overwhelmingly support democracy as the best form of government, and since 2004 have become increasingly interested in politics,

active in elections, and participatory in their communities (LAPOP 2004-2012). The expansion of access to internet and social media has also had important consequences for politics in the region, with five Latin American countries ranking in the top ten in the world in terms of social network “engagement” (hours spent per month) and social media increasingly being utilized for political purposes (*The Economist* 2013; Valenzuela et al. 2012). The end result of all of these trends is that Latin America has become a region where many (but not all) citizens are highly engaged in democratic politics and their communities via interpersonal and virtual activities, perhaps more than anytime in the region’s history.¹³

How might recent trends in socioeconomic development and increases in civic engagement relate to protest? Beginning in the 1970s, scholars shifted their attention from grievance-based explanations of protest (e.g. Gusfield 1968, Gurr 1970) to the causal mechanisms that might explain why grievances translate into collective action in certain cases, but not others.¹⁴ The “resource mobilization” approach offers an explanation based not on relative deprivation, but on the socioeconomic factors that underpin the formation and sustainability of social movements. For scholars adhering to this particular theoretical construct, the primary determinants of whether or not social

¹³ “Community” and “civic” engagement will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter, which is in keeping with the literature on the topic (e.g. Putnam 2000).

¹⁴ Despite this trend in the protest literature, some recent work has delved into the potential causal influence of specific types of grievances in spurring protest involvement (Finkel and Muller 1998). Land and income inequality (Muller and Seligson 1987, Sen 2002, Jenkins and Jacobs 2003), neoliberal reforms and associated austerity measures (Walton and Ragin 1990, Arce 2008, Roberts 2008, Silva 2009, Bellinger and Arce 2011), and political repression or exclusion in authoritarian regimes (Loveman 1998, Bunce 2003) have all been attributed causal weight in spurring mass mobilizations. Moreover, journalistic accounts of virtually any episode of mass mobilization—from Occupy Wall Street to Arab Spring to the recent protests in Brazil—tend to focus on the grievances being voiced by demonstrators as a primary causal factor, rather than the longer-term economic and political trends that might facilitate instances of mass mobilization.

movements emerge and are successful lie in a particular movement's access to the organizational resources necessary for mobilization (McCarthy and Zald 1973; 1977). According to Jenkins, "the formation of movements is linked to improvements in the status of aggrieved groups, not because of grievances... but because these changes reduce the costs of mobilization and improve the likelihood of success" (p. 532; 1983).¹⁵

Since the initial emergence of the resource mobilization approach, it has continued to solidify its place through empirical studies as one of the most powerful theoretical tools for explaining protest participation. In recent cross-national work on protest, theories focusing on specific grievances and disaffected radicalism have been widely rejected as invalid or at least not generalizable explanations of protest, as evidence from primarily Western Europe and the U.S. (and some developing countries via the World Values Survey) has revealed that protestors are more often educated, middle-class citizens who seek to effect political change through non-traditional methods—a far cry from the "disaffected radical" described by Gurr, and much closer to the predictions made by adherents to the resource-based tradition (e.g. Inglehart 1990, Norris et al. 2005, Dalton et al. 2009).

In Latin America, studies have found that citizens who are more highly educated, interested and active in politics, and connected to civil society organizations are the most likely to engage in protest (e.g. Booth and Seligson 2009, Moreno and Moseley 2011).

¹⁵ In particular, the resource mobilization school received a boon from studies on the U.S. Civil Rights Movement published in the 1960s and 1970s. While in many ways, blacks in the U.S. encountered the same grievances they had faced during the decades leading up to this time period, access to organizational resources changed drastically in the direct lead-up to the Civil Rights movement. Indeed, it seemed that increased urbanization, the growth of historically black universities, and an expanding black middle class, led to the removal of traditional paternalistic social relations between (particularly Southern) whites and blacks, and paved the way for a thriving national movement (McAdam 1982; Jenkins 1983).

Thus, it would seem that at the individual-level, the resource mobilization approach begins to explain which individuals are more likely to protest in Latin America, especially in an era when more citizens have access to organizational tools than ever before. Yet at the aggregate level, the resource mobilization approach predicts (and has found, in the case of Dalton et al. 2009) that rates of protest participation are highest in the most economically developed contexts, where more citizens possess the organizational resources to build movements and articulate their interests. This perspective is at odds with a case like Bolivia, for example, which ranks as Latin America's most contentious country while also being one of the region's most underdeveloped. Moreover, while countries like Peru, Argentina, and Ecuador have developed rapidly in recent years and played host to numerous mass demonstrations, other countries like Uruguay and Costa Rica have grown at impressive rates and failed to register high protest numbers. Thus, while resource mobilization clearly helps understand current trends in protest activity across Latin America at the individual level, it falls short in capturing why individuals in certain countries in the region are so much more contentious than others.

The Persistence of Flawed Institutions

Latin America is a region populated by regimes of varying democratic quality (e.g. O'Donnell 1993, Diamond 2002, Levitsky 2002, Gibson 2006, Tommasi and Spiller 2007, Levitsky and Murillo 2009, Levine and Molina 2011, Scartascini and Tommasi

2012).¹⁶ While every country in the region aside from Cuba is widely characterized as a formal, electoral democracy (though some regimes, like Venezuela, probably require additional adjectives (Collier and Levitsky 1997)), Latin American regimes differ substantially in how effectively their formal political institutions channel participation and implement public policy. In this section, I explore the potential consequences of this variation for protest participation in the region.

Much of the recent literature on Latin American democratic political institutions has focused on institutional weakness in countries across the region, and how it might contribute to poor representation outcomes and policy output. Two dimensions define institutional weakness, according to Levitsky and Murillo (2009): enforcement and stability. In many Latin American countries, the formal “rules of the game” (North 1990) often change or are not enforced. For example, presidents in countries like Argentina, Venezuela, and Ecuador (among others) have sought to change reelection laws so that they can remain in power, and despite explicit legal prohibitions against doing so, many presidents in the region have pursued “court-packing” strategies to attempt to establish political control over the judicial branch or have eliminated central bank autonomy (e.g. Helmke 2002; Boylan 2001). This degree of institutional uncertainty often has dire consequences for the quality of public policy, as it encourages shortsightedness among government officials, who in many cases are under qualified for the positions they hold (Spiller and Tommasi 2007).

Shortcomings related to institutional weakness and poor governance are reflected in Latin Americans’ attitudes. Despite widespread support for democracy as a form of

¹⁶ Democratic quality can be defined as the extent to which regimes adhere to democratic norms like “freedom, the rule of law, vertical accountability, responsiveness, and equality” (Diamond and Morlino 2004, p. 21).

government across the region, confidence in key regime institutions like political parties, legislatures, and law enforcement remains low in many Latin American countries (Booth and Seligson 2009). In addition, even as Latin America has experienced unprecedented economic growth and reductions in poverty, satisfaction with public services like education, healthcare, and transportation continues to be comparatively low (LAPOP 2012). High crime rates plague many countries in the region, increasing exponentially in recent years across countries like Venezuela, Mexico, and much of Central America (Ceobanu et al. 2011; Bateson 2012). Thus, it would appear that a gap has emerged between Latin Americans' demand for democracy and its supply (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005), as diffuse support for democracy has consolidated while criticism of specific regime actors and dissatisfaction with government performance has persisted, and in some cases increased (Booth and Seligson 2009; Mainwaring and Scully 2010).

Within the protest literature, numerous studies have discussed and in some cases tested the potential relationship between institutional context and protest. Specifically, scholars utilizing the “political opportunities” approach have sought to uncover the political mechanisms that allow previously unexpressed grievances to materialize. This might entail a focus on processes of democratization and political liberalization, or, within existing democracies, on the role of political parties, labor unions, or important legal decisions in structuring potential protest activity (Huntington 1968, Tilly 1978, McAdam 1982, Kitschelt 1986, Brockett 1991). Others have compared rates of protest in contexts characterized by different levels of democratic “openness,” as several scholars have posited a curvilinear relationship between political openness and protest (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978, 2006; Muller and Seligson 1987). According to this logic, protest

movements arise and flourish more frequently in moderately open regimes, where public opposition is tolerated and widespread but representative institutions are not fully facilitative of effective participation, than in regimes at either end of the openness spectrum (Eisinger 1973, Tilly 1978, Muller and Seligson 1987).

Empirical work on the impact of political institutions on protest participation has produced mixed results. In their cross-national study utilizing data from the World Values Survey, Dalton et al. (2009) find that more democratic, high functioning (i.e., “open”) institutional contexts produce higher rates of protest participation. Their dependent variable measures participation in four types of protest activities over an indefinite time period, across a mix of democratic and authoritarian regimes.

Unfortunately, failing to specify a time period for participation casts serious doubt on those results (which will be further discussed below in the discussion of measurement), and the most common form of protest participation reported was petition signing, an activity that falls outside of most conceptualizations of contentious politics. Similarly, relying only on a rule of law indicator to measure political development leaves out of the analysis several potentially important institutional factors that might moderate rates of protest participation.

In other recent work, scholars have shifted towards examining how weak political institutions in democracies can push citizens towards adopting contentious tactics (e.g. Boulding 2010, Machado et al. 2011). A focus on more specific features of national level political institutions by Machado et al. (2011) in their study of Latin American democracies reveals that institutional weakness actually increases the prevalence of

protest participation within that regime.¹⁷ However, despite the significant contributions of this work, its limited sample of seventeen countries from one time point prevents inclusion of other important second-level economic controls, and raises the question of whether 2008 may have been somewhat anomalous in terms of protest activity across the region. More generally though, I argue that studies to this point have overlooked the degree to which institutional factors *interact* with the individual-level characteristics that motivate protest participation—most notably, civic engagement—to shape distinct participatory repertoires across countries.

Contentious Engagement in Flawed Democracies

The often-sharp, cross-national variation we observe in protest participation across countries calls for a focus on how political context interacts with mass level dynamics to influence the rise of contentious political participation. In the face of trends related to community engagement and institutional quality in Latin America, I argue that a combination of high levels of civic engagement among citizens and ineffective political institutions precipitates more radical modes of political participation, as regimes' ability to deliver on citizens' expectations fails to match the mobilization capacity of the citizenry. Thus, where individuals are engaged in civic life and interested in politics, but institutional quality is low—e.g. unresponsive or inconsistent representational vehicles, fickle systems of checks and balances, and weak rule of law—protest emerges due to the

¹⁷ Boulding's 2010 piece on the impact of subnational electoral environment on the relationship between NGOs and protest activity in Bolivian municipalities finds that the presence of NGOs increases the number of protests in uncompetitive electoral environments. It also offers what is probably the closest approximation of the argument I make here, though it does not employ multilevel techniques nor does it measure protest participation at the individual level.

inability of formal political institutions to adequately channel and respond to the voices of active democratic citizens.

Following this line of thought, politically active individuals utilize protest as a means of exerting their influence more forcefully on the regime given their mistrust of formal political institutions and their perceived lack of efficacy operating through conventional vehicles. Thus, contrary to the commonly-held notions that protest movements are either largely led by economically deprived segments of society that have long withdrawn from the political arena (e.g. Gurr's 1970 grievance-based theory), or that protest is a healthy byproduct of liberal democracy and economic development (e.g. Dalton et al. 2009), I argue that in contemporary Latin America, protest has become part of the "repertoire" (Tilly 1986)—or set of options at the disposal of collective actors—of participation utilized by politically active citizens in systems devoid of effective political institutions.

While the term community engagement might seem like a synonym for protest participation itself, rather than part of a causal explanation of protest, it in fact refers to the extent to which citizens are knowledgeable about and interested in political issues, and how connected they are to the types of social and political networks that can serve to foment collective action (Putnam 2000). The degree of civic engagement in a given context is thus well measured by survey items used to gauge political interest and involvement, membership in community organizations, and exposure to political information-sharing via social networks. In contexts where institutions are high performing, we would expect that highly engaged citizens would participate in politics primarily through formal (or "conventional") vehicles. However, where representative

institutions are weak, I argue that high levels of civic engagement give rise to contentious modes of participation, as citizens come to believe that formal institutions do not adequately represent their interests and respond to their claims.

The specific mechanisms that determine how well regimes channel and respond to popular demands might include the quality of party representation, the effectiveness of governments in implementing policy and providing public services, and the extent to which rule of law institutions provide citizens equal protection under the law (Kitschelt 1986, Przeworski 2010, Machado et al. 2011, Scartascini and Tommasi 2012).¹⁸ Engaged citizens naturally seek to influence politics, as they are interested in and knowledgeable about key issues, and believe that policymakers should be responsive to their voices. Where formal institutions are strong and of high quality, those citizens can have faith that their opinions will be reflected through formal institutional channels, whereas that assumption cannot be made where institutions are incapable of fulfilling basic representative functions.

Political institutions in Latin American democratic systems vary greatly in terms of their ability to offer a representational outlet for their population, and their capacity to translate citizens' policy preferences into government output. For example, while political parties have been relatively programmatic in countries like Chile, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, party platforms and ideological positions vacillate wildly in countries like Argentina, Peru, and Paraguay, and clientelistic linkages pervade (Kitschelt et al. 2010). While executives have for years possessed the power to act unilaterally in countries like

¹⁸ In their 2011 piece, Machado, Scartascini, and Tommasi argue that where institutionalized modes of participation are deemed unproductive, citizens adopt "alternative political technologies" as a more direct means of obtaining representation (also see Scartascini and Tommasi 2012).

Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, rendering legislative bodies basically inconsequential, presidents wield considerably less power to rule by decree in countries like Uruguay and Chile and must adopt more collaborative tactics in pursuing policy agendas (e.g. Mainwaring 1990, Foweraker 1998). Chile boasts effective law enforcement and low levels of corruption, but other countries with similar levels of economic development like Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil are characterized by police corruption and weak judicial-legal institutions (e.g. Seligson 2006). These examples highlight the extent to which regimes differ in their ability to absorb citizens' preferences and produce responsive public policy, and it is this variation that I see as critical to understanding varying levels of protest in the region.

However, focusing solely on the role of institutions is missing a key piece of the puzzle. My emphasis on civic engagement—i.e. individual-level linkages to mobilizing structures like community organizations or social media—as a conditioning variable in this process speaks to the literature on resource mobilization and protest (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978; Jenkins 1983), which argues that the formation and survival of protest movements depends in large part on the political resources available to contentious actors. A single-minded emphasis on institutional characteristics as the decisive determinant of contentious participation ignores the critical role that swelling rates of civic engagement have played in producing protest across Latin America in recent years. Weak political institutions themselves do not necessarily guarantee that protests will occur—rather, weak institutions *and* a citizenry readily mobilized, able and motivated to organize collective action, operate in concert to produce high protest societies. The list of national cases where institutions are low quality but protest

movements fail to gain traction is endless—in Latin America and the Caribbean, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Jamaica, to name a few—and includes virtually any authoritarian regime where representational institutions are non-existent or ineffective but grassroots engagement is limited. Moreover, protests often materialize in countries with “good” institutions, as was the case recently in Chile in 2011 and in the U.S. during the Occupy Wall Street movement, due in part to the dense organizational networks that also exist in such democracies. For this reason, I argue that any cross-level explanation of protest must factor in individual level civic engagement, as these critical organizational linkages serve as a necessary condition for any potential institutional effect on contentious politics.

Table 3.1 Interactive Relationship between Institutional Quality and Civic Engagement

	Low Quality Institutions	High Quality Institutions
Low Civic Engagement	Low probability of protesting	Low probability of protesting
High Civic Engagement	High probability of protesting	Moderate probability of protesting

The three hypotheses that emerge from this discussion are as follows:

Hypothesis 3.1: Individuals with access to organizational resources—e.g. higher community activity, interest in politics, education, and use of social media—will be more likely to protest than their less engaged counterparts.

Hypothesis 3.2: Individuals with less support for formal institutions and more dissatisfaction with public services are more likely to protest.

Hypothesis 3.3: Low institutional quality will increase the probability of participating in a protest, but only among those citizens who are at least minimally engaged in political life.

I now turn to an examination of these ideas through analysis of survey data gathered across Latin America over the past six years.

Data and Measurement

To test the theoretical framework proposed above, I utilize data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project's (LAPOP) AmericasBarometer surveys from 2008, 2010, and 2012, which consist of representative national surveys of individuals from twenty-four countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The key dependent variable comes from a question that asks respondents if they have participated in a street march or public demonstration during the previous twelve months.¹⁹²⁰

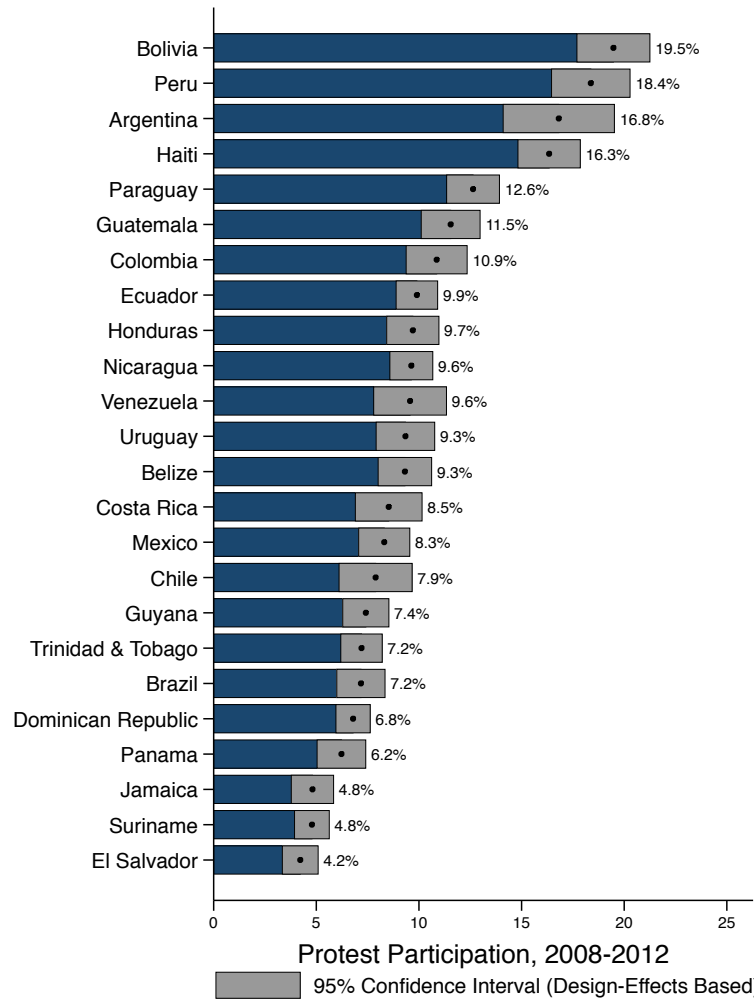
Figure 1 displays the percentage of respondents who participated in a protest from 2008-2012 in each Latin American country included in the AmericasBarometer biannual surveys. Clearly, significant variation exists in the region in terms of the extent to which protest has been adopted as a form of political participation. Bolivia had the highest rate of protest participation in Latin America at nineteen percent, followed closely by

¹⁹ See appendix for specific question wording for all variables included in the analysis.

²⁰ Summary statistics for each variable are included in the appendix.

Argentina, Peru, and Haiti. Bolivia also experienced the most contentious single year rate of participation recorded by the AmericasBarometer surveys, at nearly thirty percent participation in 2008. These results immediately cast doubt on the notion that high levels of development produce high levels of protest, as Haiti and Bolivia are among the poorest nations in the Americas, while in such economically diverse countries like Jamaica, Panama, and El Salvador, protest appears to be extremely uncommon, with barely five percent of citizens registering participation.

Figure 3.2 Percent of Respondents Who Participated in a Protest, 2008-2012



Source: © AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

The AmericasBarometer survey instrument offers an improvement on previous cross-national data on protest participation utilized in other studies for two primary reasons. First, the AmericasBarometer surveys from 2008-2012 always specify a timeframe of the past twelve months when inquiring about protest participation—something that other cross-national projects like the World Values Surveys have not done. Questions that fail to establish a timeframe for respondents are not measuring current levels of protest participation, but instead capturing an individual’s lifetime

account of protest activity. This would seem to favor higher rates of protest participation for older democracies, where protesting has been permitted for many years, even if current levels are not particularly high. While these data do not speak to present levels of protest, the predictors of protest—e.g. community activity, wealth, and even levels of education—do reflect current conditions. This temporal disconnect between the independent and dependent variables then casts doubt on the meaning of findings utilizing this measure of protest activity, such as those relying on World Values Survey data before 2005.²¹

Second, the AmericasBarometer survey offers multiple time points at which we can evaluate the determinants of protest participation for each country, which helps remedy any potential bias related to an outlier year for a particular country and increases the number of observations for second level variables. For example, in the case of Chile, protest participation was relatively low in 2010 (and seemingly before, though we lack AmericasBarometer data to confirm) but skyrocketed to eleven percent in 2012, placing it in the top five in the region. A snapshot view using one round of surveys can thus capture an anomalous moment in a country's history, given the oftentimes sporadic nature of large protest events. By taking into account results from three separate surveys, this study provides a more balanced view of a country's proclivity for protesting over time, less subject to exceptional years and episodes of mass contention.

At the individual level, the key independent variable for capturing community engagement is an index that gauges the frequency with which citizens participate in local

²¹ The most recent version of the WVS questionnaire available online (2005) states that “during the last five years” has since been added to this question. However, all previous surveys—which have been used in the studies cited above, including the key study by Dalton and co-authors (2009)—ask if respondents have ever participated in any of the enumerated activities without limiting responses to a certain time period.

civic organizations. Respondents were asked how often they attended meetings for a variety of different types of community organizations during the previous year, including community improvement associations, parent organizations, professional associations, religious groups, and political parties. The response options provided were “Never,” “Once or Twice a Year,” “Once or Twice a Month,” and “Once a Week.” I then coded the response levels from 0 (“Never”) to 3 (“Once a Week”), and added the five variables to form a single “engagement” index, which was then rescaled to 0-100. I argue that this variable effectively measures the extent to which individuals are engaged in community activities, and have access to the organizational structures that can serve to facilitate collective action.

At the individual level, I also include variables for interest in politics, level of education, and use of social media to share or receive political information—all of which approximate the resource mobilization approach to explaining protest participation by individuals. In addition, I draw from questions on support for key political institutions, satisfaction with public services, and external efficacy to shed light on how perceptions of political institutions influence individuals’ proclivity to protest. To test competing theories regarding the influence of specific grievances on protest participation, I will utilize individual-level variables for presidential approval, evaluations of one’s personal economic situation, evaluations of the national economic situation, and socioeconomic status. Interpersonal trust is also included, as many have argued in the past that trust in one’s fellow citizens increases the probability of protesting (e.g. Inglehart 1989, Dalton et al. 2009).

For the second level (i.e., country level) variables on institutional quality, I turn to the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). The WGI offers measures on six dimensions of governance, three of which are relevant to this study: Voice and Accountability, Government Effectiveness, and Rule of Law. These measures represent the views of business, citizen, and elite survey respondents, and are based on "30 individual data sources produced by a variety of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms" (WGI website). These indicators offer the best combination of coverage across countries and time and rigorous measurement techniques for the countries included in the AmericasBarometer survey, though the indicators are certainly not without drawbacks (see Kaufmann et al. 2007). Descriptions of each dimension from the creators of the indicators are as follows:

Voice and Accountability: "Reflects perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media."

Government Effectiveness: "Reflects perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies."

Rule of Law: "Reflects perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence."

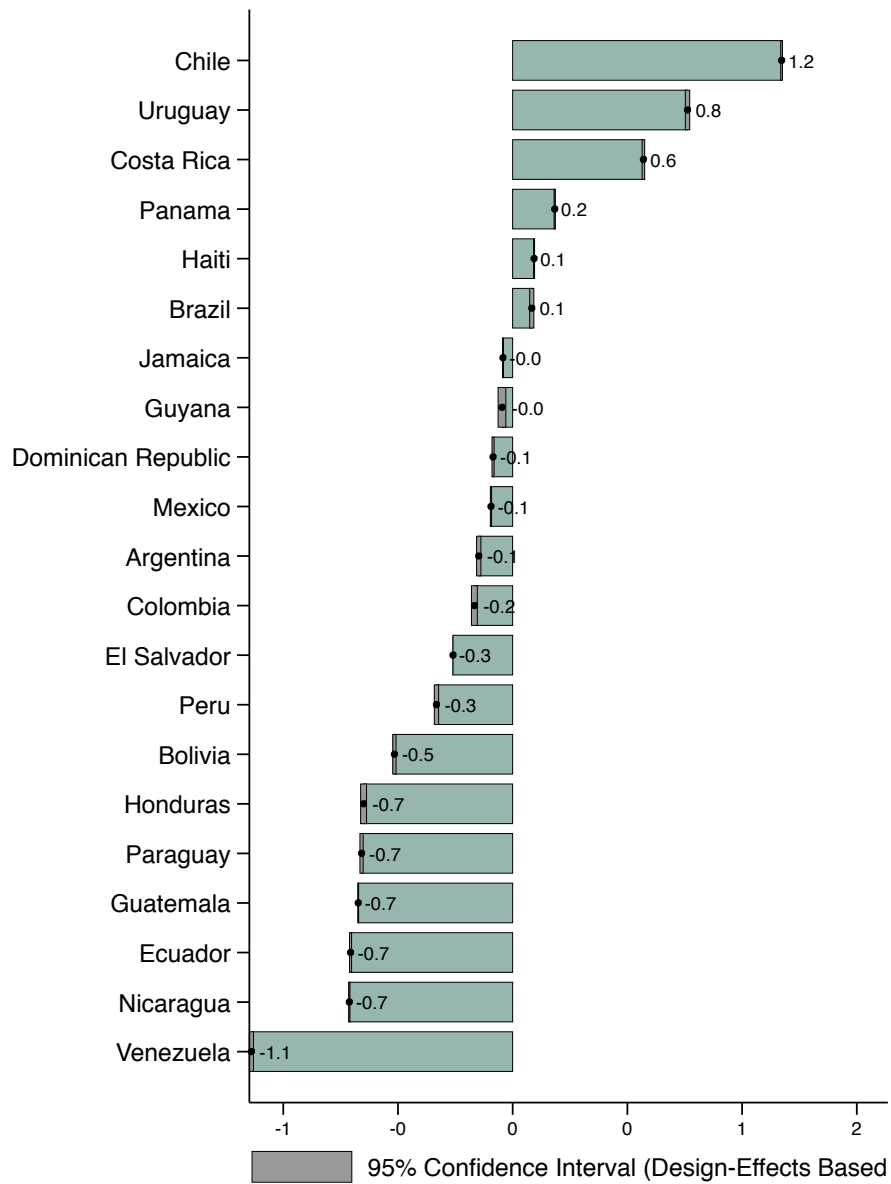
Each of these three dimensions captures an important component of institutional quality, and will be tested individually as a second level predictor of protest participation.²² The “Voice and Accountability” measure helps gauge the extent to which individuals can effectively participate in politics and obtain representation in government, while “Government Effectiveness” serves as a measure of regime transparency and capacity in the making and implementation of public policy. “Rule of Law” offers an indicator for how well regimes offer citizens equal protection under the law, a crucial characteristic of effective democratic governance. I combine the three variables in an additive index I call the Institutional Quality Index, which I use in the analyses below as an indicator of the institutional environment in which individual citizens operate. I argue that this multifaceted indicator offers an effective proxy for the extent to which Latin American regimes fulfill the democratic promise of representation, which I expect will be reflected in patterns of protest participation across countries.

