

Do Latin Americans Support Democracy?

Electoral democracy as practiced in the Western Hemisphere and Europe has two fundamental principles: rule by the people and constitutional restraint on government power. In order to assess whether Latin Americans' political culture is amenable to democracy as a system of government, we need to investigate their endorsement of these principles. In this chapter, we explore the first principle, rule by the people, by investigating democratic norms in Latin America. Chapter 3 examines the second principle, support for limits on governmental power.

As we have noted, electoral democracy as a system of government came recently to many countries in the region. Given this, we wonder how deeply implanted have become such democratic norms as believing that all citizens should have the opportunity to take part in the political system. How strongly do Latin Americans support the idea of democracy as such? How dedicated are they to the implications of citizens' political activity? That is, to what extent do Latin Americans support the cornerstone of democracy—basic political participation rights for all citizens, including for critics of the system?¹ This chapter provides answers to these questions. Before examining democratic norms, we will briefly discuss what we mean by the term *democracy*.

WHAT MODEL OF DEMOCRACY?

The powerful label of *democracy* has been claimed by many types of regimes. The word's Greek roots *demos* and *kratein* literally mean "rule by the people," so a true democracy should embrace this principle. We describe several models of democracy that have functioned in Latin American nations and refer to some of them in later chapters.

- The Western model of representative, *electoral-constitutional democracy*, has its origins in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Liberalism. (See note 47 in Chapter 1 for further explanation.) It emphasizes not only citizen participation in rule but also representative government and constitutional restrictions on the power of majorities, government in general, and elected and

appointed executives. This is the style of democracy that evolved from the American Revolution and U.S. Constitution; all Latin American nations implemented a version of it as they developed into democracies. Liberal democracy focuses on procedures and institutional structures designed to protect citizens' fundamental right to political participation, or taking part in rule. It largely ignores policy outcomes or questions of distributive justice among citizens. All 18 countries in our study have adopted a version of this system (although some have moved away from it). Because this model predominates across the region, we address most of our analysis of democratic norms to attitudes related to constitutional electoral democracy. (This model of democracy is often derided as "democracy lite" for denying citizens meaningful participation outside of elections, domination by unresponsive elites and powerful interests, perpetuation of inequality, and failure to address needs of the majority.)

- *Social democracy* melds Liberal democratic procedures (above) with some degree of socialist economics by using public regulation and ownership of production to promote economic justice (greater equality) among citizens. It may endorse redistribution of income in order to empower the mass public and level the political playing field, otherwise tilted by economic inequality.

- *Participatory democracy* seeks to remove the separation of citizens from representative officials and bureaucratic specialists by promoting direct citizen involvement in governing, formulating policy, and making decisions. Participatory democracy often involves providing for direct citizen participation in some decisions of lower level governmental institutions and may include opportunities for consultation with citizens on national-level policy.

- *Populist democracy* bypasses procedural and legal restraints on the charismatic leader who is linked directly to citizens so that he or she can implement "the people's will." Populist regimes may have either a left-wing and right-wing orientation. (Populism's tendency to override separation of powers and executive restraint can lend itself to a majority's abuse of minority rights.)

- *Democratic socialism* is a political-economic system that emphasizes public ownership of means of production so as to use captured profits to promote economic justice. This form of socialism affords citizens participation rights and protects them. (Socialism may instead follow a highly authoritarian governance principle such as vanguard party rule on behalf of—but with little effective participation by—citizens.)

Some Latin American political systems embody aspects of another model in addition to electoral-constitutional democracy. Social democracy, in varying degrees of implementation, is fairly widespread across Latin America, including cases as different as Costa Rica and Argentina. There have been several populist governments: Argentina's Juan Perón led a rightist populist regime, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez a leftist one. Cuba, not included in our study, followed the vanguard rule model of democratic socialism, rendering it "democratic" only with respect to distribution of economic costs and benefits. The governments of Nicaragua and El Salvador