In Figure 2, countries are listed in terms of average Institutional Quality Index Score for the period 2008-2012. Chile leads the region in terms of institutional quality with a score of 1.2.²³ Venezuela and Haiti score lowest, unsurprisingly, while a large group of Latin American regimes hover around zero. These scores indicate that while democracy predominates in the region, the quality of political institutions and governance varies greatly, with the majority of regimes falling short of living up to modern standards of liberal democracy.

²² For country values on each of these of these indicators, please see the table in the appendix.

²³ As a reference point, the score for the United States during this time period was 1.39.

Figure 3.3 Mean Institutional Quality Scores, 2008-2012



Source: © AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

As controls, I also include second-level measures of human development, inequality, and economic growth during the year of the survey. These variables will serve to test grievance-based explanations of contentious politics, in addition to providing assurance that the causal effects of variation in institutional quality on protest

participation are not a function of an omitted variable linked to both institutional quality and protest levels.

Analysis

The dependent variable in this analysis is protest participation, measured at the individual level. I begin with two individual-level models of protest across Latin America that will highlight those individual socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics associated with protest behavior. In the second set of models, I then incorporate the national-level variables discussed above in order to assess the impact of these second-level institutional factors on individual-level protest participation.

Individual level models

Table 2 displays the results from the first set of models, each of which employs logistic regression given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable.²⁴ In Model 1, we see that several variables emerge as strong predictors of protest participation, none more so than community engagement. An increase from the 0 to 50 on the community engagement scale nearly triples one's probability of protesting, holding other covariates at their means (see Figure 3.4).²⁵ Moreover, a person at the highest value in terms of community activism is more than four times likelier to participate in a protest than

²⁴ These logistic regression models account for the complex nature of the survey data, which include stratification and clustering. Both models were also run including fixed effects for countries and years, with Uruguay and 2012 as the baseline, but given that this did not affect results, those coefficients are not reported in Table 2. All countries are weighted to an equal N.

²⁵ Predicted probabilities are calculated using Stata 12's "margins" command while holding other variables in the model at their mean. Graphs were made using the "marginsplot" command, which graphs the results from "margins."

someone in the lowest quintile, holding other variables constant at their means. In keeping with the resource mobilization approach to explaining protest participation, education and interest in politics also have strong positive effects on the probability of participating in a protest.

Table 3.2 Individual Level Models of Protest Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

VARIABLES	Protest Participation (1=Protested)	Protest Participation (1=Protested)
	Model 1 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 2 Coeff. (s.e.)
Female	-0.278*** (0.025)	-0.292*** (0.049)
Age	-0.008*** (0.0009)	-0.005*** (0.002)
Wealth (quintile)	-0.011 (0.010)	-0.078*** (0.019)
Interest in Politics	0.011*** (0.0004)	0.009*** (0.0008)
Education	0.325*** (0.021)	0.309*** (0.039)
Community Participation	0.026*** (0.0008)	0.0273*** (0.001)
Presidential Approval	-0.003*** (0.0006)	-0.003** (0.001)
Interpersonal Trust	-0.002*** (0.0004)	-0.001 (0.0008)
Personal Economic Situation	-0.002*** (0.0007)	-0.002* (0.001)
National Economic Situation	0.0005 (0.0006)	0.0007 (0.001)
Perception of Corruption	-1.89e-05 (0.0005)	-0.002* (0.0009)
System Support	-0.006*** (0.0007)	-0.007*** (0.001)
Efficacy	0.0007 (0.0005)	0.0005 (0.0008)
Satisfaction with Public Services	--	-0.006*** (0.001)
Shared Political Information via	--	0.009***

Social Network		(0.0007)
Constant	-2.784*** (0.090)	-2.569*** (0.168)
Observations	88,750	29,248
Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; Two-tailed tests		

On the other hand, several variables seem to decrease Latin Americans' likelihood of participating in a street march or demonstration. Net of other factors, women are less likely to have participated in a protest, and age has a significant negative impact on protesting as well. Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this paper, system support has a significant negative effect on the probability of taking part in a protest march or demonstration, meaning that individuals who view key regime institutions more positively are less likely to protest, while those with more negative evaluations are more likely protestors. While this effect falls far short of the magnitude of the effect for community engagement, moving from the lowest quintile in terms of system support to the highest results in a twenty-five percent decrease in the probability of participating in a protest (from .12 to .9).

One individual-level finding that seems to hint at a potential cross-level interaction between institutional quality and civic engagement is the interaction between system support and community involvement (Figure 3.5). As predicted, low system support and high engagement produce the highest probabilities of participating in a protest. Perhaps most interesting about this interaction though is the extent to which the effect of low system support is conditional on at least a moderate level of community involvement. At minimal levels of community engagement, no decrease in system

support seems to increase the probability of protesting—however, as community engagement increases even slightly, system support’s effect surfaces.

Figure 3.4 Predicted Probabilities Based on Changes in Levels of Community Engagement

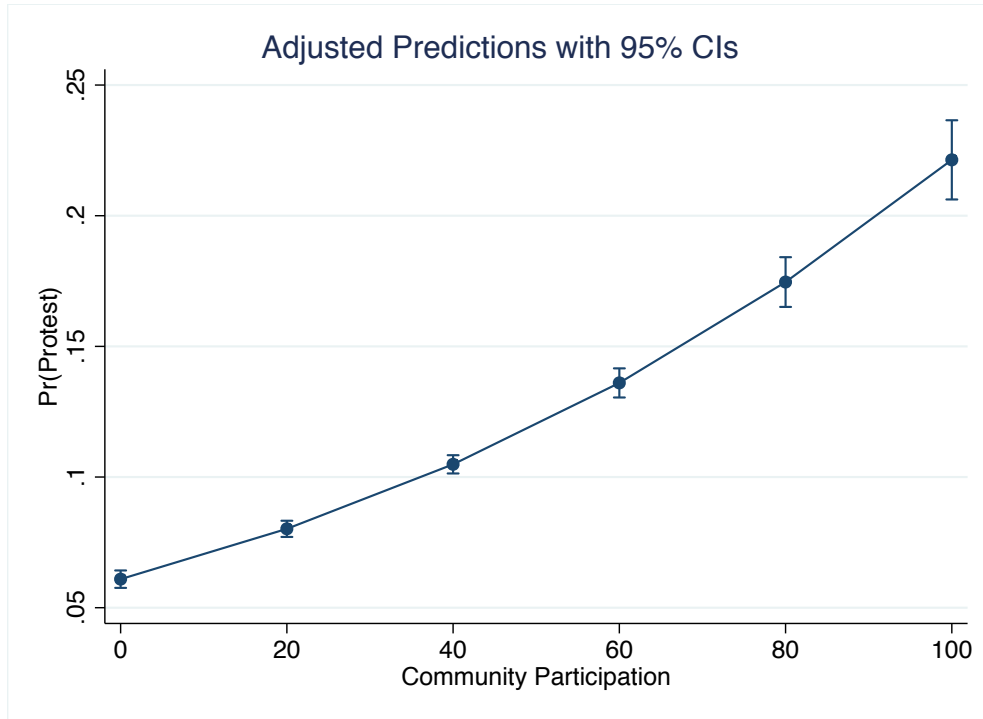
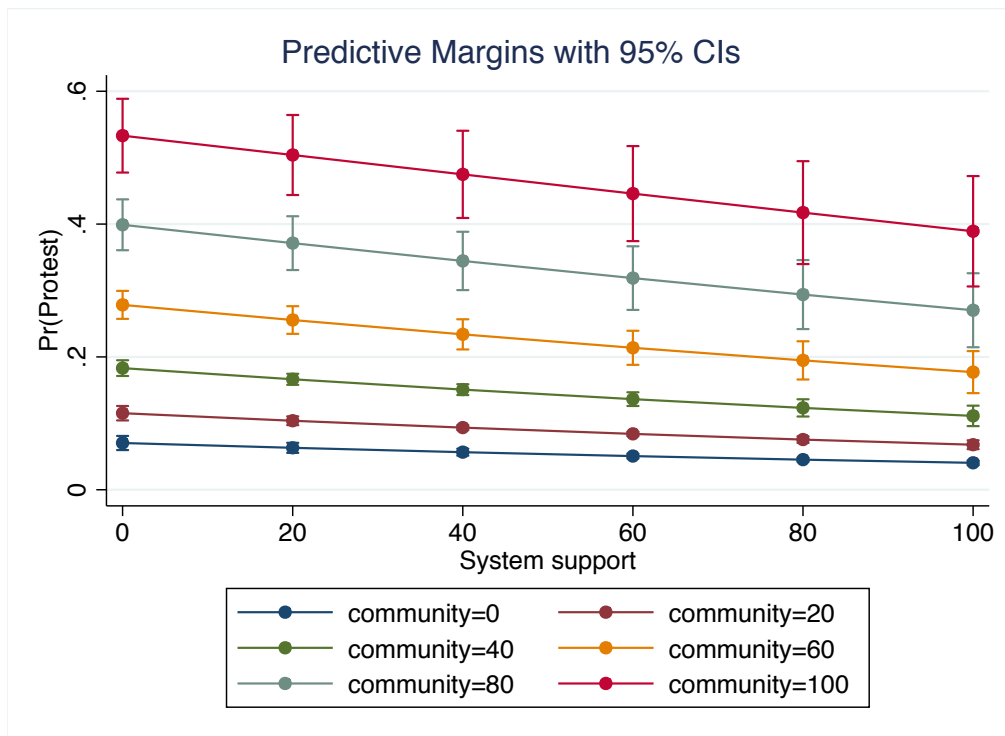


Figure 3.5. Predicted Probabilities: Interaction between System Support and Community Engagement



Model 2 adds variables for information sharing via social networks and satisfaction with public services to the equation. Each of the questions that serve as the bases for these two variables was only asked in 2012, meaning that the number of observations drops substantially. However, both variables have significant effects on one's probability of protesting: while an increase in satisfaction with public service provision decreases the odds of having protested, those who actively share or receive political information through social networks are nearly three times more likely to participate in a protest than those who do not, holding other variables at their means and modes.

In sum, based on these predictive models of protest participation in Latin America from 2008-2012, it appears that citizens who are actively engaged in their communities—i.e., they are interested in politics, participate in community organizations, and share political information via the Internet—and citizens who have negative views of key regime institutions and public services are the most likely protestors.²⁶ While these initial findings comport with the theoretical approach outlined above, the more important test of how institutional environment shapes participatory repertoires requires a multilevel approach, which follows in the next section.

²⁶ In any attempt to propose and test a causal argument using cross-sectional data, endogeneity is justifiably a concern. In this case, the most plausible alternative explanation would be that protest actually increases community engagement, in that demonstrations might link formerly unassociated protestors to established civic organizations. Replacing a potentially problematic variable with an instrument unrelated to the outcome variable can help solve this problem (Sovey and Green 2011). A two-stage least squares model instrumenting for protest with ideology (an instrument deemed “not weak”) coupled with a Hausman test somewhat assuages concerns that the causal arrow flows from community engagement to protest and not the other way around, as I was unable to reject the null hypothesis of exogeneity. However, I include results from an instrumental variables regression model that instruments for community engagement in the appendix. While the predicted effect of community engagement on protest is somewhat attenuated, it remains one of the strongest predictors in the model.

Multilevel models

In the second set of models, country level variables were added to each model and multilevel mixed effects logistic regression models were estimated to account for variation between countries during the three survey years under consideration. In other words, the second level variables listed in each model describe “Country Years”—i.e., the national context in which individuals from each round of the AmericasBarometer responded to the survey questions. The results for eight models of protest participation are presented in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. In each model, second level economic variables serve as controls, in addition to the individual-level variables that proved consequential in the regional analyses presented above. Variables for the WGI indicators of institutional quality were added one at a time in the four models in Table 3.3, and then interaction terms were inserted in the four models in Table 3.4.

Table 3.3 Multilevel Models of Protest Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

	Protest Participation (1=Protested)	Protest Participation (1=Protested)	Protest Participation (1=Protested)	Protest Participation (1=Protested)
VARIABLES	Model 3 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 4 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 5 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 6 Coeff. (s.e.)
<i>Individual Level Variables</i>				
Female	-0.272*** (0.023)	-0.272*** (0.023)	-0.272*** (0.023)	-0.272*** (0.023)
Age	-0.008*** (0.0008)	-0.008*** (0.0008)	-0.008*** (0.0008)	-0.008*** (0.0008)
Wealth (quintile)	0.005 (0.009)	0.005 (0.009)	0.005 (0.009)	0.005 (0.009)
Interest in Politics	0.012*** (0.0004)	0.012*** (0.0004)	0.012*** (0.0004)	0.012*** (0.0004)
Education	0.261*** (0.018)	0.261*** (0.018)	0.261*** (0.018)	0.261*** (0.018)
Community	0.026***	0.026***	0.026***	0.026***

Participation	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)
Presidential Approval	-0.003*** (0.0005)	-0.003*** (0.0005)	-0.003*** (0.0005)	-0.003*** (0.0005)
Interpersonal Trust	-0.001*** (0.0004)	-0.001*** (0.0004)	-0.001*** (0.0004)	-0.001*** (0.0004)
Personal Economic Situation	-0.002*** (0.0006)	-0.002*** (0.0006)	-0.002*** (0.0006)	-0.002*** (0.0006)
System Support	-0.004*** (0.0006)	-0.004*** (0.0006)	-0.004*** (0.0006)	-0.004*** (0.0006)
<i>Second level Variables</i>				
Gini Index (2009)	3.899 (2.637)	3.988 (2.685)	4.017 (2.666)	3.937 (2.665)
HDI (2007)	2.909 (2.365)	1.106 (2.111)	1.386 (2.090)	1.731 (2.206)
GDP growth (annual)	0.005 (0.039)	0.010 (0.040)	0.011 (0.040)	0.011 (0.039)
Government Effectiveness	-0.364 (0.268)			
Voice and Accountability		-0.032 (0.267)		
Rule of Law			-0.099 (0.211)	
Institutions Index				-0.177 (0.263)
Constant	-7.255*** (2.668)	-5.804** (2.509)	-6.100** (2.568)	-6.313** (2.592)
Observations	92,567	92,567	92,567	92,567
Number of Country Years	67	67	67	67

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; Two-tailed tests

Table 3.4 Multilevel Models of Protest Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean (with interactions)

VARIABLES	Protest Participation (1=Protested)	Protest Participation (1=Protested)	Protest Participation (1=Protested)	Protest Participation (1=Protested)
	Model 7 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 8 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 9 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 10 Coeff. (s.e.)
<i>Individual Level Variables</i>				
Female	-0.270*** (0.023)	-0.255*** (0.023)	-0.275*** (0.023)	-0.277*** (-0.007)
Age	-0.008*** (0.0008)	-0.006*** (0.0008)	-0.007*** (0.0008)	-0.007*** (0.0008)
Wealth (quintile)	0.005 (0.009)	0.003 (0.009)	0.006 (0.009)	0.005 (0.009)
Interest in Politics	0.012*** (0.0004)	0.013*** (0.0004)	0.013*** (0.0004)	0.012*** (0.0004)
Education	0.262*** (0.018)	0.265*** (0.018)	0.260*** (0.018)	0.331*** (0.022)
Community Participation	0.025*** (0.0008)	--	0.026*** (0.0007)	0.026*** (0.0007)
Presidential Approval	-0.003*** (0.0005)	-0.003*** (0.0005)	-0.003*** (0.0005)	-0.003*** (0.0005)
Interpersonal Trust	-0.001*** (0.0004)	-0.0006 (0.0004)	-0.001** (0.0004)	-0.001*** (0.0004)
Personal Economic Situation	-0.002*** (0.0006)	-0.002*** (0.0006)	-0.002*** (0.0006)	-0.001*** (0.0006)
System Support	-0.004*** (0.0006)	-0.003*** (0.0006)	-0.004*** (0.0006)	-0.004*** (0.0006)
Community Dummy	--	0.737*** (0.037)	--	--
<i>Second level Variables</i>				
Gini Index (2009)	3.905 (2.663)	4.021 (2.690)	3.299 (2.576)	3.174 (2.580)
HDI (2007)	1.822 (2.204)	1.079 (2.227)	2.000 (2.128)	2.063 (2.132)
GDP growth (annual)	0.010 (0.039)	0.011 (0.040)	0.027 (0.038)	0.028 (0.038)
Institutions Index	-0.107 (0.264)	0.020 (0.270)	-0.484* (0.274)	-0.822*** (0.282)
Institutions Index * Community Participation	-0.003*** (0.001)	--	--	--
Institutions Index *	--	-0.313***	--	--

Community Dummy		(0.062)		
Institutions Index* Interest in Politics	--	--	0.002** (0.0007)	--
Institutions Index * Education	--	--	--	0.194*** (0.033)
Constant	-6.343** (2.590)	-6.125** (2.617)	-6.348*** (2.453)	-6.457*** (2.457)
Observations	92,567	92,567	92,567	92,567
Number of Country Years	67	67	67	67

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; Two-tailed tests

First, it should be mentioned that second level economic variables seem to play a very minor role in explaining individual-level protest dynamics in Latin America during the time period under consideration. Neither inequality, human development, nor GDP growth during the year of the survey serve as significant predictors of protest participation, raising questions about the idea that macroeconomic forces are what drive cycles of protest. Although individuals' perceptions of their personal economic situation do continue to carry some weight, as do negative performance evaluations of the current president, wealth is not a strong predictor of participation. It thus appears that we can discount economic factors as the primary determinants of mass mobilization in Latin America. This does not mean that economic grievances fail to play any role in motivating instances of contentious behavior—rather, it indicates that many citizens experiencing economic hardship decide not to protest, while others in comfortable economic situations do choose to participate. At the same time, these results do not reveal any positive relationship between economic development and protest participation, contrary to findings from accounts grounded in analyses of developed democracies.

The relationship between institutional context and protest participation is a thornier one to interpret. In each of the first four models, it appears that the institutional variables—while having the predicted negative sign—fail to attain statistical significance as predictors of protest involvement. This would seem to indicate that institutional environment itself does not have a significant impact on the probability that individuals within that context will protest, controlling for other individual and aggregate level factors, which contradicts the findings of Machado et al. (2011).

However, the theory I put forth in this paper is an interactive one, whereby institutions interact with community engagement to affect individuals' likelihood of adopting contentious political behaviors. In Model 7, I interact the “Institutional Quality Index”, a country level variable, with community engagement, an individual level variable. The coefficient is negative, and obtains statistical significance at the $p < .01$ level. The fact that the effect for institutional quality is insignificant in this model indicates that it is not an important predictor of protest where community engagement equals zero. However, the significance of the interaction's coefficient indicates that this changes as the two interacted variables' values change.

Figure 3.6 Predicted Probabilities: Interaction between Institutional Context and Community Engagement

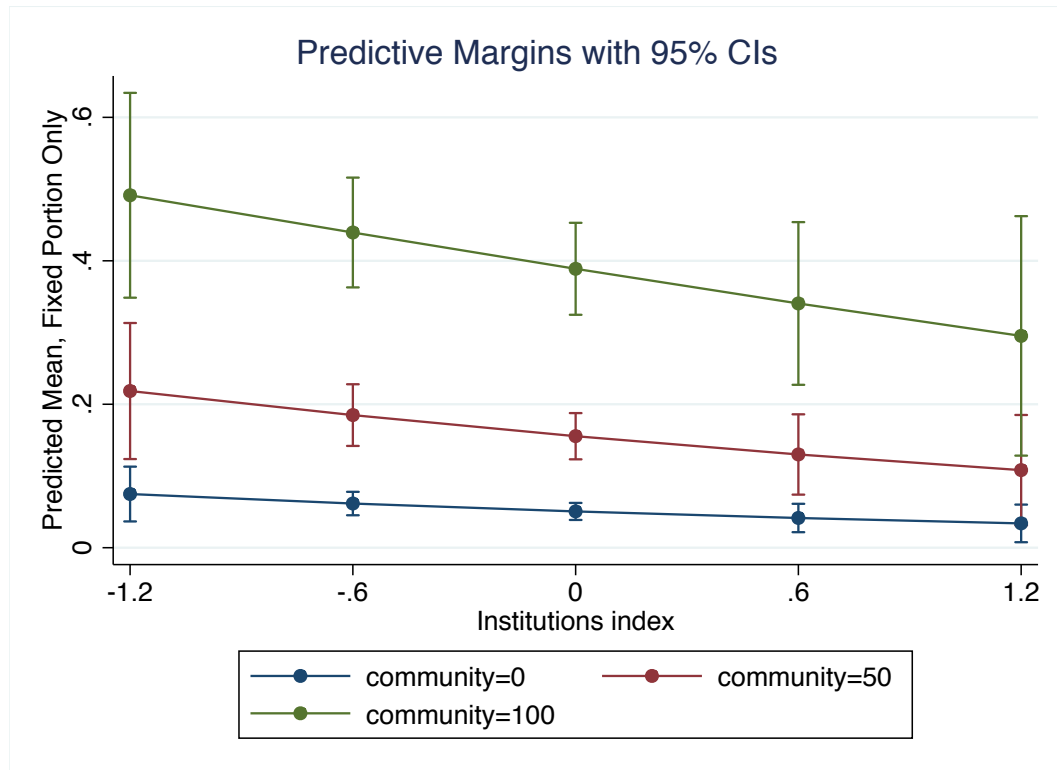


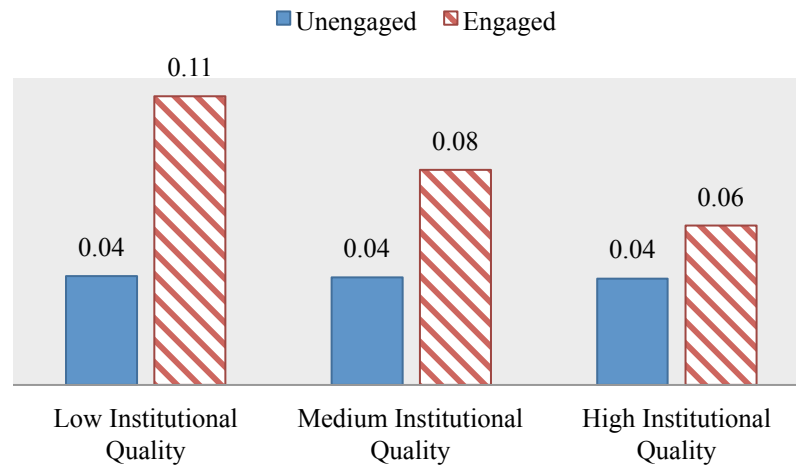
Figure 3.6 displays predicted probabilities of participating in a protest depending on variation in institutional context and community engagement. By graphing changes in the predicted probabilities, we can clearly observe that the causal impact of institutional context changes drastically depending on levels of community engagement, and vice versa. Where community engagement equals zero—i.e., citizens have no ties to any of the five types of civic organizations referred to in the questions that make up the index—institutional quality has no effect on the probability of protesting. However, as engagement increases, the causal importance of institutional context begins to emerge. Where the “Community Engagement” index equals fifty, it seems that citizens in low quality institutional settings become substantially more likely to protest, holding other individual and second level variables at their means and modes. Where community

involvement is high, the differences in probabilities are even starker—indeed, while a maximally engaged individual in a low quality institutional environment (Institutional Quality Index = -1) possesses a .48 probability of participating in a protest, that same individual possesses only a .26 probability of participating in a high quality institutional environment. Thus, active citizens are nearly twice as likely to have protested in low quality institutional contexts compared to high quality institutional contexts.

As a robustness check, Model 8 offers a similar interaction term with an alternative coding of the community engagement variable. In this case, I coded as “Community Engagement Dummy” = 1 individuals who were at least minimally participative in one community organization, and as Community Engagement Dummy = 0 those who possessed no ties to local community groups.²⁷ Throughout Latin America, roughly twenty-two percent of respondents fall in the category of completely unengaged in their communities, while seventy-eight percent were coded as Community Engagement Dummy = 1.

²⁷ This alternative coding of the engagement variable controls for the possibility that a small number of hyper engaged citizens—e.g. individuals who are active in three or more community organizations—are driving results.

Figure 3.7. Predicted Probabilities: Unengaged v. Engaged Citizens



Predicted probabilities for this interaction are presented in Figure 3.7. Again, it appears that the causal import of community engagement and institutional quality are highly dependent on one another. Engaged citizens in low quality institutional environments are almost twice as likely to participate in a protest as their counterparts in high quality institutional settings. Moreover, while engaged citizens are more than twice as likely as unengaged people to protest where institutions are poor, that difference is not nearly as glaring in strong institutional settings. Unengaged citizens are almost equally likely to participate in protests regardless of institutional context. Put simply, it seems that poor political institutions seem to push the politically engaged towards adopting protest participation while having very little effect on the contentious behaviors of unengaged citizens.

Figure 3.8. Predicted Probabilities: Institutional Context and Education

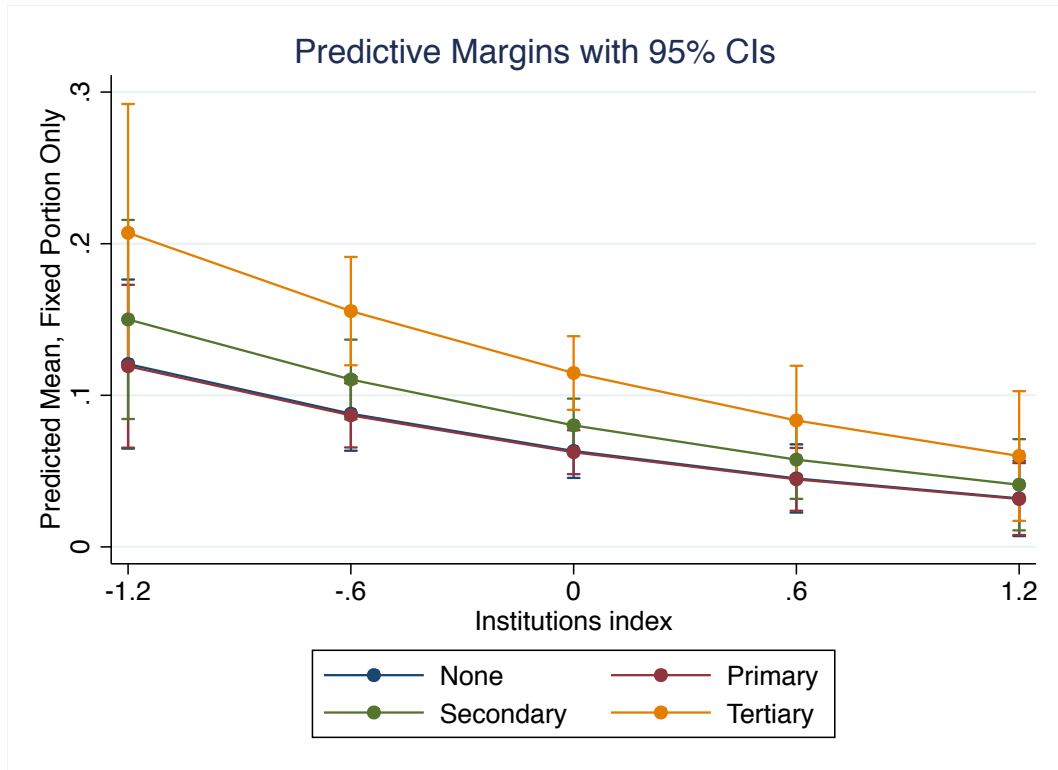
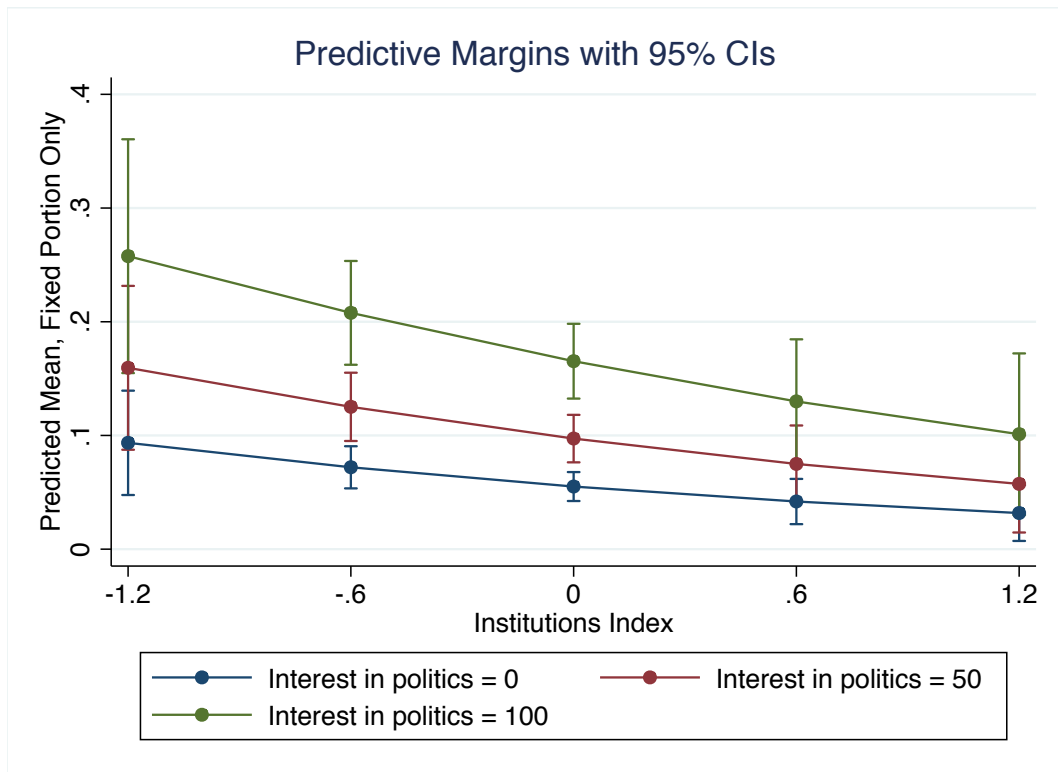


Figure 3.9. Predicted Probabilities: Institutional Context and Interest in Politics



Finally, Models 9 and 10 include interaction terms with institutional quality on one hand, and education and interest in politics, respectively, on the other. In each of these models the coefficient term for the interaction is significant. As Figures 3.8 and 3.9 illustrate, each of these variables interacts similarly with institutional quality, in that each becomes a stronger predictor of protest participation in weak institutional contexts, particularly in the case of interest in politics. For entirely uninterested citizens, institutions fail to exert much influence on the probability that individuals protest – however, as interest in politics increases, the causal import of institutional quality begins to take off.

Conclusion

Many scholars have sought to understand how social, political, and economic factors influence protest participation and social movement formation. On the economic side, adherents to the resource mobilization approach have argued that high levels of economic development supply the organizational resources that yield protests. Others have suggested that economic struggles lie at the root of contentious movements, as they provide potential protestors with the motivating grievances to mobilize against the government and demand a higher standard of living. In terms of political development, the literature is also divided. While some claim that more open political systems allow for higher rates of protest participation, others argue that it is precisely the ineffectiveness of formal vehicles for representation in certain contexts that pushes citizens to adopt alternative, contentious means of claim-making.

This chapter promotes an alternative explanation of why protest emerges as a vital component of the participatory repertoire in certain national contexts and among certain individuals, but not others. What the findings here suggest is an interactive relationship between sociopolitical factors at the individual level and country level institutional characteristics. Low quality political institutions have an important positive effect on protest participation, but only among citizens who are at least minimally engaged in political life. In other words, low quality institutions alone cannot determine whether or not an individual decides to attend a protest rally or demonstration—rather, the combination of a low quality institutional environment where citizens feel underrepresented by formal democratic institutions, and high levels of individual-level political engagement and community involvement, can greatly increase the probability that citizens resort to contentious tactics to make their voices heard.

Admittedly, this explanation of protest across countries is somewhat knotty. Rather than putting forth one variable or set of causal factors as the driving force behind contentious politics, I offer a more nuanced interactive theory that combines seemingly two contradictory phenomena—dysfunctional institutions and high civic engagement—to explain protest. Indeed, virtually any scholar would argue that community engagement serves as a positive force in democracies, and that individuals across Latin America and other regions are only capable of participating in protests because of massive gains in political liberalization made during the last four decades and recent socioeconomic advances that have seemingly laid the foundation for a rise in civic activism.

Both points are probably correct. However, the massive wave of democratization that has taken place since the 1970s has also produced a multitude of regimes where

elections occur and basic civil liberties are observed, but where formal representative institutions fall short in terms of effectively channeling mass participation and public opinion. The results presented here suggest that when formal institutions fail to meet the needs of a highly engaged and determined populace, engaged citizens will adopt other means to make their voices heard. In short, mass level democratic engagement has outpaced the consolidation of high quality formal institutions in many Latin American regimes, creating a gap in terms of citizens' demands for democratic representation and its supply.

Moving beyond twenty-first century Latin America, these findings might also help understand how gains in social development and civic engagement, coupled with low quality formal political institutions, could lie at the root of mass protests in other regions and time periods. Indeed, an increase in political engagement and the use of social media to share political information clearly played an important role in Arab Spring countries, where citizens began to demand institutional reforms that made leaders more accountable to the citizenry. In Europe, citizens in countries like Greece and Spain—both of which possess myriad educated and engaged citizens—have not only been devastated by a severe economic recession, but frustrated by their inability to have their voices heard by policymakers amidst EU-prescribed austerity measures. Even going back to the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war demonstrations in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, protests were seemingly led by active and informed citizens faced with exclusionary or nonresponsive political institutions. Thus, this chapter casts light on a broader set of phenomena, and informs scholars as they attempt to understand the causes and consequences of future episodes of protest participation across the world.

In the following chapter, I shift my attention to Argentina – a country that has in recent years been enveloped by contentious political participation, and is widely considered to be a democracy with weak political institutions (Levitsky and Murillo 2005). Specifically, I trace how Argentine national political institutions have paved the way for the rise of normalized protest participation in the country, and how subnational variation in terms of provincial political environments has influenced the emergence and sustainability of politics in the streets.

CHAPTER IV

NORMALIZED PROTEST IN A FLAWED DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF ARGENTINA

Argentina currently ranks as one of Latin America's most contentious regimes, according to data from the AmericasBarometer surveys from 2008-2012 (LAPOP). Anecdotal evidence would suggest that Argentina's contentiousness goes back further—indeed, the rise of the *piquetero* movement during the late-1990s and the role of public demonstrations in the country's epic economic and political crises in 2001-2002 have been well chronicled by journalists and academics alike. But has Argentina always been a hotbed for contentious social movements? How have contentious repertoires expanded and potentially mutated since the country's transition to democracy? Further, has this process occurred uniformly at the national level, or does subnational variation exist in terms of the prevalence and form of contentious politics?

To answer these questions, I shift focus from analyzing variation in levels of protest participation across countries at a particular point in time, to assessing the evolution of contentious politics within one regime over several decades. Thus, rather than using cross-sectional survey data to assess the individual and country-level predictors of protest, the next two chapters endeavor to understand how protest evolves as a form of participation within a particular national context, and how this evolution may in part be a product of the same combination of rising levels of citizen engagement amidst flawed institutions of democratic representation.

Specifically, in these two chapters on Argentina, I seek to provide a richer treatment each of the three hypotheses presented in Chapter Two. Namely, how do institutional characteristics bear on patterns of protest participation in a particular political context? How might the behaviors of politically active citizens be altered where high quality democratic representation via formal vehicles is lacking? Most importantly, in these chapters I begin to analyze how over time, persistent institutional dysfunction can result in protest normalizing as a form of political participation to the extent that it becomes a quotidian characteristic of everyday political life.

In Chapter Four, I first outline the previous twenty-five years of protest in Argentina, offering a summary of how contentious “repertoires,” to use Tilly’s (1978) terminology, have advanced over the years within the country. I begin the discussion with Menem’s first term (1989-1995) and conclude with the police riots that occurred throughout the country in January-February 2014. I argue that since the early 1990s, the importance of protest to Argentine politics has steadily grown, and that contentious repertoires of participation have consolidated to the extent that they can now be considered “normal.” However, this too varies subnationally. In the second part of this chapter, I consider how subnational variation in terms of democratic quality might bear on patterns of popular mobilization across Argentine provinces. Finally, I draw on three specific provincial cases—Buenos Aires, Mendoza, and San Luis—to help articulate my theoretical perspective. These case studies are based in part on fieldwork carried out in each province from March to June 2013 with support from the National Science Foundation (SES-1263807).

The Rise of Protest in Argentina, 1989-2014

Perhaps as much as any Latin American country, Argentina has a rich history of popular mobilization. From the rise of the industrial working class in Buenos Aires in the 1930s and 1940s to the emergence of the “*madres*” of the Plaza de Mayo during the tail end of the country’s Dirty War in the early 1980s, social movements have played an important role in Argentine politics for decades. But following the demise of the ruling military junta in 1983 amidst widespread demonstrations, many observers predicted that public debate would be channeled through newly created democratic institutions. Indeed, the initial decade of democracy in Argentina did little to dispel that notion. While the new regime certainly had its rocky moments, including President Raúl Alfonsín’s premature resignation amidst a spiking inflation rate in 1989, large-scale contentious protests would not reemerge in Argentina until the mid-1990s.

The Menem Years – Sowing the Seeds of Contention

In 1989 Carlos Menem, a relatively unknown Peronist (PJ) from the small northwestern province of La Rioja, succeeded Alfonsín and soon embarked on an ambitious plan to reduce inflation and trim public excess by pegging the Argentine peso to the U.S. dollar, deregulating markets, and privatizing public services (Svampa and Pereyra 2003). This new economic model represented an abrupt departure from the previous import substitution industrialization approach in Argentina, where a large percentage of workers were either public employees or members of powerful unions that served as intermediaries between the government and industry (Murillo 1997).

Throughout the first half of the 1990s, the reforms were successful by numerous metrics, sparking growth and reducing inflation in a country previously mired in decades of stunted economic progress. However, not every sector benefited from the neoliberal model. Industrial employment fell from twenty-four percent of total employment in 1991 to sixteen percent in 2000 (Bayón and Saraví 2002), and the unemployment rate increased from six percent in 1990 to eighteen percent in 1996 (Svampa and Pereyra 2003). Labor unions were largely stripped of their power, and the country's largest and most important confederation of unions, the CGT (*Confederación General del Trabajo*), split in 1992 over the decision to continue to support Menem's reinvented Peronist party (Etchemendy 2005). While Menem was popular enough amidst a booming economy to reform the constitution and seek reelection in 1995, the seeds of discontent had been planted among the recently unemployed and disenfranchised union members who suffered under the new economic order.

A new era of contention was inaugurated in 1993 with the *santiagazo* in the northern province of Santiago del Estero. As a result of state decentralization efforts by Menem, where Argentine provinces were granted greater fiscal autonomy than ever before and tasked with taking over important public services like healthcare and education, Santiago del Estero soon found itself in a fiscal hole (Carrera and Cotarelo 2001). Angered that they were not receiving their paychecks on time—or in some cases, at all—*santiagueño* public employees took to the streets, installing roadblocks, looting stores, and occupying and defacing government buildings throughout the provincial capital. To put an end to the most violent *pueblada* in Argentine history, the national government eventually intervened, but not before hundreds were injured and as many as

ten were dead, and a slew of important government buildings and even the private homes of prominent public officials had been destroyed (Villalón 2007; Cotarelo 1999).

Unrest spread like wildfire throughout Argentina in the following months and years. Beginning with the southern province of Neuquén in 1996, the *piquetero* movement formed as a response to the 1992 privatization of Argentina's state oil company, *YPF (Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales)*, which was the largest source of public employment in the country and served as the economic backbone of oil-producing provinces in the Patagonia region. Following privatization, tens of thousands of state employees, accustomed to high-paying, secure employment, soon found themselves out of work as the new majority stakeholder in the company, Spanish oil giant Repsol, sought to strip down and make more efficient Argentina's largest and most antiquated state industry. Following the initial roadblocks organized in Cutral-Có, Neuquén, the practice expanded to unemployed workers in other cities, where different groups adopted the *piquetero* moniker in their quest for public assistance amid dire economic circumstances (Garay 2007).

Perhaps most notable about the protests in the 1990s was the extent to which non-traditional civic organizations were credited with leading this rising tide of contention (Villalón 2007). In a democracy long dominated by a powerful workers party, which drew its strength in large part from labor unions, it was striking to see local neighborhood associations and newly founded confederations of the unemployed mobilizing citizens at such a prodigious rate. The protests of the 1990s were clearly more than just a response to unfortunate economic circumstances—they were the first indication that traditional

representational outlets were insufficient, and reflected a growing lack of trust in Argentina's formal political institutions.

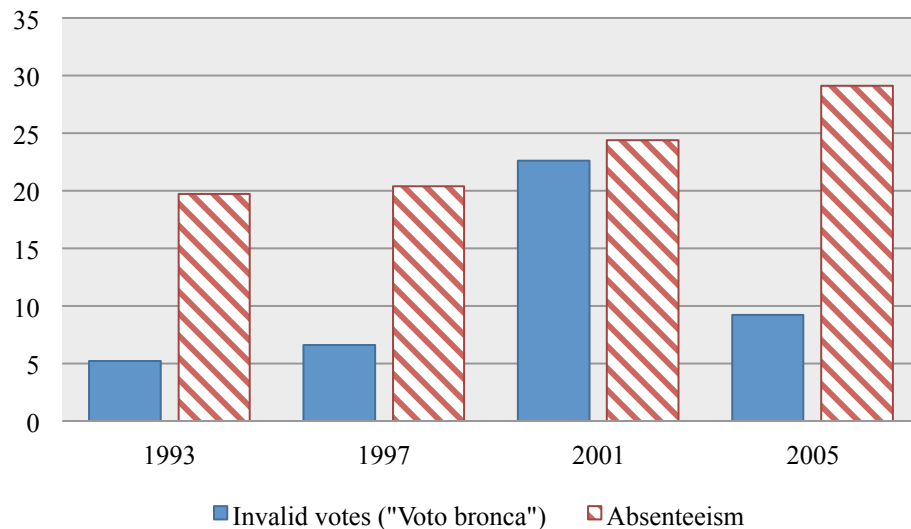
Indeed, beyond merely being adversely affected by the economic reforms undertaken by Menem's newly reimagined Peronist Party, there was a sense among many Argentine citizens that they had been duped by a politician who had said one thing during his presidential campaign, but done virtually the exact opposite once in office (Stokes 2001). Menem ran a classic populist campaign, geared towards winning over union leadership and the working class – the traditional backbone of the PJ. Following his election, he not only embarked on a neoliberal economic campaign that crippled many of his supporters, but did so in a way that subverted political dialogue and compromise, forcing his agenda through using executive decrees and court-packing, among other democratically questionable tactics (O'Donnell 1993, Carey and Shugart 1998; Helmke 2002). While the initially positive results of Menem's economic strategy kept the backlash in check for a brief period of time, this growing sense of betrayal reared its head when *menemismo* began to produce diminishing returns.

The December 2001 Crisis

Years of building tension amidst widespread social unrest came to a head in late 2001 following the October midterm elections, which resulted in the highest rates of absenteeism since Argentina returned to democracy and an unprecedented number of spoiled or null ballots (“*voto bronca*”; Figure 4.1). Menem's second term had come and gone, and Argentina's economic prospects were bleak. Two years into a severe economic recession, which had brought on unprecedented unemployment, food shortages, and

drastic cuts in social spending, Economic Minister Domingo Cavallo launched, with virtually no democratic debate and seemingly following the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an effort to reduce capital flight by restricting the amount of money Argentines could withdraw from their bank accounts—a measure dubbed the “*corralito*” (Vilas 2006). Having alienated perhaps the only group of citizens not already in the streets, middle class Argentines with bank accounts in need of cash but without credit, the government’s fate was sealed. In December, citizens of all stripes launched an all-out assault on the incumbent de la Rúa government, setting the stage for perhaps the most contentious moment in Argentine history.

Figure 4.1. Absenteeism and the “Voto Bronca” in the 2001 Legislative Election²⁸



By mid-December, riots had broken out across the country, lootings of supermarkets and neighborhood *kioscos* had become widespread, and massive

²⁸ Source: Argentine Ministry of the Interior website.

“*cacerolazos*,” characterized by the banging of empty pots and pans to symbolize the shortage of basic foodstuffs, were routine (Auyero 2005). De la Rúa declared a state of siege, allowing for the intervention of police and the military to quell the insurrections, which resulted in thirty-seven deaths in a week (Vilas 2006). Nowhere were the protestors bolder and more numerous than in the capital city, where on December 19 and 20 tens of thousands of Argentines staged a *cacerolazo* in the *Plaza de Mayo* armed with one unifying cry – “*Que se vayan todos!*” (All of them must go!) – a phrase that perfectly captured Argentines’ lost faith in the democratic institutions of their country. On December 21, de la Rúa announced his resignation. His successor, Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, would also resign after barely a week on the job.

More than just a reflection of the dire economic situation, the 2001-2002 protests exposed a growing lack of confidence in formal representative institutions that were deemed corrupt and ineffectual (Levitsky and Murillo 2003). Argentines believed that both of the country’s major parties—the Peronists, headed by Menem, and the UCR (Unión Radical Civil), represented by de la Rúa’s coalition government—had misled voters during their presidential campaigns, and ran corrupt administrations that rewarded loyalists and made politically advantageous but economically disastrous policy decisions. The sheer number of null and spoiled votes cast in the October midterms revealed this institutional distrust, as did the generalness of the protestors’ rallying cry.

However, in the lead-up to de la Rúa’s resignation, political actors had already begun to explore how they might harness the power of these incipient social movements. Auyero’s (2007) seminal book on the 2001-2002 riots in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area explores this “gray zone” of politics, revealing that Peronist party leaders helped to

organize lootings of supermarkets and other protest events as the crisis loomed. Eventually, the Peronist governor of Buenos Aires province, Eduardo Duhalde, would take control of the presidency and help stabilize the Argentine economy. Another Peronist, Nestor Kirchner, succeeded him as president following Menem's withdrawal from the race in the face of certain defeat in the second round election. Thus, while in many ways the Argentine citizenry accomplished their immediate goal of replacing de la Rúa, they also confirmed the potential usefulness of contentious tactics to a once-powerful political party currently on the fringes of political influence.

The Kirchner Years – An Era of Normalized Protest

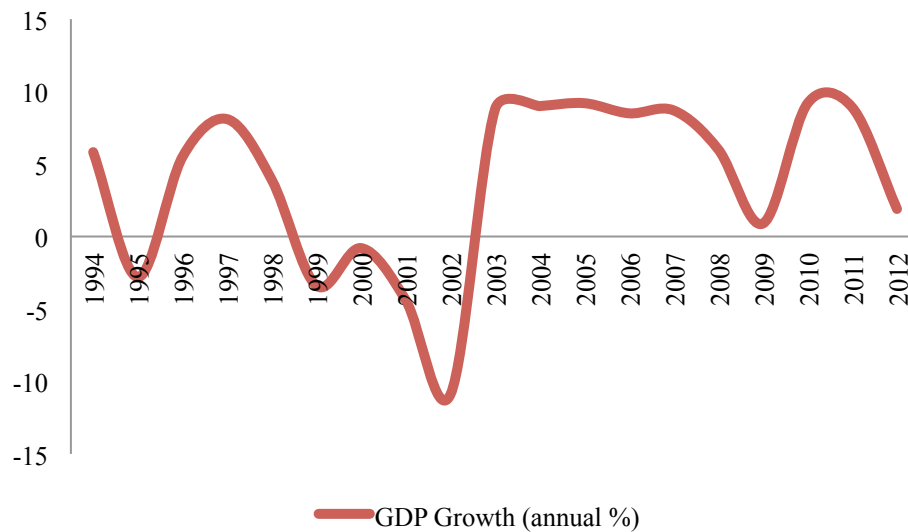
Like Menem, Kirchner was a little-known Peronist governor, this time from the sparsely populated southern province of Santa Cruz, who culminated his meteoric rise in Argentine politics with a *ballotage* victory in April 2003. Having only received about twenty percent of the vote in the first round, Kirchner was tasked with constructing an operational coalition with very little political clout within the traditional Peronist Party structure.

One of the first places that Kirchner looked for support was among those who were most critical of the government during the crisis years—particularly the piquetero movement, which had emerged as one of the most powerful political groups in the country over the last decade. If Kirchner was going to be able to effectively govern, he needed to prevent the types of destabilizing protests that fomented popular discontent and brought an end to the de la Rúa and Duhalde presidencies. Thus, he reached out to piquetero leaders by offering several of them posts in his government, like Jorge Ceballos

(*Barrios de Pie*) and Luis D'Elía (*Federación Tierra, Vivienda y Hábitat*). He also renewed the state's commitment to unemployed Argentines in the form of increases in social welfare spending primarily through the *Jefes y Jefas* (Heads of Household) program. Finally, Kirchner made it a point of emphasis that police officers not repress protestors, in a conscious effort to avoid making the same mistakes as his predecessors (Levitsky and Murillo 2008).

During the first Kirchner term, from 2003-2007, the government was able to quell contentious protests for the most part, and achieve the election of First Lady and Senator Cristina Fernández de Kirchner to succeed her husband. Furthermore, the economy bounced back, as Argentines enjoyed one of the most successful four-year periods of growth in the country's history (Figure 4.4). Fernández de Kirchner won with more than forty-five percent of the popular vote in the first round of the 2007 presidential election—double what her husband received and more than twice as many votes as her closest competitor—thus precluding the need for a run-off. Despite their historic popularity and seeming vice grip on the Argentine presidency, the Kirchners would find themselves embroiled in one of Argentina's most contentious moments ever only a few months later.

Figure 4.2. GDP Growth in Argentina from 1994-2012 ²⁹



The first large scale protests under the two Kirchner governments began in March 2008. Emboldened by strong economic growth and immense popularity since Kirchner's 2003 election (see Figure 4.4), Fernández de Kirchner sought to boost government revenues and decrease domestic food prices through a controversial export tax that also had the potential to enervate one of Peronism's most powerful enemies: the agricultural sector. The tax would target soybean and sunflower exports—two of Argentina's most lucrative commodities on the international market. Almost immediately, Argentine farmers responded with a countrywide strike, roadblocks of major highways, and a massive *cacerolazo* in the Plaza de Mayo, during which violent clashes between D'Elía's pro-government followers and anti-government protestors resulted in multiple injuries.³⁰ In response, government supporters organized a protest march to counter that of the

²⁹ Source: The World Bank: data.worldbank.org/country/argentina.

³⁰ Most accounts point to D'Elía's band of supporters as the aggressors, even suggesting that police nearby were aware of the violence but had been instructed not to intervene (Sued 2008: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/998778-caceria-para-ganar-la-plaza>).

farmers in April 2008 attended by thousands of *kirchneristas*. Finally, when the controversial legislation went up before the Argentine Senate after passing in the Chamber of Deputies, Vice President Julio Cobos cast a tie-breaking vote *against* the measure, effectively ending his relationship with the Fernández de Kirchner government.

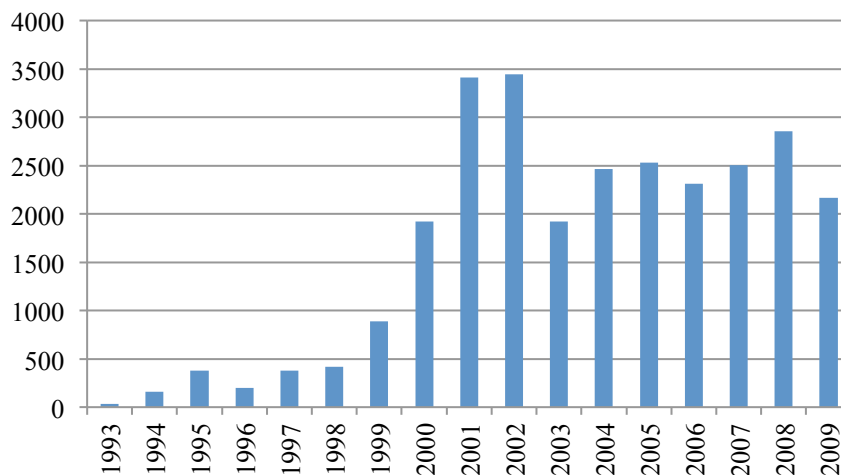
Since 2008, protest has continued to prosper as a form of political participation in Argentina. An increasingly vocal opposition organized several massive cacerolazos in 2012, culminating in a protest event on November 8, 2012 that attracted over 700,000 demonstrators in Buenos Aires alone³¹ and hundreds of thousands more in cities across the country. In 2014, a protest strike by police in Córdoba triggered similar work stoppages nationwide, which eventually resulted in rampant lootings and multiple deaths before provincial governments finally gave in to the protestors' demands. Like clockwork, the start of the school year in March was delayed by a standoff between teacher's unions and provincial governments, particularly in the chronically underfunded province of Buenos Aires. Fernández de Kirchner's supporters, led by former piqueteros and *La Cámpora*, a youth organization founded by her son, continued to counteract anti-government demonstrations with pro-government ones. In sum, virtually any political conflict seems to find its way into the streets in Argentina, regardless of the claimant or target of that claim.

In Argentina, two organizations have taken the initiative to attempt to document protest activity since its emergence in the early 1990s: *Nueva Mayoría* and *Programa de Investigación sobre el Movimiento de la Sociedad Argentina* (PIMSA). As seen in Figures 4.3 and 4.4, the early to mid-1990s were relatively quiet in terms of protest activity. However, protest rates would swell in the latter part of the decade, with 2001-

³¹ Source: The Justice and Security Ministry of Buenos Aires.

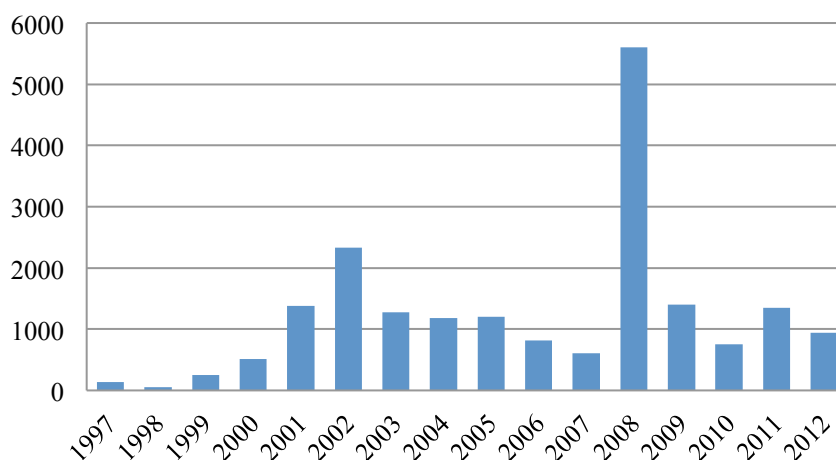
2002 representing an unprecedented spike in protest activity across the country. However, perhaps more striking is the extent to which rates of protest participation have remained high in the aftermath of the crisis, even as the economy has stabilized. Indeed, Argentina has had a very healthy recovery from that debacle, growing at some of the most impressive rates in Latin America, which as a region has been booming since the turn of the century. In the case of roadblocks, 2008 (perhaps the peak of Argentina’s recent commodities boom) scores as far and away the most contentious year in recent history. It appears as if a new era of protest was inaugurated around the turn of the millennium, as political groups now seek to utilize protest repertoires to further their goals even in times of relative political and economic stability.

Figure 4.3. Acts of Rebellion in Argentina, 1993-2009



Source: PIMSA 2010

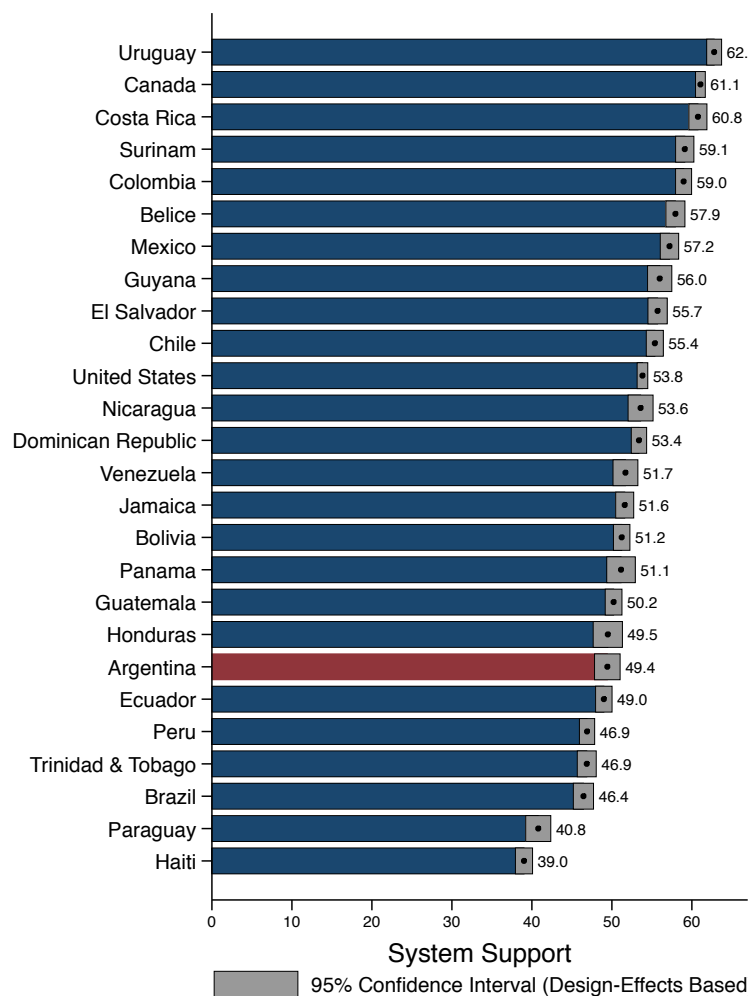
Figure 4.4. Roadblocks in Argentina, 1997-2012



Source: Nueva Mayoría 2012

These protest data confirm the extent to which Argentine citizens have increasingly responded in a contentious fashion to a political system that promises democratic representation, yet fails to deliver. As democracy has consolidated in Argentina over the past three decades and individuals have become increasingly politically active, I aver that expectations for democracy have risen. I argue that the persistence of “delegative” democracy (O’Donnell 1993), rampant political corruption, and parties that vacillate wildly from one policy stance to the next have led Argentines to sour on formal modes of making their voices heard, and turned increasingly to street-based participation as a more aggressive, but oftentimes effective, mode of obtaining representation. This disenchantment is reflected in survey data from the country, in addition to the recent normalization of contentious participation (Figure 4.5). Figure 4.5 illustrates that Argentine ranks among the bottom in Americas in system support, a variable constructed by LAPOP to gauge citizen support for key regime institutions like the national legislature, the Supreme Court, and political parties.

Figure 4.5. System Support in Argentina in Comparative Perspective (2008-2012)³²



In the following section, I evaluate the degree to which Argentine provinces differ in terms of democratic quality, and how that might bear on contentious politics within

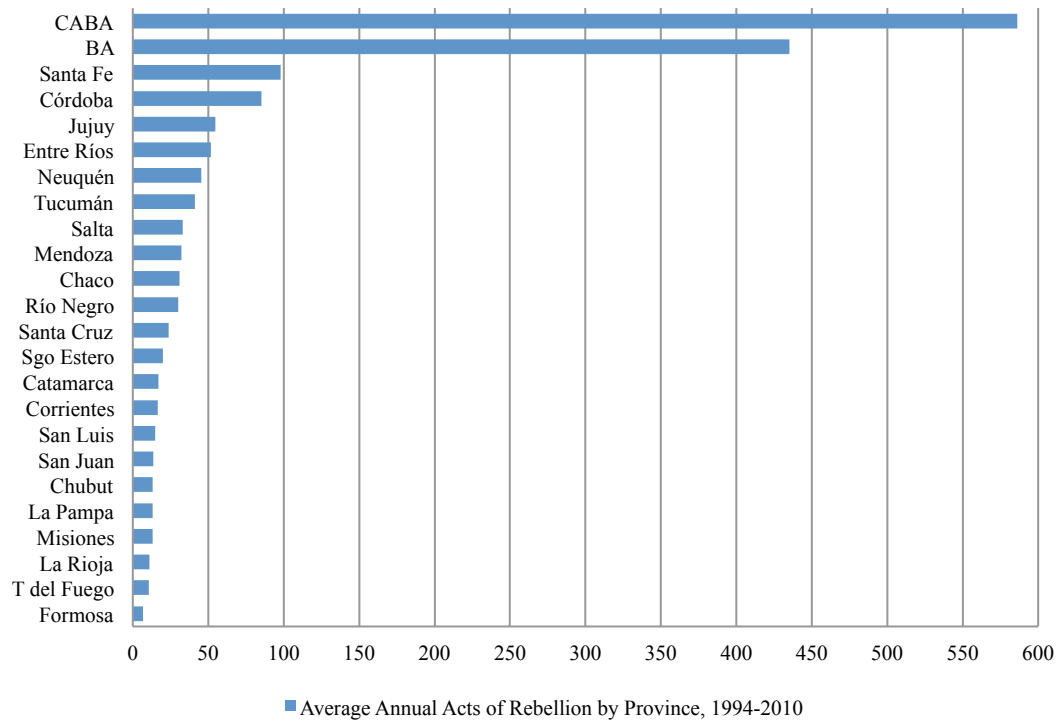
³² Support for national institutions is measured by scale summarizing results of seven B-series questions (b2 b3 b4 b6 b21 b13 b31): B2. To what extent do you respect the political institutions of (country)? B3. To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of (country)? B4. To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of (country)? B6. To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of (country)? B13. To what extent do you trust the National Legislature? B21. To what extent do you trust the political parties? B31. To what extent do you trust the Supreme Court?

their borders. My expectation is that in certain subnational contexts within Argentina, patrimonial governments dominate political life to the extent that the expectation for democratic representation among individuals has evaporated. However, in other provincial regimes at intermediate levels of democratic quality, a similar dynamic to what we observe at the national level surfaces, wherein democratic institutions are unresponsive enough that contentious participation is deemed necessary, but not so closed off as to preclude any challenging of the local political machine. Finally, I also expect that certain provincial systems outperform the national regime, achieving a level of competitive multiparty democracy similar to what we find in countries like Uruguay and Costa Rica.

Narrowing the Focus: Analyzing Protest at the Provincial Level

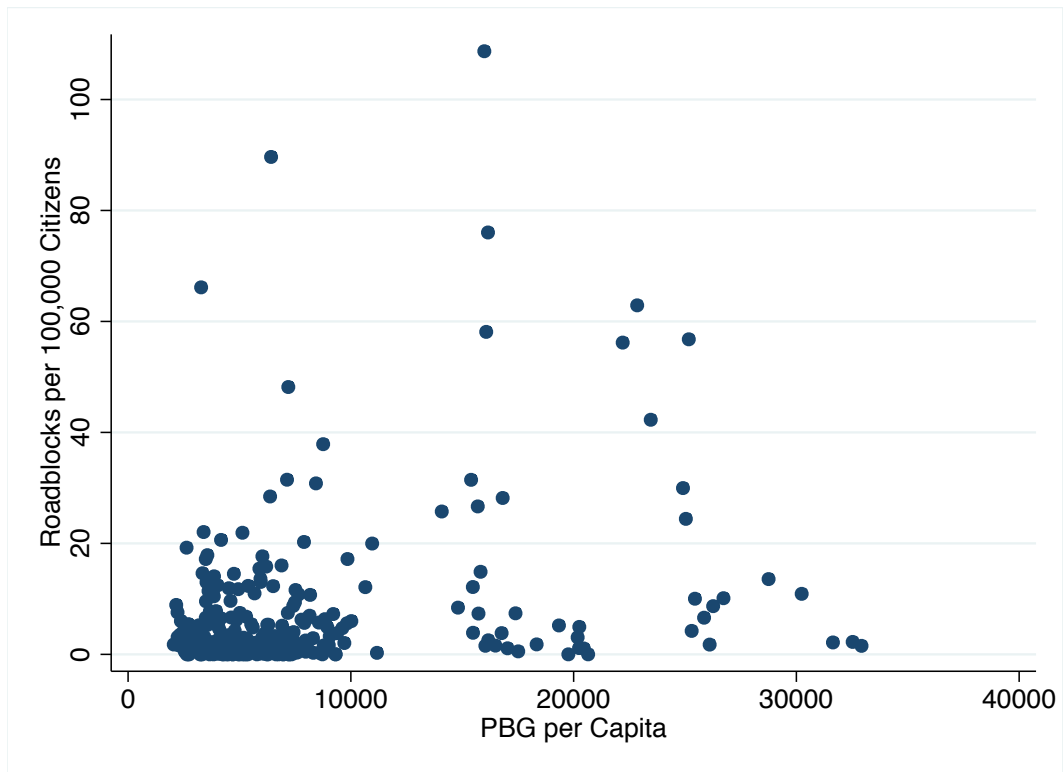
Argentina is undoubtedly a contentious case, as illustrated in the previous section. At certain moments, the country has seemingly erupted in mass protests nationwide that have had serious consequences for the country's politics. Now, it seems that virtually any political conflict is mediated at least in part in the streets. Yet this national-level account of Argentine protests leaves two questions unanswered: Do repertoires of participation vary subnationally in Argentina? And if so, what explains the uneven nature of protest activity found within the country?

Figure 4.6. Average Annual Acts of Rebellion by Province, 1994-2010



Clearly, wide variation exists in terms of the extent to which protest has caught on in Argentine provinces. The most obvious initial conclusion one might draw from Figure 4.6 is that the population of the province is what drives levels of contentious politics, as the top four cases in terms of average annual protest events are the capital city and the country's three most populous provinces. But it seems as if other factors are at play as well—indeed, several more sparsely populated provinces like Jujuy, Entre Rios, and Neuquén are ranked relatively high in terms of annual acts of rebellion, while provinces of a similar size like Formosa and La Rioja register virtually no protests during the period under consideration.

Figure 4.7. Annual Roadblocks by PBG per Capita



At first glance, no obvious relationship surfaces between economic circumstances and variation in protest activity across provinces (Figure 4.7). Indeed, both poor and rich provinces can be counted among the “most contentious” cases, while the same can be said for the group of provinces with lower rates of protest activity. Clearly the 2001-2002 economic crisis produced a spike in protest activity, but the extremely high number of protests in 2008 occurred during times of relative prosperity. Along the same lines, the economically depressed times of the late 1980s failed to produce many protests. For all of these reasons, I look to political factors to explain this striking subnational variation in protest activity.

Uneven Democracy and Protest

Since the Third Wave of democracy occurred in Latin America, scholars have noted that democratization failed to take hold uniformly within countries—that is, “authoritarian enclaves” remained in regimes that were at the national level, ostensibly democratic (Fox 1994). In these so-called “brown areas,” subnational politics might scarcely resemble modern conceptualizations of democracy, characterized instead by personalistic machines, uncompetitive elections, and political clientelism (O’Donnell 1993). This variation could conceivably have important consequences for the political rights of citizens, economic development outcomes, and individuals’ attitudes towards the national political regime (e.g. Hiskey 2002, Gibson 2004, Hiskey and Bowler 2005).

Like many of its Latin American neighbors, Argentina is a veritable hodgepodge of subnational regime types. It is home to one of Latin America’s most (in)famous federal systems, characterized by vast differences in the quality of democratic institutions found within the country’s twenty-three provincial governments (Spiller and Tommasi 2009, Gibson and Suarez-Cao 2010, Behrend 2011). In some provinces, liberal democracy is the name of the game, characterized by competitive elections, free media, enforced property rights, and the apolitical dispersion of social programs and public jobs. In other Argentine provinces, powerful bosses eliminate their competition through aggressive political clientelism, the absence of independent media, and even occasional repression (e.g. Gibson and Calvo 2001, Chavez 2004, Gibson 2004, Gervasoni 2010). In sum, while Argentina has certainly transitioned to liberal democracy at the national level (even if it experiences the occasional hiccup), there is a great deal of evidence supporting the notion that many Argentine provinces have yet to make that transition.

One additional factor that makes Argentina a particularly intriguing case for subnational research is the profound decentralization of economic resources and policymaking authority that occurred in the 1990s in the country. Seemingly, these reforms would make provincial regimes more accountable to the popular will, but also more capable in responding to public opinion and election results. However, contrary to received wisdom, much evidence suggests that the decentralization process that occurred in the country failed to significantly increase provincial power vis-à-vis the central government, and has led to numerous high profile fiscal crises and corruption scandals in provincial governments (Falleti 2005; 2010). In sum, the growing provincial obligations with respect to the provision of public services have made the successes and failings of provincial governments more apparent to Argentine citizens than ever before.

How might the uneven nature of subnational democracy in Argentina impact the spatial variation we observe in terms of contentious politics and relate to my argument about flawed institutions and civic engagement? To this point, most work on the institutional determinants of protest has zeroed in on the national level (e.g. Machado et al. 2012, Dalton et al. 2009). Two recent articles have attempted to unravel how political competition affects rates of protest participation at the subnational level (Arce and Mangonnet (2012) focus on Argentine provinces, while Boulding (2010) looks at Bolivian municipalities), but neither study offers a more complete view of the ways in which subnational political environments might exacerbate or discourage contentious participation.

The work most relevant to explaining how subnational regime characteristics influence variation in contentious politics within Argentina actually comes from the

1970s, beginning with a study on urban riots in U.S. cities. In his seminal 1973 article in the *American Political Science Review*, Peter Eisinger sought to explain why violent uprisings occurred in certain U.S. cities during the American Civil Rights Movement, but not others. While the dominant theoretical school at the time attributed urban uprisings by African Americans to relative deprivation—i.e., the "perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities" (Gurr 1970, p. 37)—Eisinger was interested in how characteristics of local political systems might make citizens more or less likely to adopt contentious tactics. Specifically, he analyzed the extent to which municipal institutions were “open” or “closed” to effective political participation by African Americans (i.e., promising and delivering – or not – on democratic representation). Eventually, he determined that the relationship between political openness and protest participation was a curvilinear one: i.e., open systems facilitate effective participation via formal vehicles, while closed systems prevent widespread protest participation due to the costliness of participating. However, at intermediate levels of openness, institutions are not responsive to the extent that they render protest unnecessary, yet are open enough that individuals can draw on existing civil society organizations to mobilize without fear of repression (see also Muller and Seligson 1987). These regimes promise but do not deliver democratic representation, and where an active citizenry is present, this failure to deliver can transform civic engagement into protest.

While the initial unveiling of this theoretical approach focused on the subnational level, subsequent studies attempted to apply the political contextual framework to national political institutions. Eventually, a new avenue of empirical research began to crystalize that examined “political opportunities,” or “consistent—but not necessarily

formal or permanent—dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure” (Tarrow 1994; p. 85). These dimensions can include the nature of political competition, characteristics of party systems and legislative bodies, and rule of law institutions—any factors that influence social movements’ prospects for “(a) mobilizing, (b) advancing particular claims rather than others, (c) cultivating some alliances rather than others, (d) employing particular political strategies and tactics rather than others, and (e) affecting mainstream institutional politics and policy” (Meyer 2004, p. 126; see also Kitschelt 1986).

Of course, other causal mechanisms are necessary for protest to emerge in a particular system beyond contextual political factors alone. Grievances and organizational resources specifically have an important impact on a given population’s potential for mobilizing in contentious ways. Yet as we have seen, no direct relationship between levels of development and the number of protest events seems to emerge at the provincial level, and contentious political activities have continued to thrive in Argentina even as the economy has rebounded. Moreover, in the Argentine context, organizational resources (i.e., opportunities for “engagement”) and provincial political contexts are tightly related. In many provincial regimes—e.g. San Luis, Formosa, and La Rioja—civil society is so dominated by the ruling political elite, that independent grassroots movements might have trouble forming and garnering mass support. Thus, in some ways, “openness” encompasses the extent to which civic organizations can serve to aggregate and vocalize opposition voices in the form of organized protests. Finally, by shifting the level of analysis to “within-country,” I am able to control for many (but not all) national

economic shocks that affect subnational units in a given country, and cultural factors that might bear on protest repertoires.

Three Subnational Regime Types

From this discussion of political opportunities and relative openness, we can derive three different subnational regimes “types” that might help explain variation in contention across Argentine provinces: 1) the *closed* provincial regime, 2) the *open* provincial regime, and 3) the *mixed* provincial political environment. Below, I discuss specific characteristics of each, and how they relate to conceptualizations of institutional quality presented in previous chapters.

On one end of the openness spectrum is the closed system, where there exists no credible political threat to the political machine in power. Opposition parties in these contexts are weakly organized and lack necessary funding, and the dominant political force in the province exerts a great deal of control over local media and civil society. The same party almost always controls the governorship and legislature, and that party also plays a pivotal role in selecting the national legislators that will represent the province in Buenos Aires. Moreover, the political elite in closed systems frequently wield a great deal of control over the judiciary and local law enforcement, and often come from a select group of powerful political families who use their discretionary control over public employment to reward loyalists and punish dissidents (Chavez 2004, Behrend 2011). In many cases, these types of subnational regimes develop in small, peripheral provinces with limited productive activity, thus granting the ruling machine immense influence over the local economy given the considerable funding that such provinces receive under the

Co-Participation System enacted in 1988 (Gervasoni 2010).³³ Closed regimes impede effective political participation, as the winner in virtually any local election is predetermined. Given the absence of strong opposition parties and meekness of local media and civil society, citizens within these regimes encounter difficulties when attempting to mobilize opposition. Further, the ruling machine's access to economic and juridical power makes any potential protestors vulnerable to harsh punishment.

On the other hand, in open systems more than one party competes for political power with realistic hopes of attaining office—i.e., there is “institutionalized uncertainty” (Przeworski 1991). In these more liberal contexts media is free, with different news outlets representing distinct economic and political sectors, some of which are openly critical of the incumbent government. Such provincial regimes also boast independent judiciaries and law enforcement, which treat citizens equitably regardless of their partisan affiliation. In open provincial regimes, power has changed hands several times without incident, and the indefinite reelection of governors (and even members of the same family, in the case of Mendoza) is prohibited. Open regimes should provide citizens with numerous formal outlets for political participation through which they can feel at least somewhat efficacious, given the diversity of electoral options and the general inclusiveness of the provincial regime. Certainly some protest can be expected, as is the

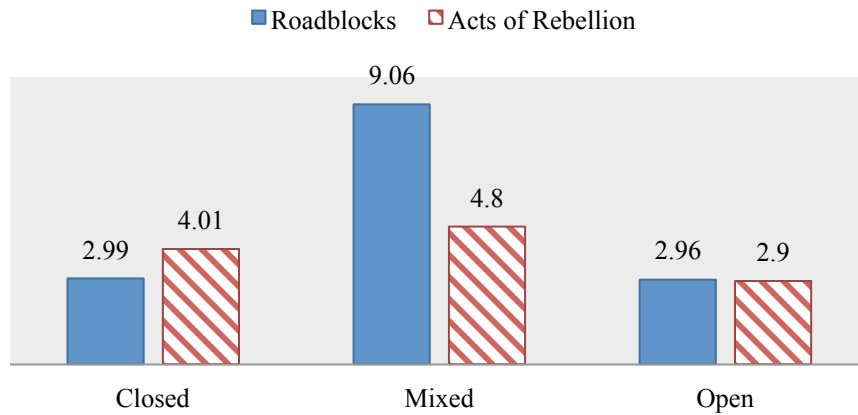
³³ The Co-Participation Law has existed in some form since the 1930s, though its most recent incarnation was passed in 1988. Originally only a temporary provision, the law intended to redistribute funds from Argentina's wealthiest provinces to its poorest. So in the case of a province like Buenos Aires, the largest in the country in terms of population and economic output, it contributes far more to federal funds than it receives. On the other hand, a province like La Rioja contributes virtually nothing to the co-participation system while receiving funding from the national government that amounts to a very high percentage of the total economic activity in that province. Given that the Argentine population is largely concentrated in three provinces—Buenos Aires, Santa Fé, and Córdoba—and the autonomous capital, the vast majority of provinces stand to benefit from the current set-up, and most experts regard any potential reform of the current system highly unlikely.

case in any democratic regime, but most conflict will be mediated through non-confrontational, in many cases formal, channels.

Finally, mixed systems typify the protest-producing contexts outlined by Eisinger and others, where political structures are not fully accommodating of opposition voices and participation, yet are not so closed off that potential movements have no organizational capacity or hope that their actions might make a difference. In other words, non-traditional forms of participation might be deemed necessary to effectively influence policymakers, but not so costly as to render them unlikely. An example might be a province where one party has always controlled the governorship and legislature, rendering electoral participation ineffectual in large part, but elections are increasingly competitive, independent media exists, and repression is rarely utilized to quell anti-government demonstrations. In such a case where a hegemonic provincial party exists but there are still reasons for citizens in the opposition to believe that 1) they are capable of effectively organizing movements and 2) those movements might precipitate a positive response from the government, protest can flourish.

Figure 4.8 illustrates how the number of contentious events varies based on provincial regime characteristics. Using Gervasoni's (2010) subnational democracy scores, we find the lowest levels of contentiousness among Argentina's *most* and *least* democratic provinces. The highest levels of protest activity are found in mixed contexts, in keeping with the expectations outlined above. Below, I consider three provinces that fall in each category, providing more nuanced information as to how political contexts affect individuals' abilities to coordinate and participate in contentious activities.

**Figure 4.8. Protests across Provincial Political Environments:
Average annual protests per 100,000 citizens in Argentine Provinces, 1994-2011**



Sources: Nueva Mayoría 2012, PIMSA 2011

A Sequential Outline of the Normalization of Protest

The argument and suggestive evidence outlined above hold that in mixed systems, falling somewhere in the middle of the openness spectrum, individuals are more likely to turn to contentious means of participation in attempting to influence government. In these contexts, formal institutional vehicles for representation remain suboptimal, but individuals are able to organize movements and expect that their contentious activities will be met with some type of government response other than repression. In other words, institutional performance is low while civic engagement remains relatively high, unlike in closed systems.

I argue that over the course of time, contentious participation is absorbed into the “repertoire” of normal, everyday tactics used by politically interested and active citizens in poorly performing democracies. While many social movement scholars have argued over the years that democratization eventually allows for movements’ absorption into politics through formal mechanisms of representation, I argue that this process has not

occurred as expected, particularly at the subnational level in Latin America. In provincial and state regimes across the region democratization has been uneven, as many systems have remained dominated by one party or political family, the rule of law is often patchily enforced, and wide gaps in economic development persist.

Where protest is deemed necessary to effectively pursue political objectives and citizens are allowed to freely organize and demonstrate, contentious participation can consolidate as a go-to form of political voice. As observed in Figure 4.3, since the dawn of the current era of protest in Argentina leading up to the 2001-2002 crisis, rates of protest have fallen only slightly to levels far exceeding those observed before the crisis. While the spike in contentious activity in 2001-2002 might be partially explained by a deep recession and debt default, which drew the collective ire of Argentines across the sociopolitical spectra, the time period since has been characterized by unprecedented economic prosperity for the country. I argue that individuals' lack of faith in formal political institutions, and the success they had in mobilizing during the crisis and precipitating profound changes in the government, paved the way for an era where politics in the streets would be the norm rather than the exception.

Subnational Institutions and Protest: Lessons from Three Provinces

In this section, I draw on three provincial cases to help illustrate how subnational political environments shape contentious repertoires in Argentina. Each case corresponds to one of the three ideal types described above, and a section of the openness spectrum. These case studies are based on 1) my reading of historical research by local academics

and 2) interviews with protestors, public officials, and other resident experts on the politics of the provinces of San Luis, Mendoza, and Buenos Aires.³⁴ Because of the delicate nature of some of these interviews, I have omitted any identifying information that could be traced to interviewees in the discussion below.³⁵

Figure 4.9. A Map of Argentine Provinces

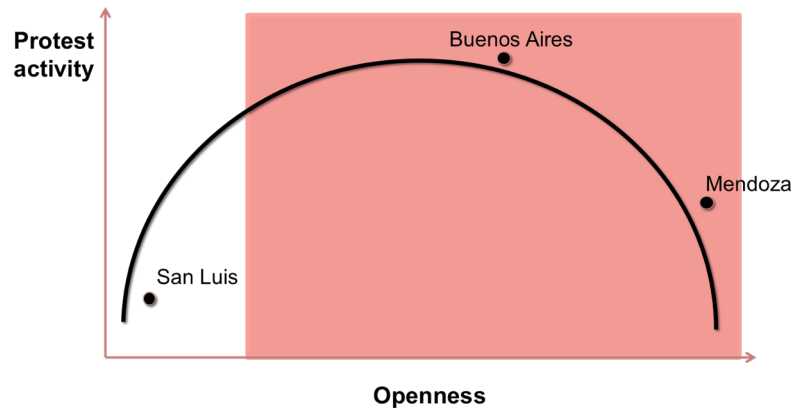


³⁴ Thirty-seven total sit-down interviews were carried out in Buenos Aires capital, Buenos Aires province, Mendoza, and San Luis in Spring 2013. Subjects were initially drawn from a list of experts utilized in Gervasoni's (2010) elite surveys project, and then additional interviews were obtained through these contacts. I also carried out dozens of informal interviews in Buenos Aires with protestors throughout late 2012 and early 2013—notably, at the three massive cacerolazos that occurred on September 13, 2012, November 8, 2012, and April 18, 2013.

³⁵ Conditional for approval by the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board: IRB# 101398.

These three provinces were chosen for the diversity they offer on the key independent and dependent variables—namely, political context and protest activity—but also for their similarities on other key variables. While Buenos Aires is by far the most populous province in Argentina and for that reason, a different animal in some respects, all three provinces could be characterized as middle income in terms of per capita PGB and relatively high in terms of human development (INDEC 2010). While Argentina’s northern provinces are very poor and underdeveloped, and its southern energy-producing provinces are located far above the national averages on classic development metrics (e.g. education levels, infant mortality, food scarcity), Argentina’s middle corridor of provinces—Buenos Aires, Santa Fé, Córdoba, San Luis, and Mendoza—are all largely agricultural and upper-middle income when compared to other provinces. In sum, while this selection of cases is probably not perfect by Mill’s (1843) standards, it does provide examples of three provincial environments characterized by similar levels of economic and human development, but vastly different institutional environments and contentious repertoires.

Figure 4.10. Openness and Protest Activity in Argentine Provinces³⁶



San Luis

The province of San Luis is located in the *Cuyo* region of Argentina, in the center-west. San Luis is a sparsely populated province that was underdeveloped historically, lacking the fertile soil of the *Pampas* region or any major urban center. Politically, San Luis has been one of the most uncompetitive, borderline authoritarian provinces in Argentina since democratization. Two brothers from one of the province's most important families, Adolfo and Alberto Rodríguez-Saá, alternated serving as governor of San Luis from 1983 to 2011, during which time each brother also served multiple terms as a national senator. Adolfo actually held the governorship for five consecutive terms, after managing to reform the San Luis constitution in 1987.

Beyond simply occupying important elected offices in San Luis politics, the Rodríguez-Saá brothers have also possessed several other distinct advantages that they have used to maintain their political hegemony in the province. Beginning in the 1980s, the two major newspapers (*El Diario de San Luis* and *La Opinión*) and several important

³⁶ The shaded area indicates democracy.

television outlets in the province were all eventually purchased by either the Rodríguez-Saá family itself or close friends who occupied important positions in their administrations (Behrend 2011).

From an economic standpoint, the Rodríguez-Saá brothers have possessed several other sources of influence that have permitted them to dominate the provincial economy and continually obtain reelection. Given San Luis' small size and overrepresentation in the national congress, it receives a great deal of federal funding under Argentina's co-participation scheme—much more per capita than more populated provinces. This fact has allowed the Rodríguez-Saá brothers to invest heavily in public housing, welfare programs, and infrastructure (Bianchi 2013). Indeed, a sizeable percentage of the *puntano*³⁷ population has either been employed by the provincial government or lives in one of the many homes built with public funds, which cost next to nothing and range from humble public housing projects to larger homes for middle class families.

³⁸According to local academic Matias Bianchi, from 1983 to 2000, the San Luis government constructed 43,202 public houses³⁹ that were made available to anyone, and ranged from humble, one-bedroom *casitas* to four-bedroom homes found in suburban areas outside of the capital city (Bianchi 2013). One professor at *Universidad Nacional de San Luis* (UNSL) explained that the mortgage on his three-bedroom house was about \$100 a month—much cheaper than a privately constructed home of similar quality. While he was no fan of the Rodríguez-Saá brothers and openly recognized the illiberal nature of San Luis politics, the offer was too good to refuse.

³⁷ The nickname “puntano” comes from the capital city's location at the foot of the *Punta de los Venados* mountain.

³⁸ In 2004, forty-seven out of every 1,000 puntanos were public employees, outpacing the national average by ten (MECON 2004).

³⁹ Keep in mind that in 2000, the population of San Luis province was 365,168.

One prominent UCR leader in San Luis lamented that building the party's base in the province was nearly impossible amidst such high levels of dependence on the government for housing, employment, and sustenance. He listed several cases where his supporters had been fired from their public jobs or denied their monthly cash transfers after Rodríguez-Saá operatives discovered they had attended a UCR rally. In his words, competing against the PJ in San Luis was playing football on a "*cancha inclinada*" (uneven playing field). Another puntana activist said that the provincial government actually required that individuals participate in a ceremonial handing over of the keys to obtain public housing, which was always attended by one of the brothers and a small group of journalists that would document the event in the next day's edition of the provincial paper. One of her friends had refused to partake in the ceremony, and was shortly notified that her contract was void and she would not receive a house.

Another key facet of the Rodríguez-Saá dominance of San Luis politics has been the Industrial Promotion Law, which went into effect in the 1980s under President Alfonsín. This legislation was originally drafted under Perón in 1973 as an effort to compensate the western Argentine provinces that sustained the heaviest casualties during the War for Independence (Catamarca, La Rioja, San Juan, and San Luis). The law essentially created tax-free zones in each of the four provinces, providing strong incentives for companies to relocate at least some phase of production to these four previously lagging provincial economies. This advantage resulted in San Luis' transition to a middle-class province, and built a great deal of political capital for the Rodríguez-Saá brothers for overseeing this rapid period of growth (Bianchi 2013).

According to both Nueva Mayoría and PIMSA data, San Luis has maintained one of the lowest rates of protest participation in Argentina since 1993. Interviews with local activists, politicians, and academics reinforced the idea that organizing movements against the Rodríguez Saá was exceedingly difficult and in some cases, dangerous. Generally, opportunities for citizen engagement of any kind are few and far between, given the Rodríguez-Saá brothers' deep insertion in virtually every sphere of social and political life.

One local activist recounted the events of the *multisectorial*—a social movement named for the multiple sectors of puntano society that banded together to protest against a highly controversial redistricting effort led by the Rodríguez-Saá brothers in 2004. While the PJ dominated politics at the provincial level, they were weaker in the capital city, where the UCR continued to win local elections on occasion. The brothers viewed this as an affront to their provincial dominance, and concocted a plan that would divide the city government into five different sub-cities, aiming to counteract the mayor elected from the UCR stronghold with four Rodríguez-Saá loyalists—in other words, a San Luis version of American gerrymandering.

For the first time under the reign of the Rodríguez-Saá, the citizens of San Luis had had enough. Led by opposition parties, union leaders (mostly associated with the *Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina (CTA)*), prominent academics at the UNSL, and religious leaders, 40,000 protestors congregated in front of the *casa de gobierno* to voice their resistance to what they viewed as bald-faced political maneuvering that would have serious consequences for how they would be taxed, what schools their children would attend, and most importantly, their cultural identities as citizens of San Luis. Puntanos

were also well aware that towns where the opposition won often found their funding mysteriously disappear, as was the case in the nearby touristic city of Merlo (Rosenberg 2004),⁴⁰ and sought to prevent suffering a similar fate in the UCR controlled section of the capital.

The protests began in March of 2004, and would continue for months. Quickly, the events turned violent, as then-governor Alberto Rodríguez-Saá ordered the provincial police to crack down on the protestors with tear gas and batons. In retaliation, the demonstrators began peppering the *casa de gobierno* with rocks, vandalizing it and several other public buildings, and lighting tires in the streets. The most violent confrontation between the police and protestors occurred in May, when fifteen protestors were hospitalized for injuries inflicted by the police and fifty-five demonstrators were imprisoned (San Martín 2004).⁴¹ As the protestors shifted their focus from the proposed redistricting to myriad other claims regarding the Rodríguez-Saá family's domination of San Luis politics, they began to look to the national government for help, demanding a federal intervention. Eventually, Hebe de Bonafini, founder and leader of the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* movement, joined the protestors in San Luis, proclaiming,

“I know the Rodríguez-Saá, and they are corrupt fascists. In Argentina, we can't allow for the existence of hidden dictatorships. San Luis is a hidden dictatorship, and the police repress anyone who works for and demands justice and democracy. The only thing they're missing is López-Rega”⁴² (Página12 2004; author's translation).⁴³

⁴⁰ La Nación: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/587910-rodriguez-saa-borro-de-los-mapas-a-merlo-bastion-de-la-oposicion>

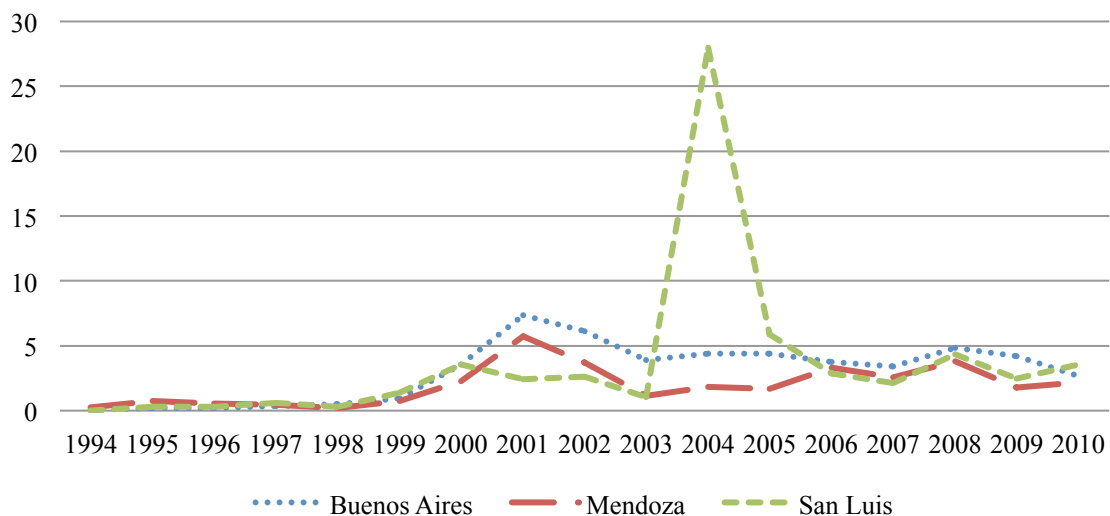
⁴¹ La Nación: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/597473-la-represion-policial-dejo-15-hospitalizados>

⁴² José López-Rega was the Minister of Social Welfare under Perón from 1973-1976 who is credited with hastening Argentina's descent into authoritarianism and initiating the “Dirty War.”

⁴³ Página 12: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-35317-2004-05-14.html>

Just when it seemed that the multisectorial would result in fundamental political change for the province, the national government refused to intervene, the provincial government backed down on their redistricting efforts, and eventually the protests died down. As evident in Figure 4.11, which compares San Luis to Mendoza and Buenos Aires, protest rates were low before the events of 2004 and have remained low since. On the only occasion when a large-scale protest mobilization occurred, it was met swiftly with repression by the provincial government, and while successful in the short term, produced little in the way of long term political change. Thus, while the 2004 multisectorial attracted the participation of an unprecedented percentage of the San Luis population, it was only a remarkable blip in a province otherwise dominated by the Rodríguez-Saá for the past thirty years. Hardly anyone in San Luis protested during the 2001-2002 crisis, and even during recent years when protests have raged across most of the rest of the country, citizens of San Luis have remained conspicuously silent.

**Figure 4.11. Acts of Rebellion per 100,000 Citizens:
San Luis, Mendoza, and Buenos Aires**



Mendoza

Mendoza neighbors San Luis to the west and is also part of the Cuyo region of Argentina, but from a political standpoint the two provinces could not be more different.⁴⁴ Since the country's democratization, Mendoza has played host to strong multiparty competition, an independent and free press, and a diversified economy characterized by minimal public employment and low levels of clientelism. Despite having only one significant urban center—the provincial capital that shares the same name—Mendoza has never been dominated by one family or cadre of political and economic elites, and boasts a political system where the principle of separation of powers is highly observed and valued. It is also home to a diverse collection of citizen organizations, boasting one of the highest concentrations of civil associations per 1,000 citizens in Argentina (MECON 2010).

Unlike at the national level, where Peronism has been the dominant party since its inception with the Radicals running a distant second, Mendoza possesses three significant political parties: the PJ, UCR, and the Democratic Party (PD), a center right party found only in Mendoza. The UCR and PJ have alternated in the governorship since 1983, while the PD has maintained a steady presence in the provincial legislature, even winning a plurality of the votes in 1999. All three parties possess strong organizations that carry out community outreach programs throughout the province, build alliances within the provincial and national legislatures (where the PD votes with Buenos Aires-based PRO), and maintain fairly consistent ideological platforms.

⁴⁴ In numerous conversations, *mendocinos* proudly pointed to the democratic history of their province, and in some cases mocked neighboring San Luis by quoting an old slogan the province used to promote tourism: “*San Luis, es otro país!*” One activist even shared with me that the only province in the country where her organization had yet to gain a foothold was San Luis, due to a combination of factors.

Among the consequences of multiparty competition in Mendoza has been an independent judiciary and strong rule of law institutions (Chavez 2002). Unlike San Luis, Mendoza is also home to several independent provincial newspapers that are owned by different groups, and are free to criticize the incumbent government without fear of retribution. For these reasons, Mendoza has routinely been scored as the most democratic province in Argentina (Giraudy 2009, Gervasoni 2010). A former editor of the province's most important newspaper, *Andes*, suggested that Mendoza's democratic history could be traced to its closer proximity to Chile than to Buenos Aires, its strong middle class, and the extent to which those factors produced a resilient Radical party that could compete with Peronism, unlike in many other Argentine provinces.

Mendoza ranks low among Argentine provinces in terms of the number of protests that occur there annually per the size of its population. According to multiple sources, on the rare occasion that Mendoza does erupt in mass protest, those protests are normally directed at the national government and often revolve around issues related to democratic rules of the game. The 1972 *mendozazo* is still regarded as one of the most important and violent protests to occur under the Argentine military regimes, and was one of the many mobilizations throughout Argentina that precipitated the brief return of elections in 1973. Since the establishment of the provincial constitution in 1916, Mendoza has been one of only two provinces in Argentina to continue to ban governors from being reelected, and the only province to prohibit consecutive terms by family members. When current governor Francisco Pérez sought a constitutional reform in 2013 to permit one reelection for governors, he was met by widespread protests in the provincial capital. Indeed, some of the most significant mobilizations in Mendoza have

arisen in response to attempted constitutional reforms—e.g., when Menem pursued reelection in the mid-1990s and when rumors began to swirl that Cristina Kirchner would seek indefinite reelection in late-2012. Thus, while protests surface on occasion, they normally look towards Buenos Aires, and hardly ever result in long-standing strikes or the widespread use of confrontational tactics like roadblocks.

Buenos Aires

Representing the middle of the spectrum is Buenos Aires, Argentina's largest province in terms of population and economic importance. By some metrics, Buenos Aires is a relatively open subnational democracy – no small elite cadre has dominated its politics and it has the country's most varied provincial economy, which has produced a diverse and influential civil society capable of mobilizing large numbers of citizens at a moment's notice. Independent sources of political information abound, as Buenos Aires has a rich collection of newspapers, television channels, and radio stations that fall outside of the provincial government's sphere of influence.

However, Buenos Aires comes up short in terms of democratic quality when compared to a province like Mendoza for several reasons; chiefly, the Peronists' electoral dominance in the province. The only time another party has held the governorship of Buenos Aires was during the first four years of democracy following the 1983 transition, and another party has held control of the provincial legislature for only four years (the UCR from 1997-2001). In many cases, the winning Peronist candidate for governor has garnered a margin of victory exceeding thirty percent, offering a strong indication of the power asymmetry that exists in the province between the PJ and its closest rival, the

UCR. Moreover, the most populated area of the province—the *conurbano* metropolitan region surrounding the nation’s capital—has been famously dominated by clientelistic Peronist mayors who played a critical role in fomenting unrest during the lead-up to the December 2001 crisis (Auyero 2005).

Another reason why Buenos Aires’ provincial political institutions fall short of ideal representativeness has little to do with what happens within the province itself. Buenos Aires is the primary victim of Argentina’s Co-Participation Law, meaning that *bonaerense* citizens receive far less federal funding per capita for education, healthcare, and social programs than Argentines in any other province. For this reason, provincial politicians are often unable to deliver high quality public services to their constituents—part of the reason why Buenos Aires has higher levels of poverty and unemployment than the national average—and experts on provincial politics have called the governor of Buenos Aires one of the weakest public figures in the country (Di Marco 2013).⁴⁵ Recent strikes by police officers and teachers in pursuit of pay raises offer evidence of the extent to which the provincial government is hamstrung by its relatively low levels of federal funding when attempting to mediate social conflict. In certain situations, the federal government has stepped in to provide a short-term boost in public spending, and given the electoral import of the country’s most populous province, claim credit for the generous federal intervention (Moscovich 2013). In the eyes of *bonaerenses*, these interventions further highlight the inability of provincial institutions to respond to the demands the province’s citizenry.

⁴⁵ La Nación 2013: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1634629-cuentas-fuertes-lealtades-debiles-el-secreto-del-poder-de-los-intendentes>

In conversations with former politicians and other experts on the politics of Buenos Aires, several interviewees stressed that the province was best understood as having two distinct parts: the conurbano and the interior. Traditionally, protests are more common in the conurbano, where individuals are more likely to identify as *porteños* (inhabitants of the capital city of Buenos Aires) than citizens of the province. Indeed, these electoral districts are underrepresented in the provincial legislature in La Plata in terms of the number of seats they possess, while the conurbano is the most important battleground during presidential elections, meaning citizens of the area often look more to national than provincial elected officials for solutions to their problems. Given this fact, one provincial pollster said that denizens of the conurbano region were often dissatisfied with representation in the provincial legislature, and were sometimes even unaware of basic facts regarding provincial institutions. For them, the politicians in La Plata care far less about what happens in their neighborhood than national political leaders, who are more visible in the media and spend more time campaigning in the conurbano in election years.

Recent social movements in Buenos Aires province offer illustrative examples regarding the role that representational deficits play in creating an environment ripe for protest. During the standoff between the agricultural sector and the Kirchner government in 2008, Buenos Aires was one of the primary battlegrounds, given the importance of soy and sunflower production in the interior of the province. Bonaerense farmers were caught in a difficult situation in terms of their options for overturning the legislation. Citizens of a country with one hegemonic political party at the national level (the PJ), and a province dominated by a powerful branch of that party operating in close concert with the federal

government, they were left with few formal options for political representation. Strikes and roadblocks thus became the key tactics utilized, as they attempted to shut down the country's most important productive sector and put the squeeze on their rivals in Buenos Aires. Eventually, their efforts resulted in a surprise success in the Senate based on the movement's ability to shift national public opinion in their favor.

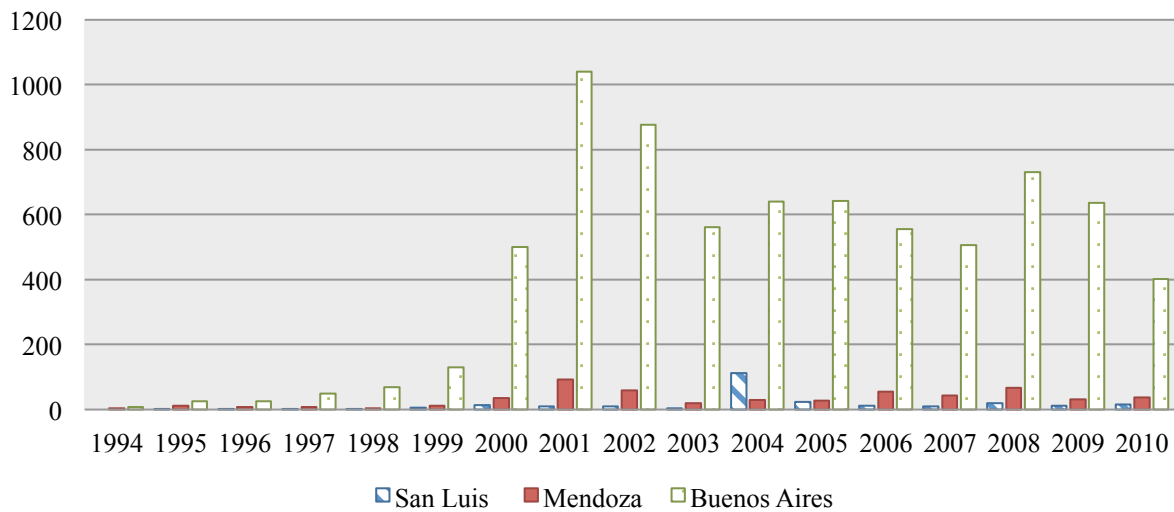
Another example would be the seemingly annual conflict between teachers and the governor in Buenos Aires over salaries. As of the final week of March 2014, Buenos Aires public schools had been closed for the initial two weeks of the school year due to ongoing wage negotiations between the bonaerense government and teachers' unions led by the Buenos Aires division of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República de Argentina* (CTERA), *Sindicato Unificado de Trabajadores de la Educación de Buenos Aires* (SUTEBA). These strikes have become so frequent and occasionally dramatic that the leader of SUTEBA, Roberto Baradel, has emerged as a well-known public figure throughout Argentina, grabbing front-page headlines routinely in *La Nación* and *Clarín*. While teachers' strikes are commonplace in Argentina, the contentiousness of the relationship between unions and the bonaerense government is heightened by the Buenos Aires governor's fiscal weakness (the province's teachers have some of the lowest salaries in the country) and the lack of an effective participatory alternative to striking for Buenos Aires teachers.

As evident in Figure 4.12, Buenos Aires province has played host to a staggering number of protest events since the early 1990s, and particularly since 2000.⁴⁶ Even when one takes into account the size of the province, Buenos Aires ranks as one of the most

⁴⁶ These figures do not include the autonomous national capital, which is not technically part of Buenos Aires province.

contentious cases in the country in terms of protests per 100,000 citizens. I argue that the primary reason for this marked contentiousness is the combination of a relatively open context characterized by an active civil society and diversified economy, with a political environment characterized by single party dominance and weak provincial governing capacity.

Figure 4.12. Total Acts of Rebellion in San Luis, Mendoza, and Buenos Aires, 1994-2010



Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the Argentine case as a particularly apt one for testing my theory of contentious politics in Latin America. Argentina embarked on a striking trend towards widespread protest participation beginning in the late-1990s, and even following the country's recovery from a catastrophic economic and political crisis in 2001-2002, contentious tactics have remained a hallmark of everyday politics throughout

much of the country. Indeed, Argentina typifies the type of high protest case discussed in the previous chapter, where many individuals have lost faith in traditional representational outlets and turned to protest as their preferred tool for acquiring political influence.

While the frequency and intensity of protests, coupled with the extent to which contentious tactics have seemingly normalized over the last decade, make Argentina a critical case in the study of protest behavior, an additional feature of Argentine democracy makes it an ideal laboratory for examining the relationship between institutions and protest. Argentina is home to one of Latin America's most (in)famous federal systems, with vast differences in the quality of democratic institutions found among the country's twenty-three provincial governments (e.g. Chavez 2004, Spiller and Tommasi 2009). Moreover, rates of protest activity differ a great deal across provincial contexts as well. As observed in the cases of San Luis, Mendoza, and Buenos Aires, the quality of provincial democratic institutions can bear on a citizenry's ability to organize collective action. While these case studies can best be characterized as suggestive of that theoretical understanding, based on interviews and historical research in only small sample of provinces, in the following chapter I more rigorously test my argument on data from every Argentine province during the period from 1994 to 2012.

CHAPTER V

SUBNATIONAL DEMOCRACY AND CONTENTIOUS POLITICS: EVIDENCE FROM ARGENTINE PROVINCES

What explains the striking variation we observe in terms of protest activity across Argentine provinces? How do provincial political characteristics influence the emergence and sustainability of contentious politics? Building on the previous chapter's qualitative treatment of these questions, this chapter seeks to provide a more empirically rigorous, quantitative evaluation of how regime characteristics of Argentine provinces impact protest participation within their borders. In so doing, this analysis becomes one of the first empirical examinations of the relationship between subnational regime characteristics and contentious politics to date, and offers an additional test of the theoretical framework that I outlined and tested at the country level in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

Specifically, in this chapter I seek to test the argument that contentious participation tends to thrive at intermediate levels of subnational democracy, as originally posited but not systematically tested by Eisinger (1973) in the American context. In short, I argue that protest thrives where democratic political institutions are not fully accommodating of opposition voices and participation, yet are not so closed off that potential movements have no organizational capacity or hope that their actions might make a difference. To test this argument, I draw on protest events data from Argentine provinces that I obtained while conducting fieldwork in Argentina during the 2012-2013

academic year with the support of a dissertation grant from the National Science Foundation (SES-1263807). I also utilize data from the 2008, 2010, and 2012 AmericasBarometer surveys of Argentina to corroborate the findings from the protest events analysis.

In the pages below, I first address the classic challenges of conceptualizing and measuring subnational democracy in the developing world, and then introduce my own approach based largely on Gervasoni's (2010) work on fiscal federalism and subnational democracy in Argentina. This measurement strategy utilizes gubernatorial and provincial legislative elections results to produce "Subnational Democracy" scores for each province from 1993 to 2011. Second, I introduce the events count data used for this analysis, obtained from two Argentine think tanks – the *Programa de Investigación sobre el Movimiento Social Argentina* (PIMSA) and *Nueva Mayoría* – and discuss the advantages and drawbacks of using these two measures. These data were drawn from newspaper reports on protests in all twenty-three Argentine provinces from 1993-2011, meaning that the analysis requires corresponding independent variables that cover the same sample of provinces over the entire time period under consideration.

Third, I outline my plan for modeling the relationship between provincial regime characteristics and protest events, which includes Poisson regression, fixed effects for individual provinces, and a number of important control variables. Then, I present the results of these analyses. To conclude, I consider another source of data – the 2008-2012 AmericasBarometer national surveys of Argentina – as a robustness check, thus bringing to a close the most comprehensive analysis to date of the relationship between subnational regime characteristics and contentious politics in the developing world.

Measuring Subnational Democracy

Unlike at the country level, where democracy scores are published annually by an array of organizations like the World Bank, Polity, and Freedom House, easily accessible and reputable democracy indicators at the subnational level are few and far between. For this reason, students of subnational politics have had to be creative in crafting their own measures of regime characteristics—particularly in developing contexts where good political data are harder to find. Thus, as the literature on subnational politics in the developing world has expanded, so too has a small collection of measurement strategies aiming to quantify how democratic local regimes really are. In this section, I review extant approaches to conceptualizing and measuring subnational regime types, and eventually argue for what I believe is the best approach for the purposes of this particular analysis.

The first decision any student of subnational democracy must make is that of which conceptualization of democracy is most apt for the question they seek to answer. Generally speaking, subnational regimes found within democratic national contexts are not wholly authoritarian, given that to some extent those subnational units must answer to national political authorities and prevailing democratic rules of the game. However, a great deal of evidence suggests that processes of democratization have occurred unevenly in many developing regimes, and subnational units can fall into some category in between liberal democracy and full-scale dictatorship. While in certain cases, subnational regimes measure up to and even outperform the national regime in terms of democratic

norms and procedures, in other cases state and provincial regimes are patrimonial, clientelistic, and exclusionary of minority voices (e.g. Key 1949, Fox 1994, Snyder 1999, Gibson 2005, Gervasoni 2010). These regimes resemble the category of national level regimes described in the literature on “competitive authoritarian” or “illiberal” democracies, where one personalistic leader or powerful party generally dominates politics, but several key features of democratic rule (e.g. regular elections free of blatant fraud) remain in place (Levitsky and Way 2002 ; Zakaria 1997). In sum, any conceptualization of subnational democracy must account for these shades of democratic quality, spanning from illiberal but not completely authoritarian (e.g. “closed”) to liberal multiparty competition (e.g. “open”).

In gauging subnational democracy, some scholars have sought to ascertain the extent to which “institutionalized uncertainty” (Przeworski 1991)—i.e., the realistic possibility of change in the ruling party—exists in a particular setting by coding subnational regimes according to whether or not they have undergone a rotation in power from one party to another (see also Alvarez et al. 1996). In a case like Mexico, for example, where true multiparty competition took hold in certain states before the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) finally ceded power at the national level in 2000, while other states have yet to see a non-PRI party win the governorship, a dichotomous rotation measure would seem highly indicative of the extent to which subnational regimes have transitioned to multiparty competition (e.g. Hiskey 2002; Hiskey and Bowler 2005).

In other studies, scholars have argued for a more nuanced conceptualization of local regime types, arguing that a multidimensional measure that takes into account both *access* to state power (i.e., the presence of inclusive and competitive elections) and the

exercise of state power (e.g. checks and balances, bureaucratic norms, and judicial independence) is paramount (Gervasoni 2010b; Giraudy 2013). While the qualitative differences between these two dimensions of democratic rule seem important, acquiring useful data regarding the exercise of power component can present challenges. For example, while Gervasoni (2010b) carried out an innovative expert survey project in Argentina to evaluate subnational democracy on both dimensions from 2003 to 2007, such a laborious endeavor requires a great deal of time and ample research funding, and in the case of Gervasoni's undertaking only yielded democracy scores for one gubernatorial term. Analyzing protest data over a nearly twenty year period will therefore require a less intensive, but more encompassing measure that accurately captures democratic quality across many provinces at various time points, but is realistically attainable with finite resources.

Given that in previous chapters of this dissertation I have defined democratic institutional quality as “the extent to which formal political institutions fulfill the democratic promise of representation,” it would seem wise to continue with that conceptualization at the subnational level. Thus, any measurement strategy I adopt should adequately capture the degree to which Argentine provincial regimes offer ample opportunity for individuals to influence policymakers and obtain representation, without having their voices suppressed or ignored by a powerful political leader or party.

This measure would need to take into consideration countless characteristics of provincial political life that could bear on an individual's ability to obtain effective democratic representation—e.g., the nature of party competition, checks on executive power, the independence from political influence of the provincial media and judiciary,

and the potential consolidation of political and economic power in the hands of a powerful elite, to name a few. But acquiring reasonable measures for all of these variables in each of Argentina's twenty-three provinces over a twenty-year period is difficult, if not impossible, given temporal constraints on available data. The challenge for this analysis is therefore finding high quality information on provincial political environments that can serve as a proxy for many if not all of the important components of subnational democracy enumerated above, but is also readily available across years and provinces.

Construction of the Subnational Democracy Index

The best source for local political information that is accessible across subnational units and time is electoral data (Wibbels 2005; Gervasoni 2010a; Giraudy 2010). Indeed, while obtaining information regarding levels of press freedom, civil liberties, and judicial independence might require extensive fieldwork in each local context, which would likely prevent large-N quantitative studies comparing subnational units, utilizing election results to make inferences regarding these factors is much easier and more generalizable. In other words, one might assume that the information provided by provincial election results—e.g., margin of victory, reelection(s) of a particular party or leader, and inter-branch dynamics—reveals a great deal about the nature of those regimes, and can serve as an effective proxy for provinces' overall levels of democratic quality. Put simply, we can reasonably assume that in less democratic provincial contexts, where local leaders utilize clientelistic practices and public funding in their campaigns, own or dominate

local media, and control local judges and law enforcement to bias outcomes in their favor, that will be reflected in multiple reelections, uncompetitive contests, and electoral rules that favor the incumbent.

In his 2010 *World Politics* piece on fiscal federalism and subnational democracy, Gervasoni uses provincial electoral data to measure two key dimensions of democracy: contestation and constraints on power (see also Dahl 1971). Gervasoni proposes an index based on five particular indicators derived from provincial gubernatorial and legislative elections: *Executive Contestation*, *Legislative Contestation*, *Succession Control*, *Legislature Control*, and *Term Limits*. *Executive Contestation* gauges how competitive elections for the governorship are by subtracting the percentage of the total vote garnered by the winning candidate from one. *Legislative Contestation* does the same, but with the governor's party in provincial legislative elections.⁴⁷ *Succession Control* assesses the degree to which incumbent governors are successful in controlling who follows them in office – this variable is coded as high if the governor himself or a close ally achieves reelection (3), medium if someone from the same party as the governor is elected (2), and low if an opposition party captures the provincial executive office (1). *Legislature Control* measures congruence between the legislature and the governor in terms of legislative seat shares, operationalized as the percentage of lower house seats won by the governor's party in each election. Finally, *Term Limits* codes whether and to what degree limits exist on the length of a governor's reign in power, coded from 0 (reelection is prohibited) to 3 (indefinite reelection). As of 2014, five Argentine provinces allow for indefinite reelection (Formosa, Santa Cruz, San Luis, La Rioja, and Catamarca) and two provinces prohibit reelection for governors altogether (Mendoza and Santa Fe). The rest

⁴⁷ In provinces with bicameral legislatures, the measure is calculated for the lower house.

allow either one or two reelections for governors. Of the five provinces that permit indefinite reelection of governors, four have never experienced a rotation in power since Argentina democratized in 1983, with Catamarca being the only exception.⁴⁸

While Gervasoni's piece provides *Subnational Democracy* scores for every Argentine province aside from Tierra del Fuego from 1983 to 2003, this particular analysis requires that I have democracy scores through 2011, necessitating an extension of Gervasoni's data.⁴⁹ To calculate the *Subnational Democracy* index, I use factor analysis to aggregate the five indicators described above into a single continuous measure, normalized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one (see Appendix for descriptive statistics). Thus, the most undemocratic provinces will have negative scores, middling provinces will cluster around zero, and more democratic subnational regimes will score positive values.

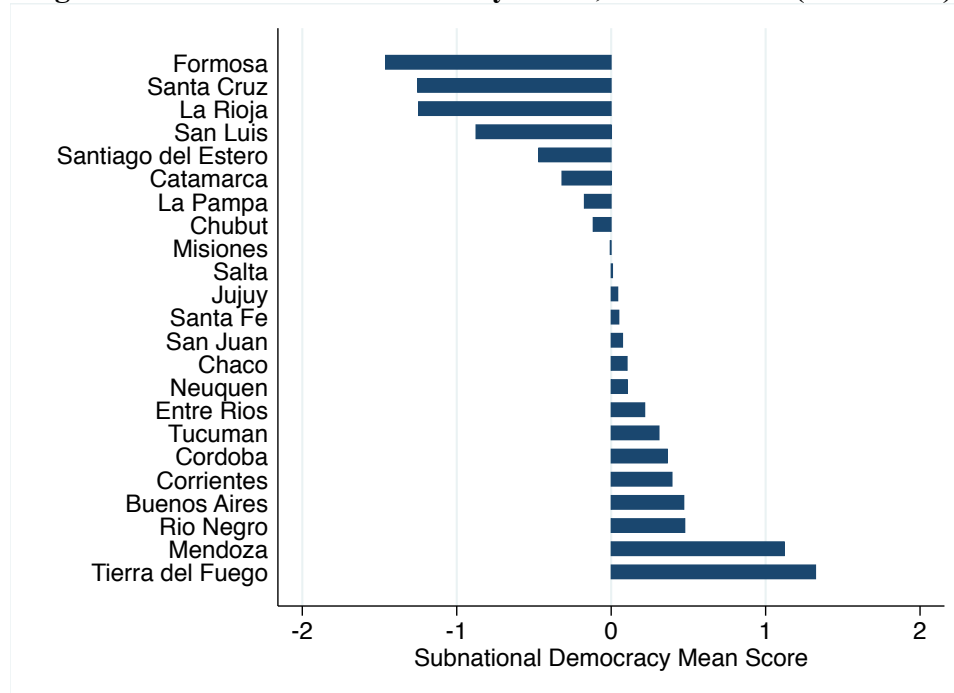
Below, I present mean subnational democracy scores from each province for the entire time period under consideration, 1993-2011 (Figure 5.1). Unsurprisingly, Formosa, Santa Cruz, La Rioja, and San Luis register the lowest values in terms of *Subnational Democracy*. None of these provinces has yet experienced a transition from PJ rule, and powerful individuals or families have dominated the politics of each province for decades. Another curious note regarding this group of provinces is that four of the past seven Argentine presidents—Menem, Rodríguez-Saá, and the two Kirchners—hail from

⁴⁸ All electoral data used for the creation of the Subnational Democracy Index were gathered from Andy Tow's comprehensive website on subnational politics in Argentina, where he has compiled data on elections at the provincial and municipal level since the country's 1983 transition to democracy: www.andytow.com. I would like to thank Dr. Tow for his continued efforts in providing this invaluable resource to students of subnational politics in Argentina.

⁴⁹ I would like to thank Dr. Gervasoni for graciously providing detailed code for creating the Subnational Democracy Index, in addition to his data for the period from 1983 to 2003 to check against values on my own measures.

three of the four *least* democratic provinces in the country, La Rioja, San Luis, and Santa Cruz, respectively. Notably, many of the least democratic provinces are also known for their lack of contentious participation (with the recent exception of Santa Cruz), as apparent in Figure 5.1.⁵⁰

Figure 5.1. Subnational Democracy Index, Mean Scores (1993-2011)

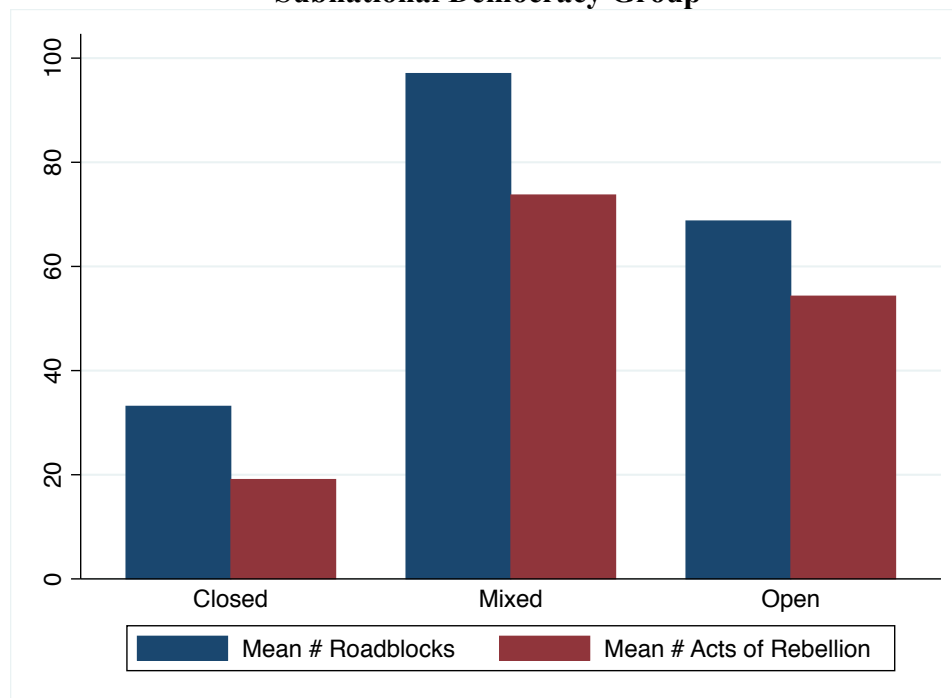


In the middle of the scale are several provinces that could be described as some of the most contentious in Argentina: notably, Jujuy, Salta, and Neuquén. Each of these provinces has registered rates of protest participation over the years that far outpace the national average, and each falls into a group of provinces that are neither overtly illiberal, nor host to high quality democratic regimes. For example, in Neuquén a local political

⁵⁰ Yearly observations for provinces were divided into terciles based on their Subnational Democracy scores, with each group consisting of the same number of “provincial years.” So, the “Closed” category refers to the least democratic third of annual observations, while the “Open” category comprises the highest third of yearly democracy scores.

party called the *Movimiento Popular Neuquino* (MPN) has won every gubernatorial election since democratization, but typically the elections have been close (with the PJ running second) and the MPN typically holds only a plurality of votes in the provincial legislature. Likewise, in Salta and Jujuy the Peronist Party almost always wins the executive office, but normally commands only about thirty percent of the seats in the legislature. In these contexts, it seems that while the PJ could certainly be characterized as the dominant party, individuals can realistically organize protests and hope for some type of response from a provincial government that is not as hegemonic and exclusionary as in cases like Formosa and San Luis.

Figure 5.2. Mean Number of Roadblocks and Acts of Rebellion by Subnational Democracy Group



Finally, it seems that while protests are more common in open contexts than in closed uncompetitive systems, the most democratic Argentine provinces tend to lag

behind mixed provinces in terms of the number of contentious protest events to which they play host. Included in this group are provinces like Mendoza, Tierra del Fuego, and Rio Negro, all of which have experienced multiple rotations of power and divided government. Notably, Buenos Aires province also scores as part of this group during certain periods in its history, though the province has yet to transition from Peronist rule following its initial post-transition victory against the UCR in 1987.

Dependent Variables: Protest Event Counts

To test the relationship between subnational democracy and contentious politics, I draw on two unique measures of protest at the provincial level, both of which track the number of protest events that occurred in each province on an annual basis. Since 1997, the researchers at Nueva Mayoría have carried out an ongoing research project on social conflict in Argentina, with a specific emphasis on the common tactic of blocking roads (“*cortes de ruta*”). To track the evolution of this tactic over time, Nueva Mayoría investigators have content-analyzed national newspapers⁵¹ and provincial newspapers⁵² to record unique instances of roadblocks occurring in each province every year. Since 1997, the number of roadblocks in Argentina has risen steadily, reaching its peak in 2008

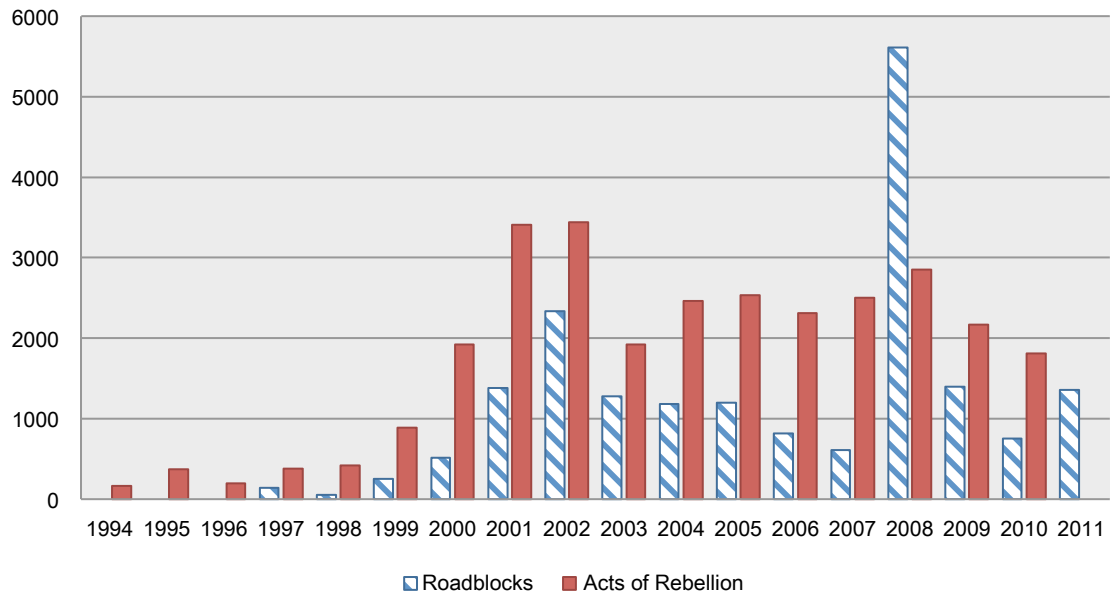
⁵¹ *La Nación*, *El Clarín*, *Página/12*, *La Prensa*, *Crónica*, *La Razón*, *Diario Popular*, *El Cronista*, *Ambito Financiero*, *The Buenos Aires Herald*.

⁵² *El Ancasti* (Catamarca), *El Chubut* (Chubut), *La Voz del Interior* (Córdoba), *Corrientes Noticias* (Corrientes), *El Diario* (Entre Ríos), *La Mañana* (Formosa), *Pregón* (Jujuy), *La Arena y El Diario de la Pampa* (La Pampa), *El Independiente* (La Rioja), *Los Andes* (Mendoza), *El Territorio* (Misiones), *La Mañana del Sur* (Neuquén), *El Tribuno* (Salta), *El Zonda* (San Juan), *El Diario de la República* (San Luis), *La Opinión Austral* (Santa Cruz), *La Capital* (Santa Fe), *El Liberal* (Santiago del Estero), *El Sureño y el Tiempo Fueguino* (Tierra del Fuego), *La Gaceta* (Tucumán).

thanks in large part to the heated standoff between the government and agriculture that resulted in thousands of roadblocks across the country (Figure 5.3).

As for the second measure, PIMSA's "acts of rebellion" ("*hechos de rebelión*") measure captures a wider range of protest activities than just roadblocks. PIMSA's researchers define acts of rebellion as "actions carried out by representatives of economic, political, or social groups, in order to contest some characteristic or policy of the existing state" (Cotarelo 2009; author's translation). Among other pieces of information regarding each act, PIMSA investigators record the date and location of the event, the identity of the organizers, and the nature of their claim. Unlike Nueva Mayoría's more expansive source material, PIMSA uses only national newspaper accounts to code protest events, in this case *Clarín*, *La Nación*, *Página 12*, and *Crónica*. It appears that similarly to roadblocks, the number of acts of rebellion increased steadily from 1994 to 2001, and while levels of protest fell slightly after the 2001-2002 crisis, they have remained much higher than before that pivotal moment in Argentine history (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3. Roadblocks and Acts of Rebellion over Time:
Argentine Provinces, 1994-2011**



There are positives and negatives associated with using each measure. The first drawback of using the PIMSA data is an obvious one—they are based on reports appearing only in national newspapers, all of which are located in Buenos Aires yet are being used to cull information on protest participation across the entire country. Buenos Aires-based papers tend to pay close attention to the goings-on of the capital and *conurbano*, while giving less press coverage to interior provinces. Thus, one might wonder if distance from the capital biases the extent to which protest events are covered in Buenos Aires-based newspapers, and thus if the PIMSA measure accurately portrays what is happening outside of the country’s largest metropolitan area.

Another problem with both measures is that event counts fail to reveal much information regarding protest magnitude, meaning that each coded event is weighted the same regardless of whether five or 500,000 people attended. Indeed, one might envision a

scenario where multiple small, relatively inconsequential protests drive up the count in one particular province, while a small number of massive protests in another province are relatively underrepresented in the data. For this reason, many scholars prefer other approaches to measuring protest like surveys, which measure participation at the individual level and thus ensure that each observation is weighted the same (e.g. Dalton et al. 2009).

These data, however, also carry with them several important advantages. First, they cover a time period of nearly twenty years, providing rare temporal breadth in the study of contentious politics at the subnational level. This feature allows us to account for any variation in the prevalence of contentious politics that might occur over time while also increasing the size of the sample, enabling a more robust evaluation of relationships between key variables. Second, these data were collected for each of Argentina's twenty-three provinces and capital city, which makes for a sample that includes highly urban areas (the Buenos Aires conurbano) and many rural, peripheral provinces (e.g. Santa Cruz or Formosa) that are often forgotten in quantitative analyses based on national level data. Finally, by utilizing two sources of protest events data, each of which captures a different set(s) of contentious repertoires, I argue that any common findings gleaned from these analyses should be particularly robust. Particularly when combined with the analysis of survey data from Argentina, which I will describe in more depth below, the analysis presented in this chapter is thus among the most thorough examinations of subnational politics and protest to date.

Modeling Strategy

Because I am dealing with count data that span nearly twenty years for all of Argentina's twenty-three provinces, there are several knotty methodological issues that must be sorted out before moving on to the analysis section. Count data are not normally distributed nor can they take on negative values, and the distribution is also discrete rather than continuous. Therefore, these data violate several key assumptions underpinning ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, rendering any findings from a standard OLS approach biased and/or inefficient (King 1988). For these reasons, I utilize Poisson regression, which assumes that the errors follow a Poisson distribution rather than a normal one, and models the natural log of the dependent variable (rather than the variable itself) as a linear function of the independent variables in the model (Long 1997; King 1988).

Another complicating factor for this analysis is the fact that I am using panel data for twenty-three provinces, rather than a dataset consisting of wholly independent, cross-sectional observations.⁵³ The fact that this dataset includes multiple observations for individual provinces over time means that I cannot assume that the observations for a particular province are independent from one year to the next. In other words, the number of protests observed in Santiago del Estero at time t are inevitably contingent to some degree on the number of protests that occurred in Santiago del Estero at $t - 1$. So, any modeling approach should take into account the unique effects of a particular province on

⁵³ I have chosen to omit the autonomous capital of Buenos Aires from this analysis, due to its unique status as the home of Argentina's national government and thus, the gathering place for many protestors who seek not to make claims on the local city government, but the national government itself. For this reason, protests in the capital would seem qualitatively different from those found in other provinces, where local protests are primarily directed at local authorities.

the number of protest events that occur in that province from year to year. For this reason, I use fixed effects for each province in all predictive models of protest events in an attempt to account for the concern that something within particular provinces is biasing results, and that a snowball effect might occur in provinces from one year to the next. I also include lagged measures of the two protest count variables, which offers an even more empirically rigorous evaluation of the impact of subnational regime characteristics on protest participation in a given context.

Finally, there are a number of key control variables that must be included in any predictive model of protests across provinces to assure that the inferences made regarding the impact of subnational democracy on contentious participation are valid. First, an indicator for population must be controlled for in any predictive model of protest events by province, as larger provinces are obviously more likely to have higher counts than sparsely populated provinces. Second, if one is to isolate the impact of institutional factors, she must also control for relevant economic circumstances that might outweigh political factors in terms of theoretical import. Upticks in unemployment, downturns in economic growth (measured as the percent change in *Producto Bruto Geográfico* (PBG)), and the overall level of development in a province (PBG per capita) are all economic factors that might bear on the prevalence of protest participation in a particular setting.⁵⁴

In the models presented below, I also include control variables for several important political factors. In their 2012 piece on how political competition and partisanship shape protest repertoires, Arce and Mangonnet find that contexts in which

⁵⁴ *Producto Bruto Interno* is calculated by Argentina's national statistical agency, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC), and represents a measure of gross domestic product by province. INDEC data were also used for measures of population, unemployment, and public employment.

the Peronist party is in the opposition often produce higher protest activity, due to the grassroots connections of the PJ and its tremendous mobilization capacity. Thus, a dummy variable for whether or not the PJ hold the governorship will be included in every model. Finally, I have also included an indicator for the number of public employees per 100,000 citizens in each province. This is based on numerous studies that have claimed that high levels of public employment tend to be associated with low quality, patrimonial democracy at the subnational level, and would seemingly diminish contentious activity (see Gervasoni 2010a, Giraudy 2012, McMann 2006).

Results

Results from four separate Poisson regression models are displayed in Table 5.1. Models 1 and 2 include the Subnational Democracy Index score for each provincial year as a continuous variable, while in Models 3 and 4 I include an indicator that divides provinces into terciles according to their democracy score, allowing me to examine the possibility that a nonlinear relationship between subnational democracy and protest exists. In Models 3 and 4, the middle tercile is the reference category, as I compare how less democratic (“Closed”) and more democratic (“Open”) systems influence the number of protest events observed during a given year in comparison to provincial regimes at intermediate levels of democracy, net of other factors.

The first finding that stands out from Models 1 and 2 is that the Subnational Democracy Index has a positive and significant effect on the number of acts of rebellion observed in a province during a particular year, while having a significant *negative*

impact on the number of roadblocks in a given provincial year (Table 5.1). In other words, when one treats Subnational Democracy as a continuous variable that has a constant linear effect on the number of protests in a given province, it produces contradictory results for the two measures of protest used in this analysis. This result runs counter to the primarily national level empirical work that argues for either a positive (e.g. Dalton et al. 2009) or negative (Machado et al. 2012) linear effect for democratic quality on rates of protest participation, and also seems to undermine subnational accounts that argue that competitive elections have a negative impact on the number of protest events in a particular context (Boulding 2010; Arce and Mangonnet 2012).

**Table 5.1. Predictive Models of Protest Events across Argentine Province
(Poisson Regression Models)**

VARIABLES	Acts of Rebellion <i>Subnational Democracy Index</i>	Roadblocks <i>Subnational Democracy Index</i>	Acts of Rebellion <i>Subnational Democracy Terciles</i>	Roadblocks <i>Subnational Democracy Terciles</i>
	Model 1 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 2 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 3 Coeff. (s.e.)	Model 4 Coeff. (s.e.)
Population (log)	-4.809** (0.477)	5.971** (0.634)	-5.132** (0.481)	5.255** (0.635)
Acts of Rebellion (t-1)	0.0005** (5.20e-05)		0.0005** (5.25e-05)	
Public Employment	-0.017** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.015** (0.002)	0.006** (0.002)
Unemployment	0.093** (0.003)	0.095** (0.003)	0.094** (0.003)	0.094** (0.003)
PBG per Capita (log)	-1.224** (0.089)	-1.320** (0.082)	-1.175** (0.089)	-1.140** (0.082)
PBG Change	-0.0001** (1.73e-05)	-0.0003** (2.18e-05)	-0.0001** (1.73e-05)	-0.0004** (2.20e-05)
PJ Governor	0.046 (0.029)	0.266** (0.034)	0.0334 (0.029)	0.164** (0.035)
Year	0.229** (0.007)	0.215** (0.008)	0.234** (0.007)	0.207** (0.008)

Roadblocks (t-1)				
			-0.0002**	-5.34e-05
			(3.04e-05)	(3.09e-05)
<i>Subnational Democracy Index</i>	<i>0.028*</i>	<i>-0.145**</i>		
	<i>(0.013)</i>	<i>(0.015)</i>		
<i>Closed System (Demcat=0)</i>			<i>-0.068**</i>	<i>-0.138**</i>
			<i>(0.033)</i>	<i>(0.033)</i>
<i>Open System (Demcat=2)</i>			<i>-0.105**</i>	<i>-0.489**</i>
			<i>(0.019)</i>	<i>(0.022)</i>
Observations	367	264	367	264
Number of groups (Province)	23	23	23	23

Standard errors in parentheses

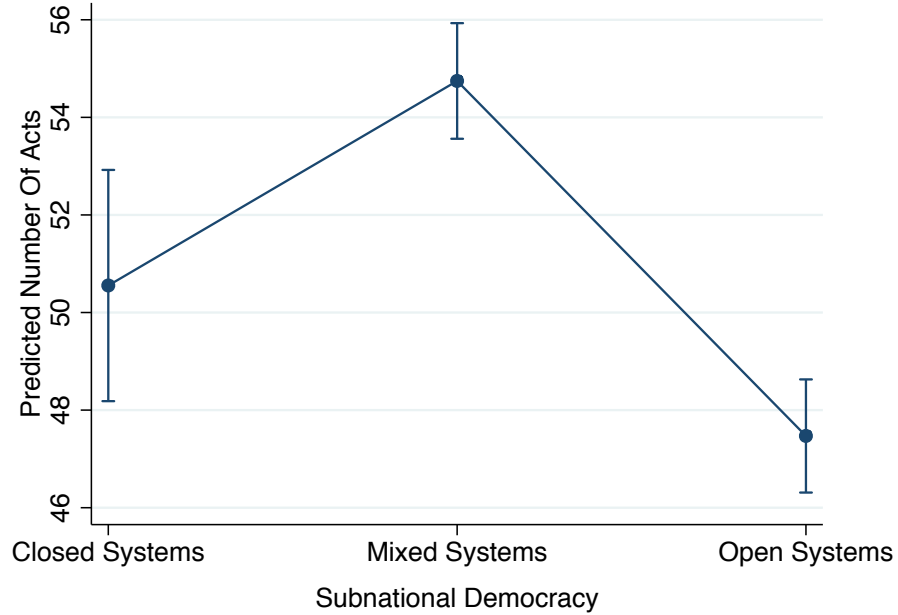
** p<0.01, *p<0.05

However, when provinces are categorized as belonging to three terciles based on their Subnational Democracy score at that particular point in time, the logic behind these puzzling results for the continuous measure becomes more decipherable. Put simply, it appears that subnational democracy has a nonlinear impact on protest events, in that at intermediate levels of democracy, protest appears to be more common than at either end of the spectrum. In “Closed Systems” and “Open Systems,” the predicted number of protest events is significantly lower than in provinces at intermediate levels of democracy, even at conservative levels of statistical significance ($p < .01$). Indeed, it seems that as predicted in the theoretical framework elaborated above and in the prior chapter, protest wanes in the most democratic subnational contexts in Argentina, where citizens have access to high quality formal representation, and in the least democratic provinces in the country, where individuals have no realistic hope of changing the status quo nor the ability to organize with their fellow citizens.

In Figures 5.4 and 5.5, I graph predicted event counts based on variation in Subnational Democracy category. To calculate predictive margins, the other variables in the models were held at their means. In the case of the Acts of Rebellion measure, clear and statistically significant differences between democracy categories emerge in terms of predicted counts, with “Open” systems bringing up the rear and “Mixed” systems unmistakably outpacing the other contexts in terms of contentious participation. However, the Roadblocks measure is where the starkness of the difference between subnational regime categories really comes to the fore. Holding all other variables constant, the predicted number of counts for a given province in a particular year would nearly double if one were to move that province from the “Open” to the “Mixed” category. The difference is almost as extreme between “Closed” and “Mixed” regimes, as belonging to the intermediate category would increase the predicted number of protest events by twenty-seven.

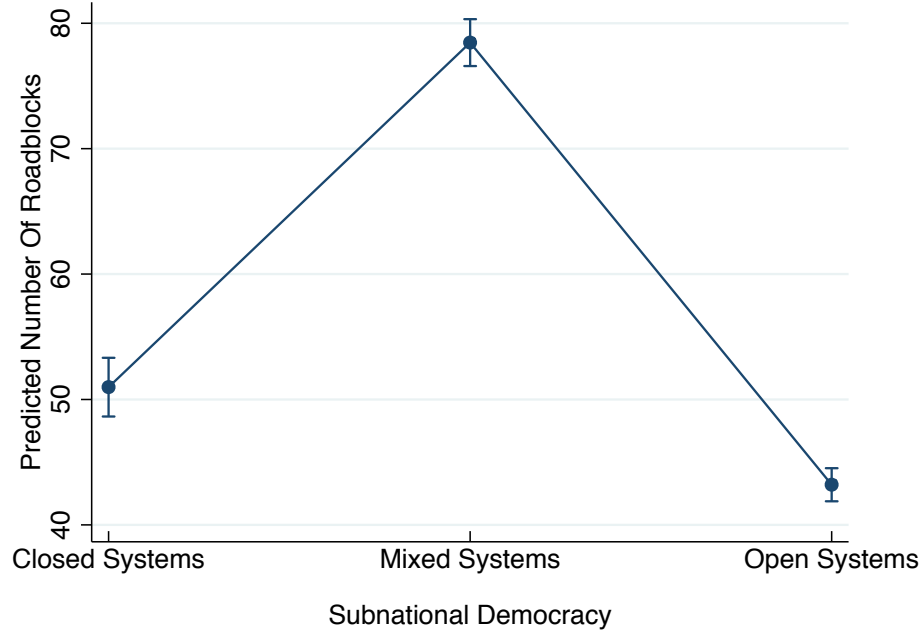
**Figure 5.4. Subnational Democracy and Acts of Rebellion:
Predicted Counts**

Predictive Margins of Subnational Democracy with 95% CIs
Acts of Rebellion, 1994-2010



**Figure 5.5. Subnational Democracy and Roadblocks:
Predicted Counts**

Predictive Margins of Subnational Democracy with 95% CIs
Roadblocks, 1997-2011



As for the control variables, as expected, the lagged number of protest events has a positive impact on the number of events observed in the current year. Controlling for other factors, population has mixed effects on the number of protests in a given province for a particular year—however, taking into account that the Acts of Rebellion variable was created based on newspaper accounts in Buenos Aires-based publications, it makes sense that events in smaller provinces might receive less press coverage. On the other hand, controlling for a litany of factors that might influence the results for the population variable, it seems that smaller provinces play host to a higher numbers of roadblocks. Blocking roads is by its very definition a rural act of contention, and is particularly common in sparsely populated provinces like Jujuy, Santa Cruz, and La Pampa, casting some light on this initially perplexing result.

Unemployment and PBG Change have the expected effects on the number of protest events in a particular context, as increases in unemployment and downturns in economic growth are associated with higher protest counts. PBG per Capita seems to have a negative effect on protest participation, as wealthier provinces play host to lower protest event counts. Also as anticipated, the control variable for year has a strong positive effect on the predicted number of protest events in a particular province. It seems that since 1994, protest events have become progressively more common in Argentina, which fits with the argument that the tactic has “normalized” since the early 2000s. Finally, the indicator “PJ Governor” has a weak positive effect on the number of protests in a particular province, running counter to Arce and Mangonnet’s finding from a more limited sample of Argentine provinces over time.

Robustness Check: Testing the Argument on Survey Data from Argentina

Having established that intermediate levels of subnational democracy seem to produce higher levels of contentious participation in Argentine provinces, one key robustness check of this finding remains: testing the argument on individual level data. The AmericasBarometer survey has been carried out in Argentina since 2008, and draws on a nationally representative sample of the Argentine population. In this section, I marshal evidence from these surveys to buttress the finding from the provincial level analysis that intermediate levels of subnational democracy tend to produce higher rates of contentious participation than low or high quality democratic contexts.

In 2008, 2010, and 2012, the AmericasBarometer has utilized a national probability sample design of voting-age Argentines, with about 1,500 respondents taking part in face-to-face interviews in Spanish in each round for a total N of 4,408. The sample has a complex design, featuring stratification and cluster sampling from the Argentine population, and has been stratified by regions within Argentina (Buenos Aires, Central, Northeastern, Northwestern, Cuyo, and Patagonia) and by urban and rural areas. The sample consists of 286 primary sampling units (municipalities), representing 21 of 23 provinces.⁵⁵ The dependent variable is drawn from a question that asks respondents if they have participated in a protest march or demonstration during the previous year. Combining results from all three surveys, about eighteen percent of Argentines reported having participated in a protest during the specified timeframe, placing the country third

⁵⁵ The sample is self-weighting, and estimates will represent the desired target population. The total number of respondents surveyed in urban areas was 3,927 and in rural areas, 481.

in Latin America behind only Bolivia and Peru in terms of citizens' professed contentiousness.

As with the provincial event count models, a handful of control variables must be included in any individual level model of protest participation to assure that the relationship between subnational regime characteristics and protest participation is not spurious.⁵⁶ First, demographic controls for age, gender, and wealth have been included in each model. While effects for gender and wealth are often inconsequential, age has been found to have a powerful negative impact on the likelihood that one has participated in a protest in the prior year, as older citizens are far less likely to take to the streets to make claims on governments than their younger counterparts (Moseley and Layton 2013).

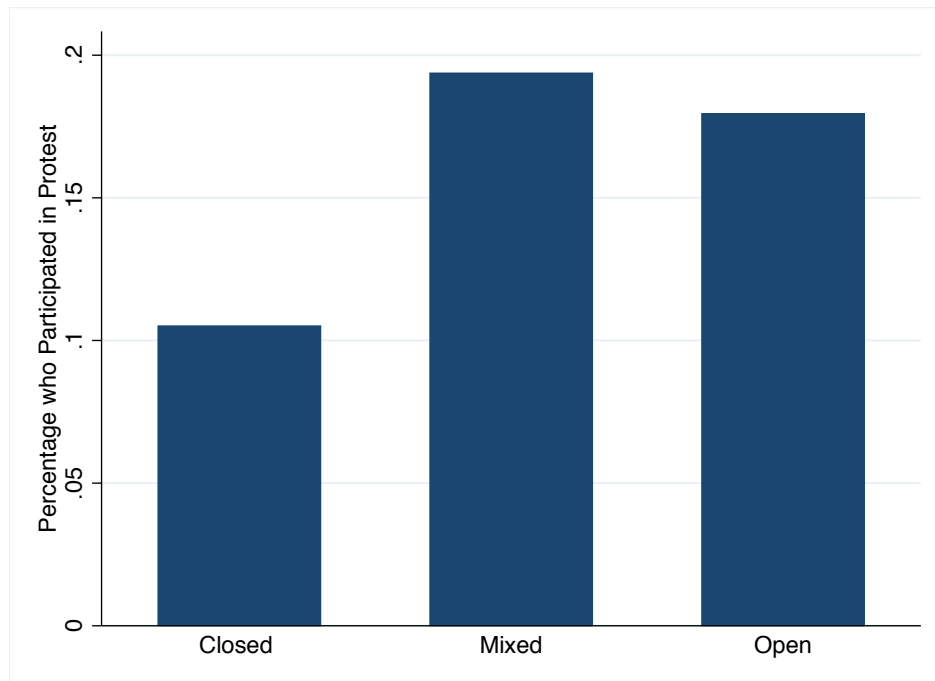
Second, a collection of sociopolitical factors that are associated with higher probabilities of protesting is included in the models presented below, including interest in politics, level of education, and community engagement. All of these reflect hypotheses from the "resource mobilization" approach to explaining protest, which as the dominant theoretical paradigm in the contentious politics literature argues that more civically active, socially connected individuals are the more likely protestors, as they possess the necessary skills and access to organizational structures to effectively mobilize contention (e.g. Meyer 2004; McCarthy and Zald 1977). Finally, I include a control for individuals' personal economic situations, which should capture any overriding grievance driving participation.

As for the key independent variable, subnational democracy, I code provinces according to their scores for the year preceding each survey, given that the AmericasBarometer interviews took place early in the year and the question regarding

⁵⁶ Question wording for all variables can be found in the appendix.

protest asks specifically about participation over the previous twelve months. Because the coded province in which individuals live is actually a contextual variable – i.e., survey respondents are nested within provinces – the results presented below are from multilevel models, which assess the impact of being located within a particular subnational context on one’s likelihood of having protested (Gelman and Hill 2006). To capture the possibility of a nonlinear relationship between subnational democracy and protest participation, I code the democracy variable in three different ways: 1) the undoctored, continuous index score, 2) terciles corresponding to the provincial analysis above, and 3) the democracy score squared, which allows for the possibility that values further from zero (i.e., corresponding to high and low levels of subnational democracy) produce lower rates of protest participation.

Figure 5.6. Protest Participation by Subnational Democracy Category



At first glance, it appears that rates of protest participation by subnational regime category match up fairly well with the findings from the provincial level analysis (Figure 5.6). Among individuals who live in mixed systems, rates of protest participation approach .20 and exceed rates of participation in closed and open democratic contexts. However, it also appears that more democratic provinces are characterized by significantly higher rates of contentious participation than the least democratic ones, and that mixed and open systems do not differ significantly in terms participation rates. However, the only sure way to test my hypothesis is to run a predictive logistic regression model of protest participation, to see how subnational political context bears on one's proclivity to protest, *ceteris paribus*.

As expected, the Subnational Democracy indicator has no significant effect on the likelihood that an individual has participated in a protest in the prior year (Table 5.2). Thus, any attempt to attribute protests across Argentine provinces to increasing or decreasing levels of subnational democracy appears misplaced, as no direct linear relationship exists between the two variables. However, results for the categorical indicators for subnational democracy included in Model 2 indicate that, similar to results from the provincial analysis, it is at intermediate levels of subnational democracy where contentious tactics truly thrive. Specifically, it appears that in closed systems, citizens have a significantly lower probability of engaging in protest than in mixed systems. However, while the negative sign indicates lower rates of protest participation in open provincial contexts as well (and this difference closely approaches statistical significance), it appears that we cannot declare beyond the shadow of a doubt that open systems are associated with a lower likelihood of protesting than mixed systems.

But, in Model 3 I include an indicator for subnational democracy squared, which captures the extent to which a province's distance from zero – which can be attributed to either high or low levels of subnational democracy – influences the probability that individuals within that province will participate in a contentious demonstration or protest march. The variable “Subnational Democracy Squared” has a strongly significant, negative impact on an individual's probability of participating in contentious activities. This result indicates that, as predicted, the further subnational democracies move away from the protest-producing middle region of democratic quality – whether towards high quality democratic rule or towards outright authoritarianism – the fewer the number of protests we should observe. Figure 5.6 plots the predicted probabilities associated with varying levels of subnational democracy squared, indicating that at the highest values individuals' probabilities of protesting wane.⁵⁷ For example, a person living in a province at the absolute midpoint in terms of democratic quality (Subnational Democracy Squared = 0) is more than three times as likely to participate in a protest compared to a person living in one of the most *or* least democratic provincial contexts in Argentina (Subnational Democracy Squared = 6).

⁵⁷ This finding holds when I create a variable that represents the absolute value of provinces' democracy scores – in other words, increasing a province's distance from zero in terms of subnational democracy decreases the probability of protesting among individuals.

**Table 5.2. Predictive Models of Protest Participation in Argentina
(Logistic Regression Models)**

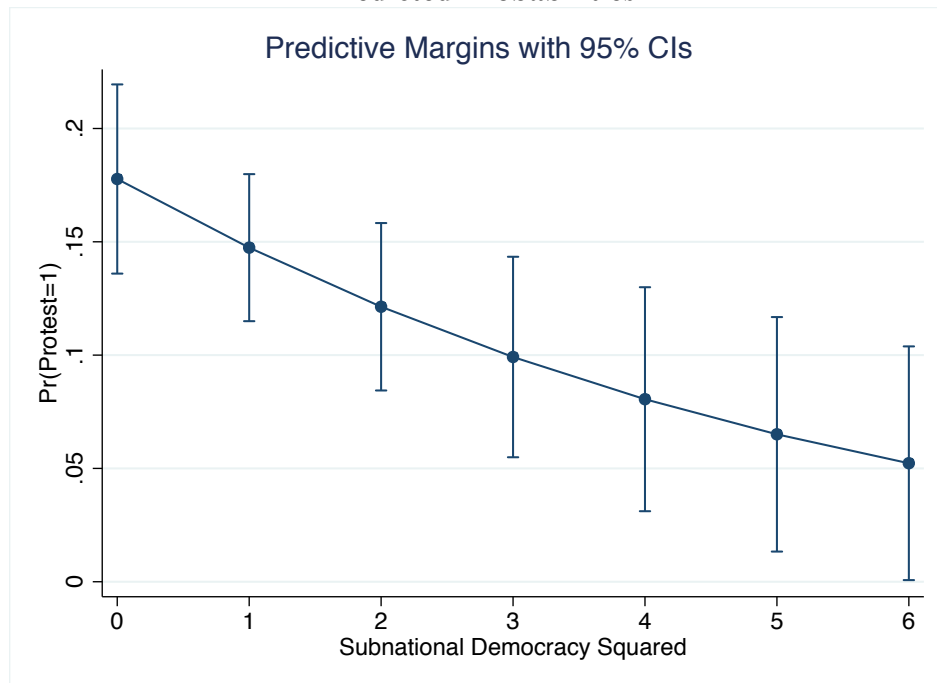
VARIABLES	Protest Participation (1=Protested) <i>Subnational Democracy Index</i>	Protest Participation (1=Protested) <i>Subnational Democracy Terciles</i>	Protest Participation (1=Protested) <i>Subnational Democracy Squared</i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Female	-0.010 (0.094)	-0.004 (0.094)	-0.009 (0.094)
Age	-0.021*** (0.003)	-0.020*** (0.003)	-0.021*** (0.003)
Wealth Quintile	-0.023 (0.038)	-0.02 (0.038)	-0.023 (0.038)
Interest in Politics	0.015*** (0.002)	0.015*** (0.002)	0.015*** (0.002)
Education Level	0.145** (0.070)	0.141** (0.070)	0.146** (0.070)
Community Participation	0.030*** (0.003)	0.030*** (0.003)	0.031*** (0.003)
Personal Econ. Situation	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)
<i>Subnational Democracy</i>	-0.004 (0.098)		0.132 (0.113)
<i>Closed System</i> (Dem Category=0)		-0.522*** (0.140)	
<i>Open System</i> (Dem Category=2)		-0.128 (0.115)	
<i>Subnational Democracy Squared</i>			-0.245** (0.103)
Constant	-1.862*** (0.267)	-1.695*** (0.273)	-1.701*** (0.272)
Observations	3,836	3,836	3,836
Number of groups (Province)	21	21	21

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The results for control variables in these individual level models of protest participation match up fairly well with results from the regional analysis of survey data presented in Chapter Three. While gender and wealth appear unrelated to one's

likelihood of protesting, age has a strong negative impact on participation. Education, community participation, and interest in politics are, as expected, strong predictors of having participated in a protest during the previous twelve months. Lastly, having encountered an economic rough patch personally seems to fuel protest participation, which is in keeping with the finding from Chapter Three that personal economic circumstances often seem to outweigh sociotropic evaluations when it comes to motivating protest participation.

Figure 5.7. Subnational Democracy Squared and Protest Participation: Predicted Probabilities

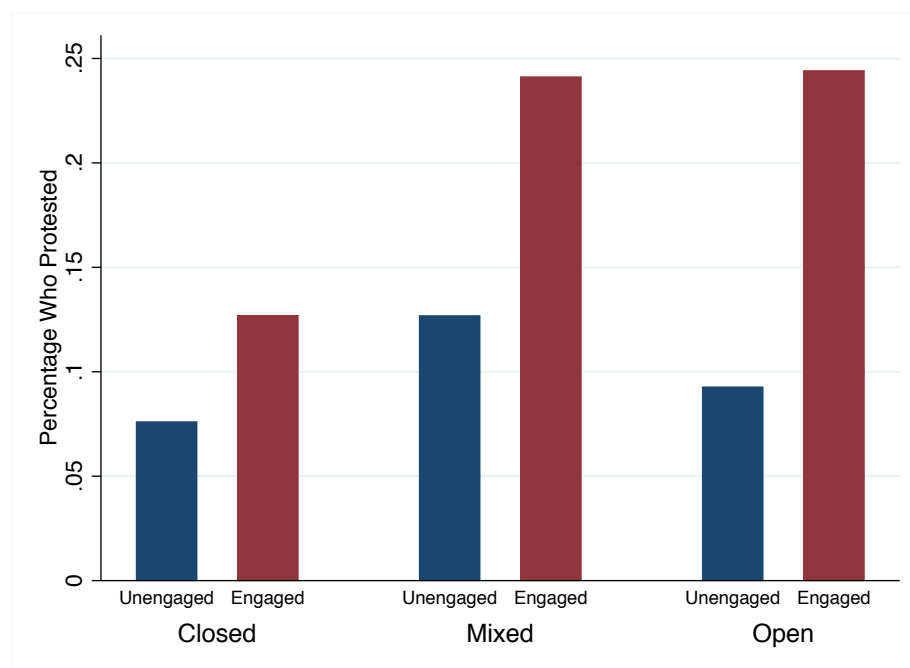


Subnational Democracy and Civic Engagement

To this point, I have treated the three provincial regime categories as proxies for both democratic institutional quality and civic engagement, the two factors identified as critical determinants of participation in the cross-national chapter. This has largely been

due to problems related to data availability in terms of subnational measures of engagement, but also because I argue that the subnational democracy measures based on electoral data offer a rough proxy for both concepts, as engagement is inevitably low in illiberal contexts devoid of competition and steeped in patrimonial state-society relations. However, to bring this analysis more in line with the cross-national results presented in Chapter Three, I take a brief look here at how subnational institutional environments interact with civic engagement to influence rates of protest participation.

Figure 5.8 The Interaction between Subnational Democracy and Civic Engagement⁵⁸



Unlike at the country level, I fail to uncover a significant result for the interaction between subnational democracy and community participation when I include the

⁵⁸ These are absolute probabilities, as opposed to predicted probabilities derived from model results.

interaction term in a predicted model of protest participation. As apparent in Figure 5.8, engaged citizens are clearly more likely to partake of contentious participation than their less engaged counterparts, regardless of democratic context. However, it appears that in Argentina, engaged citizens in open and mixed provincial contexts are *equally* likely to participate in protests, which contradicts the country level finding to some extent, as we would assume that engagement has a stronger impact on participation in mixed (i.e., less democratic) settings. While living in a closed system clearly stifles contentious activity, it appears that differences between high and mixed democratic contexts are minimal in terms of protest participation rates, with the main distinguishing factor being that unengaged citizens in mixed contexts are more likely protestors than their counterparts in open provincial democracies.

While there appear to be slight disparities in how this cross-level relationship plays out within Argentina compared to across Latin American regimes, one must keep in mind that in looking at the impact of subnational democracy, we are dealing with regimes that are nested within a unique national context. As mentioned in Chapter Four, many individuals in democratic provinces—who are highly engaged in politics—take to the streets to protest against the *national* regime, as has been the case recently in Mendoza. Moreover, I would also argue that Argentine provinces provide a more diverse set of cases in terms of democratic quality, as the least democratic subnational regimes in the country are in many ways more closed off than even the most illiberal national democracies in the region (e.g. Venezuela or Ecuador), which are at least characterized by competitive elections and increasingly vibrant opposition parties. Thus, while the results obtained in this subnational chapter largely corroborate what we observe at the

national level, in that flawed democracies play host to more protests than high quality democracies or illiberal regimes, they are by no means a perfect match.

Conclusion

This chapter offers a thorough investigation of the relationship between subnational democratic institutions and protest participation in Argentine provinces, utilizing multiple sources of data and methodological approaches. The findings are consistent: rather than unearthing a linear relationship between subnational democracy and protest, it appears that contentious politics thrives at intermediate levels of democratic quality, and fades at either end of the openness spectrum. These findings not only shed light on a heretofore under-examined dynamic in the Latin American context, but call for a recalibration of how we understand why and where protests occur in the developing world more generally. Indeed, rates of mobilization can vary drastically even within the context of a single democratic regime, and uneven processes of subnational democratic development can have important consequences for the participatory repertoires that individuals within those contexts utilize.

Furthermore, I believe that these provincial level findings complement the results from the cross-national analysis presented in Chapter Three. In many ways, Argentine provinces offer a more extensive universe of cases in terms of democratic quality than what we find at the national level in Latin America. That is, in certain provinces in Argentina, democratic competition is virtually nonexistent, the current government dominates local media, and the ruling elite's control over access to public jobs and social

assistance programs keeps potential political challengers perpetually at bay. Even in Latin America's least democratic country aside from Cuba, Venezuela, recent elections have been characterized by intense competition between incumbent candidates and an increasingly unified opposition, and the government's domination of the economic sphere is nowhere near as complete as it is in a province like Formosa, La Rioja, or San Luis, Argentina.

In sum, these findings from Argentina reveal the limitations of the argument that flawed institutions spawn high levels of contentious political behaviors. At a certain point, the closing down of opportunities for political expression becomes so complete that individuals can neither organize themselves nor hope that potential contentious actions on their part would have any influence on policymakers. In other words, where the democratic promise of representation ceases to exist, so too does the motivation to take to the streets in demand of change. However, where democratic institutions are only partially flawed, as is the case in numerous developing regimes across the region and in many provinces within Argentina, protest becomes a powerful tool for individuals in pursuit of effective democratic representation.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have sought to explain why protests arise in certain Latin American contexts but not others, and how individual level and institutional factors interact to explain contentious political participation. I find that characteristics of democratic political institutions help explain the emergence of protest participation in different national and subnational contexts, but that the effects of these political factors are not as straightforward as many have argued. Rather, they are best characterized as non-linear, or conditional on a certain base level of civic engagement among a particular citizenry. That is, while underperforming democratic institutions can play a part in triggering contentious modes of political participation, institutions can also be so *un*-democratic that protest movements are prevented from ever getting off the ground. In sum, institutions *matter* in explaining why individuals protest, but in complicated ways that defy our collective desire for a parsimonious explanation.

In this concluding chapter, I summarize and offer additional interpretation of the key findings presented to this point. Then, I discuss the implications of these findings at greater length, and offer some ideas for extending and improving upon this research. I conclude with some additional remarks on the state of the literature on contentious politics in the developing world.

Contentious Engagement in Flawed Democracies

Prior to this dissertation, scant empirical work has examined protest participation across countries, nor have many studies sought to unravel how characteristics of national political institutions might bear on repertoires of contentious participation within that country's borders.⁵⁹ Perhaps more importantly, few have examined how the interaction of country level political factors with individual level variables influences protest activities within a society. Contrary to accounts that attribute swelling rates of protest participation to rising political and economic development (Dalton et al. 2009) or institutional weakness (Machado et al. 2011), I find that institutional quality has no significant *linear* impact on the likelihood that individuals participate in protests. Instead, results from the predictive models of protest participation I run in Chapter Three uncover a substantial interactive effect for institutional quality and an intervening individual level variable: civic engagement. Where civic engagement is low, institutional quality fails to register a significant impact on the likelihood that an individual will partake of protest. However, as individuals become more involved in their communities and gain access to the organizational resources necessary for mobilization, institutions begin to exert an important stimulative effect on an individual's probability of protesting. Conversely, the strongest positive effects for community engagement on protest participation are found in low quality democratic contexts, where engaged citizens are almost twice as likely to participate in a protest rally or demonstration as their counterparts in high quality democracies.

⁵⁹ The only exceptions would be work by Dalton et al. 2009 and Machado et al. 2011.

This finding is robust to alternative conceptualizations of community engagement, and is especially strong when one examines the stark differences in predicted probabilities of protesting between individuals who have *zero* connections to community organizations and citizens who are least minimally involved in some local group. Moreover, I find that this interactive relationship manifests itself in different ways beyond merely the cross-level political institutions—civic engagement nexus. Indeed, I also uncover a significant interactive relationship between system support and community involvement: that is, when individuals lack faith in core political institutions *and* are active in local community associations, they are far likelier to protest than when either factor is absent. Education and interest in politics interact in similar ways with institutional characteristics to what we observe for civic engagement, though the findings are not as strong.

In contrast to these confirmatory results for the importance of political institutions in provoking protest among civically engaged citizens, I find few significant effects for the economic factors that have often been hailed in the literature on contentious politics in Latin America as crucial in explaining instances of mass mobilization (e.g. Almeida 2007; Silva 2009; Walton 1989; Yashar 2005, 1998). Measured at the individual level, wealth itself has little impact on an individual's probability of taking part in a rally or demonstration, nor do individuals' perceptions of the national economic situation. At the country level, national measures of inequality, recent economic growth or decline, and human development also fail to lend much explanatory power to answering the question of why individuals participate in protests.

In sum, these findings call for a recalibration of our understanding of the connection between national political institutions and individual level protest participation in the developing world, and the determinants of contentious political participation more generally. Given the many challenges associated with democratic transition and consolidation (e.g. Linz and Stepan 1994; Schmitter 1994), the number of flawed democracies has exploded in recent years as the third—and now potentially, fourth—“waves” have spread throughout the world. At the national level, dysfunctional democratic institutions seem to combine with mass level trends in civic engagement to explain why certain individuals are more likely to protest than others. Where institutions fail to fulfill the democratic promise of representation, politically active citizens may seek alternative means of influencing government policy that are not spelled out on a piece of paper. While the presence of contentious politics itself signals progress in countries where only a few decades ago, any challenging of the incumbent regime was strictly prohibited, it is also symptomatic of a system that fails to provide high quality representation and policy responsiveness to its citizens.

The Limitations of the ‘Bad Institutions’ Argument

While Chapter Three offers compelling evidence that institutional deficiencies at the country level can spur contentious participation by engaged individuals, in Chapters Four and Five I narrow my focus to Argentina, a country characterized by weak national political institutions but also vast subnational variation in terms of protest. Since Argentina’s return to democracy, and specifically beginning in the mid-1990s under the

Menem government, protests have become increasingly prevalent in the country. Crippled by market reforms that left a record number of Argentines unemployed, and driven by extreme disillusionment with representative institutions, the newly formed *piquetero* movement began to install roadblocks across the country in the late 1990s. In 2001, as the Argentine economic crisis reached its dramatic apex, thousands of citizens descended on the capital city to voice their indignation over the corrupt and unresponsive political actors and institutions they deemed culpable for their current state of despair.

More than just reflective of a deep economic crisis that had serious consequences for the daily well being of Argentine citizens, the 2001-2002 protests signaled a crisis of representation. Argentine citizens were fed up with a system that seemingly rewarded corrupt and inept leadership, power hungry presidents, and parties that pivoted from one ideological stance to another at the drop of a hat. The rallying cry that resonated with so many Argentinean citizens – “All of them must go!” – perfectly captured the overwhelming lack of faith in formal vehicles for representation that pervaded at the time, and the tactics used by Argentine protestors at this pivotal moment—e.g., roadblocks and *cacerolazos*—have since become consolidated as relatively normal repertoires of political participation.

However, in spite of what this national-level narrative would lead us to believe, protest has taken hold unevenly within Argentina. According to data from two leading Argentine think tanks, *Nueva Mayoría* and PIMSA, the country as a whole has indeed become more contentious over the years and protest repertoires have expanded in usefulness and scope, but there are certain provinces where protests are not particularly common. This subnational landscape offers a unique opportunity to explore the question

of how subnational variation in democratic quality impinges on varying levels of protest activity within Argentina.

In Chapter Five, I find that characteristics of subnational regime institutions have important consequences for the number of protests that occur within a given provincial context. Utilizing an innovative measurement strategy devised by Carlos Gervasoni (2010), I calculate (on an annual basis) subnational democracy scores for each of Argentina's twenty-three provinces over the course of nearly twenty years. I find that, net of other factors, the degree of democracy within a province plays an important, *but non-linear*, role in the frequency of protests that occur within its borders. Consistent with my more general argument about the quality of representative institutions, but also expanding that argument to incorporate explicitly undemocratic political systems, I find that protests are less common in both the *most* democratic and *least* democratic contexts. At intermediate levels of subnational democracy, where representative institutions are most likely to fall short of their democratic promise but not so illiberal as to preclude any challenging of the incumbent government, protest flourishes as a form of political voice. The substantive effects for these three distinct subnational regime types are impressive—while “open” and “closed” provinces play host to similar predicted counts of protest events holding other variables constant (~ fifty protests annually), being a “mixed” system increases the predicted number of protests by about thirty for a given year.

To offer an alternative test of the argument that systems with flawed democratic institutions encourage higher rates of protest participation, I draw from the 2008, 2010, and 2012 AmericasBarometer national surveys of Argentina. Using multi-level models, I examine the possibility that provincial political context has an important impact on the

probability that individuals nested within those contexts have participated in a street march or demonstration during the prior year, controlling for a number of individual level predictors that I found to be consequential in Chapter Three.

The results from the analysis of Argentine survey data corroborate much of what I find using event counts data from each province: rather than having a linear impact on the likelihood that an individual will protest, the effect of subnational democracy is curvilinear. Both high quality democratic environments and authoritarian provincial institutions seem to discourage protest participation, while middling levels of democratic quality with presumably flawed representative institutions spur higher rates of contentious participation. These findings are thus robust to multiple sources of data and measurement strategies.

The results from the subnational analysis of protest across Argentine provinces reveal the limitations of the “bad institutions” argument. While findings from many studies to date on this topic might lead one to assume that the worse institutions get, the more likely protest becomes (e.g. Machado et al. 2009; Boulding 2010, 2014; Arce and Mangonnet 2012), it appears that flawed institutions stimulate protest only to a point, after which they become so closed off that protest movements are incapable of mobilizing at all to articulate their claims. This curvilinear relationship between institutional context and protest harkens back to Eisinger’s (1973) work on protest behavior in American cities in the 1960s, but has been conspicuously absent in recent accounts of protest in the developing world.

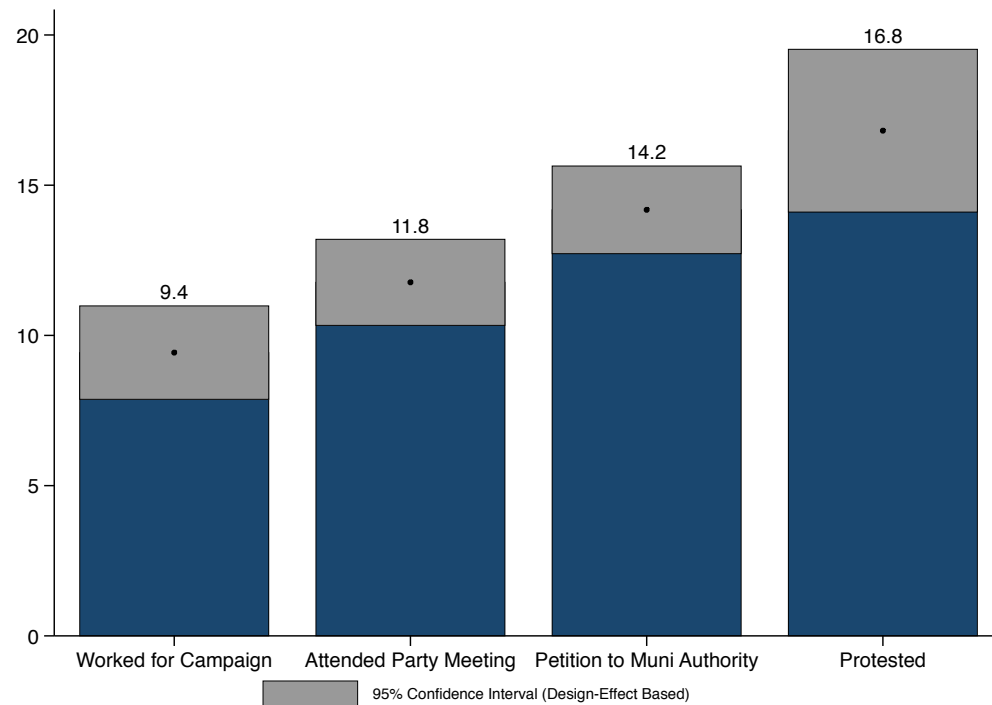
In provincial political environments like San Luis, opposition movements are ignored, coopted, or even repressed by an incredibly powerful local machine, making

movement organization and mobilization too costly except under extreme circumstances. In provinces like Mendoza, citizens enjoy competitive multiparty democracy and high quality representation, rendering contentious participation unnecessary for the most part, but not obsolete. However, in provinces like Jujuy, Neuquén, and Buenos Aires, where one party often dominates the political realm but not to the extent that they exert total hegemony over political institutions, civil society, and economic opportunities, protest can thrive as a normal form of political voice.

Normalized Protest in Argentina and Beyond

According to figures from PIMSA and Nueva Mayoría, the number of protests in Argentina surged in the lead up to the 2001-2002 crisis, and has remained high ever since. In 2008, nearly one in three Argentines claimed to have participated in a protest rally or demonstration in the previous year, and over 5,000 roadblocks were staged nationwide. Without a doubt, protests have become very common, rivaling virtually any other form of political participation in terms of popularity aside from voting (Figure 6.1). But can we classify protest participation in Argentina as “normal?” In other words, is protest utilized equally across socioeconomic and demographic groups, and do the same variables that predict standard formal modes of political participation also predict which individuals will take part in protests?

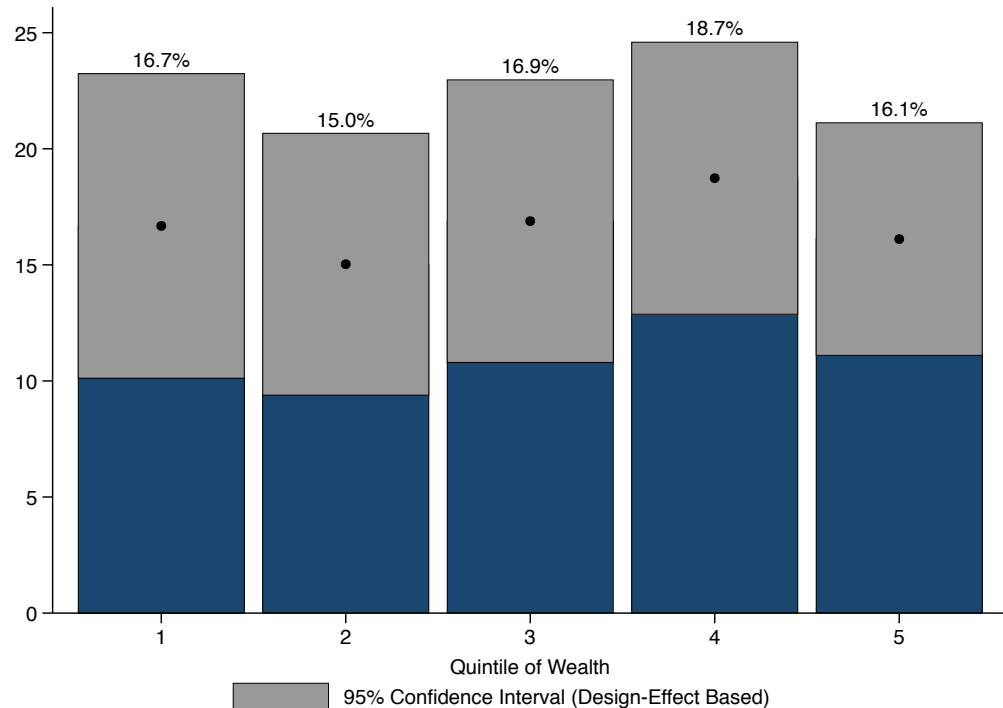
Figure 6.1. Protest Compared to other Participation in Argentina, 2008-2010



In a word, “yes.” In addition to its prevalence as a political activity, it seems that several of the classic (see Verba et al. 1995) individual level predictors of formal political participation—most notably, education and interest in politics—are strongly associated with contentious participation in Argentina. Moreover, the degree to which non-contentious forms of community participation and protests are linked, a relationship covered extensively in Chapter Three, speaks to the “conventional” nature of contentious political participation in Argentina. Perhaps the only standard predictor of conventional participation that is not associated with higher rates of protest is wealth, as no significant relationship exists between class and protest participation in Argentina. However, while in Argentina class does not appear to be a strong predictor of participation, evidence from the rest of Latin America indicates that middle-class individuals are indeed the most

likely protestors, corroborating Verba et al.'s findings from the American context (Moseley and Layton 2013).

Figure 6.2. Rates of Protest Participation in Argentina According to Wealth Quintile, 2008-2012



In general, it appears that protest participation is almost equally prevalent across key demographic groups. While 17.1% of male respondents surveyed in 2008, 2010, and 2012 in Argentina responded that they had participated in a protest during the previous year, 16.5% of females responded in the affirmative to the same question—a difference of means undistinguishable from zero. As mentioned above, across income quintiles rates of participation differ very little, and while protest participation begins to taper off after individuals turn fifty-five years old (probably for the obvious reasons related to the sheer physicality of demonstrating in the streets), differences between age brackets below that

level are slight (LAPOP 2008-2012). In sum, while protestors appear to make up a younger than average slice of the citizenry, they otherwise constitute a fairly representative cross-section of Argentina's politically active population, deviating little from voters and other habitual participants in politics.

Evidence from the rest of Latin America is mixed in terms of the degree to which protest has normalized. Only Peru and Bolivia outpace Argentina with respect to participation rates since 2008, and regional analyses generally reveal striking similarities between protestors and citizens who participate in politics through formal vehicles. However, one might also imagine that in certain countries where institutions are of higher quality, like Costa Rica, Chile, or Uruguay, protestors make up a smaller, less representative subsample of the total population. Indeed, in Chile, community participation is not associated with protest participation, which offers a striking contrast to what we observe Argentina and the region at large (LAPOP 2010, 2012).

To make a definitive claim about whether or not certain repertoires of participation have consolidated as the years have passed, one would need longitudinal data from within each of those countries, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, in Argentina the data tell a very clear story: thirty years of weak institutions and low quality democratic representation has birthed a country where contentious participation is the norm, as individuals seek more effective tactics for influencing government. The provinces within Argentina where this is *not* the case are either 1) so authoritarian that protest mobilization is too costly or 2) high-functioning enough that citizens within that province are content to operate through formal vehicles for democratic representation.

Implications

Moving forward, several important implications emerge from this dissertation for future research on political participation and democracy in Latin America and beyond. The first is that uneven institutional development in the region has serious consequences for how democratic citizens engage the political regimes they inhabit. While a significant body of research has documented the persistence of weak or flawed political institutions throughout Latin America (e.g. Levitsky and Murillo 2005; Scartascini and Tommasi 2010), less research has evaluated how institutional strength or weakness might bear on patterns of political participation across and within national political contexts. This dissertation, along with a handful of other recent studies (e.g. Machado et al. 2009; Boulding 2010, 2014), offers an empirical evaluation of the relationship between institutional characteristics and the utilization of contentious modes of political behavior; however, one might imagine a number of different behavioral consequences of institutional variation, on variables including but not limited to voting, political clientelism, and party or union activism. Plus, variation in institutional quality probably influences the attitudinal consolidation of democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996), as well as key political attitudes like support for the political system, perceptions of crime and corruption, and support for extralegal or anti-democratic measures like public lynchings or military coups. Research examining how institutional variation influences mass level behaviors and attitudes is still somewhat limited in the developing world (see Anderson and Singer 2008), especially taking into account the vast differences in institutional

quality observed in a region like Latin America, and thus represents a fruitful avenue for deepening our understanding of democratic politics in Latin America.

Another important contribution of this research is that it further underlines the importance of subnational approaches to understanding political phenomena, particularly in the developing world. By conducting a provincial level analysis of contentious politics in Argentina, a country characterized by stark subnational variation in terms of economic and political development, I marshal additional evidence for my general argument regarding the connection between institutional characteristics and protest participation. Indeed, Argentine provinces provided a more expansive universe in terms of the temporal coverage of the data and the magnitude of the variation on key institutional characteristics, which resulted in distinct findings from the cross-national analysis. Within countries, democracy can take hold at a different pace, and what we think we might know about a given country's politics and development prospects might not apply at all to certain territories within its national boundaries. The differences that I encountered between cities and provinces when living and conducting fieldwork in Argentina made this fact more clear than ever.

On that note, I also want to reiterate how important it was for this particular dissertation project that in testing my theory, I was able to obtain different types of data from distinct sources, at multiple levels of analysis. Organizations like LAPOP provide an invaluable resource to students of political behavior, and we are fortunate to have unprecedented access to rich mass level data that until recently, only existed for the United States and Europe. However, while to some extent multi-national survey data served as the empirical backbone of this dissertation project, I believe my dissertation

benefited greatly from the subnational component. By testing my theoretical approach on two distinct sources of event counts data from Argentina and uncovering results that corroborated what I had found at the national level, this project provides a much more convincing test of my argument than would have been possible with only survey data. Moreover, by living in Argentina for a year and conducting interviews in three diverse provinces and the capital city, I gained an on-the-ground understanding of the country's politics that contextualized what I was observing in the data.

Potential Extensions of this Project

As much as I would like to say that this dissertation offers the definitive statement on democratic political institutions and protest in Latin America, it does suffer from numerous shortcomings that could be improved upon in future studies. Leaving aside obvious limitations that could only be solved with additional research funding or data that do not currently exist—e.g., conducting another national case study to compare with Argentina or obtaining additional survey level data for a time-series analysis of protest across countries—here I consider several potential extensions of this project that might help ameliorate some its most notable flaws in future studies.

One important next step for this project would be to evaluate the consequences of normalized protest for political representation and democratic politics in Latin America—a topic that this dissertation does little to address. How do governments respond to protests in contexts like Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina, versus countries where contentious participation is less common? How effective are protestors in pursuing their political

goals through street-based, extra-institutional activities compared to formal modes of participation? On one hand, there are numerous examples of protests really *working* in many Latin American contexts, which inevitably explains to some extent why individuals and groups continue to view contentious activities as viable problem-solving strategies. On the other hand, policymakers might suffer from protest fatigue in a “Boy who Cried Wolf” scenario, where contentious actions lose their power through overuse. Normalized protest might result in governments responding only enough to quell the masses, without having to provide long-term solutions to real problems. Unlike representation through elections and political parties, protests require no guaranteed feedback between individuals and representatives—if a particular issue fades once it has been resolved in the short-term, policymakers are not obligated to follow through on whatever promises they made to make that issue go away.

An interesting way of studying the effectiveness of protest participation might be threefold. First, one could track specific claims over time and evaluate how those protest-motivating issues were eventually resolved. In doing so, one could estimate how frequently protestors are successful in a particular context in accomplishing their goals, and uncover information regarding the conditions under which protests succeed or fail.⁶⁰ Second, one might utilize survey data to explore how efficacious and well-represented protestors feel compared to participants in other more formal political activities, while accounting for obvious problems related to endogeneity. Finally, one might explore how the policy preferences of protestors correspond to actual policy output, compared to

⁶⁰ To my knowledge, the only studies to this point that have addressed the policy consequences of protest have been Tenorio’s (2014) piece on social policy responses to mass protests and Franklin’s (2009) article on how Latin American governments respond differently to distinct repertoires of contention.

preferences of non-protestors—a strategy that has been used in the American context to examine if voters are better represented than non-voters (Griffin and Newman 2005).

Debating whether heightened levels of protest are “good” or “bad” for democracy is perhaps an even thornier enterprise. The fact that protestors across Latin America are now able to take to the streets and make claims on governments is undoubtedly an important sign of progress for a region where only thirty years ago, those same individuals would have been imprisoned or worse. Moreover, widespread protests are indicative of a swelling number of citizens who are engaged in politics and want to have their voices heard, which is a positive sign in an era when scholars bemoan declining turnout rates and widespread apathy with regard to politics. At the same time, protests are by definition aggressive, can frequently descend into outright political violence, and often carry with them consequences for the local and national economy. Regardless of whether it is the protestors or law enforcement officers who are the chief perpetrators, the fact remains that protests are frequently (but not always) dangerous in Latin America, raising serious concerns regarding public safety. As mentioned above, protest also remains a relatively blunt instrument for obtaining desirable outcomes in terms of representation—even when demonstrations are successful in the short term, they often provoke only piecemeal concessions from a government seeking to avoid a public relations nightmare, rather than meaningful long-term changes in how public officials respond to the popular will.

Another potential avenue of research would be to evaluate the representativeness of protestors vis-à-vis partakers of other forms of political participation. Scholars have long expressed concern that voters are not representative of the entire population,

particularly in countries without obligatory voting (Lijphart 1997), as voters often consist of a biased cross-section of citizens in terms of class, racial, and ethnic characteristics. Moreover, research from the U.S. context has found that costlier forms of participation like local community and political party activism exacerbate participation biases, as wealthier, whiter, and more educated citizens exert far more influence via civic voluntarism (Verba et al. 1995). While in the Argentine case, it does seem that protest has “normalized” across several important demographic variables, there are other ways in which augmented influence for the people who take to the streets might distort policy outcomes in undesirable ways.

As argued throughout this dissertation, protestors need organization to effectively mobilize. Thus, individuals with access to these crucial organizational resources are likely to exert more influence on policymakers than less connected citizens. In a case like the 2008 agricultural uprising in Argentina, where farmers throughout the country quickly organized to block major highways and cease production until the government abandoned its proposed export tax increase, a small sliver of the Argentine population was able to achieve a very influential political victory through sheer organizational strength and dexterity. As opposed to elections, where a large percentage of the population has the opportunity to weigh in and provide a more representative depiction of public opinion, protests tend to serve to promote the particularistic interests of an organized few, except in rare instances where massive numbers mobilize to communicate more general claims. In Dahl’s terms, this offers a classic case of the *intensity of preferences* winning the day over the majority of preferences (Dahl 1956). While perhaps in some ways deserving of their heightened influence due to their efforts, educated,

politically interested, and socially connected citizens might not speak on behalf of their less contentious (and less politically-savvy) counterparts, who by abstaining from protests miss out on an important opportunity to influence public policy.

Finally, perhaps the gravest omission from this dissertation is that I largely neglect variation in protest “type” as an important dependent variable. Not all repertoires are created equal—peaceful street demonstrations are different from roadblocks, which are in turn distinct from organized lootings of grocery stores. It is possible that institutional characteristics encourage certain types of contention, but not others. However, in this dissertation my argument is that the same institutional characteristics that increase the number of roadblocks in a particular province also increase rates of participation in street marches and demonstrations. Future work might divide repertoires by type, analyzing whether or not institutional deficiencies exert the same type of influence peaceful demonstrations as they do on more confrontational, violent tactics. My expectation is that while protests might be less common in more illiberal contexts, the protests that arise in those settings have a higher probability of becoming violent—e.g., the case of the “*multisectorial*” in San Luis in 2004-2005.

Moreover, the characteristics of protestors themselves and the typical response from law enforcement to contentious behaviors would seem highly consequential in explaining patterns of contention in a particular context. For example, in a country with weak institutions like Argentina, protest appears to be relatively normal across demographic and socioeconomic groups. Because public manifestations are so common, and protestors are composed of such a large, diverse cross-section of the total population, demonstrations are most often peaceful and non-confrontational (with obvious exceptions

like the 2001-2002 riots). However, in a country like Chile, where protest is far less common and utilized by a less representative subsection of the population (usually, younger and more leftist), we find that tactics are more aggressive and are often met by police with tear gas and nightsticks. I leave these dynamics relatively unexplored in my dissertation, but future studies would do well to take the next step and explore these intriguing puzzles.

This dissertation project has contributed to our understanding of why people protest at different rates across Latin America, and how characteristics of national and provincial political institutions interact with individual level factors to explain why individual citizens adopt contentious tactics in their quest to make democracy work for them. It has also shed light on a particularly contentious case in Argentina, a country where protest continues to shape democratic politics on an everyday basis, and how uneven democratization at the subnational level can influence patterns of political participation within a single country. In so doing, this dissertation connects the two dominant strains of comparative research—institutions and behavior—to offer a comprehensive examination of one of the most important sociopolitical phenomena in Latin America today.

However, despite this dissertation's contributions, it only serves to highlight how much work is left to be done on the topic of contentious politics in the twenty-first century. Democracy is changing, as increasingly engaged citizens grow impatient with the unresponsive nature of many formal institutions and utilize an expanding array of organization tools to mobilize contentious repertoires of participation in making their voices heard. Only by expanding upon this dissertation to include other cases and

repertoires of contention, and further delve into the consequences of normalized protest, will we begin to fully grasp how contentious behaviors are revolutionizing democratic politics in Latin America and beyond.

APPENDIX

Table A1. World Bank Governance Indicator Scores, 2007-2011

	Voice and Accountability	Government Effectiveness	Rule of Law	Institutions Index
Chile	1.03	1.19	1.28	1.17
Uruguay	1.07	0.56	0.65	0.76
Costa Rica	0.97	0.29	0.44	0.57
Panama	0.56	0.13	-0.14	0.18
Trinidad and Tobago	0.52	0.31	-0.52	0.10
Jamaica	0.51	0.23	-0.45	0.10
Brazil	0.5	-0.03	-0.21	0.09
Belize	0.65	-0.44	-0.33	-0.04
Suriname	0.37	-0.08	-0.48	-0.06
Guyana	0.08	-0.09	-0.22	-0.08
Mexico	0.1	0.22	-0.61	-0.10
Argentina	0.35	-0.18	-0.61	-0.15
Colombia	-0.18	0.06	-0.38	-0.17
El Salvador	0.07	-0.11	-0.74	-0.26
Peru	0.04	-0.35	-0.69	-0.33
Dominican Republic	0.08	-0.58	-0.69	-0.40
Bolivia	-0.03	-0.51	-1	-0.51
Honduras	-0.44	-0.6	-0.92	-0.65
Paraguay	-0.15	-0.86	-0.95	-0.65
Guatemala	-0.29	-0.64	-1.1	-0.68
Ecuador	-0.26	-0.74	-1.14	-0.71
Nicaragua	-0.43	-0.92	-0.79	-0.71
Venezuela	-0.84	-1	-1.58	-1.14
Haiti	-0.68	-1.49	-1.37	-1.18

Table A2. Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Question Wording or explanation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Dependent variable						
Protest	“In the last 12 months, have you participated in a demonstration or protest march?” Yes (1); No (0).	105,600	.103	.304	0	1
Independent Variables						
Community Engagement	<p>“Now, changing the subject. In the last 12 months have you tried to help to solve a problem in your community or in your neighborhood? Please, tell me if you did it at least once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year or never in the last 12 months.” This was repeated for religious organization, parents’ association, community improvement organization, an association of professionals, or a political party. 4-point scale; higher values = more participation.</p> <p>Answers to these questions were then converted into an index.</p>	116,526	19.628	16.661	0	100
External Efficacy	“Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?” 100-point scale; higher values = more efficacy.	111,596	39.365	32.099	0	100
System Support Index	<p>“I am going to ask you a series of questions. I am going to ask that you use the numbers provided in the ladder to answer.</p> <p>1. To what extent do you think the courts in</p>	113,147	52.234	22.548	0	100

(country) guarantee a fair trial?
 2. To what extent do you respect the political institutions of (country)?
 3. To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of (country)?
 4. To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of (country)?
 5. To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of (country)?"
 7-point scale; higher values = more positive evaluation of institutions.

Answers to these questions were then converted into an index.

Personal Economic Situation	"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?" 100-point scale; higher values = good.	115949	49.441	20.987	0	100
National Economic Situation	"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?" 100-point scale; higher values = good.	115,512	42.121	23.367	0	100
Satisfaction with Public Services	"And thinking about this city/area where you live, are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the condition of the streets, roads, and highways?" Repeated for public health services and schools. 100-point scale; higher	34,685	50.194	19.471	0	100

	values = more satisfied.					
Interest in Politics	How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none? 100-point scale; higher values = more interest.	115,418	35.277	.772	0	100
Shared Information Via Social Network	And in the last twelve months, have you read or shared political information through any social network website such as Twitter or Facebook or Orkut? Coded as 1 if “yes”, 0 if “no.”	38,126	.111	.327	0	1
Perception of Corruption	Taking into account your own experience or what you have heard, corruption among public officials is very common, common, uncommon or very uncommon? 100-point scale; higher values = higher perception of corruption.	109,775	72.385	28.472	0	100
Age	Respondents’ age in years.	116,042	39.193	15.803	16	99
Wealth Quintile	A weighted index that measures wealth based on the possession of certain household goods such as televisions, refrigerators, conventional and cellular telephones, vehicles, washing machines, microwave ovens, indoor plumbing, indoor bathrooms and computers.	116,275	2.933	1.422	1	5
Interpersonal trust	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...? 100 point scale; higher values = more trustworthy.	114,039	58.244	30.029	0	100
Presidential approval	Speaking in general of the current administration, how would you rate the job	113,353	54.952	24.653	0	100

	performance of President [NAME]? 100 point scale; higher values = more favorable.					
Education	Level of formal education. 4-point scale; 0=None, 1=Primary, 2=Secondary, 3=Superior	116,656	1.817	0.772	0	3
Female	1 if female, 0 if male.	116,655	0.501	0.500	0	1

Table A3. Community Engagement and Protest: Instrumental Variables Regression

VARIABLES	Model 1 IVReg (2SLS)
	<i>Second stage (DV: Protest)</i>
Community Participation	.0007*** (.0001)
Female	-.024*** (.002)
Age	-.0004*** (.00006)
Interest in Politics	.001*** (.00003)
Education	.027*** (.001)
Wealth	-.0002 (.0007)
Internal efficacy	-.00007** (.00003)
Constant	.030*** (.005)
	<i>First stage (DV: Community Participation)</i>
Church Attendance	.200*** (.001)
Female	.423*** (.003)
Age	.013*** (.003)
Interest in Politics	.072*** (.002)
Education	-.027 (.072)
Wealth	.015 (.037)
Internal efficacy	.018*** (.002)
Constant	5.374*** (.001)
Cragg-Donald Wald F- statistic	19557.97
Number of Observations	96,546

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
 Two-tailed tests

Church attendance was chosen as the instrument—a variable that strongly correlates with community participation, but is unassociated with protest participation. Indeed, the Cragg-Donald Wald F-statistic indicates that this is a *very* strong instrument. The assumption I then make in the analysis above is that church attendance does not influence protest participation through any pathway other than community engagement. The results for community engagement remain strong, and comparable to those presented in the body of the paper.

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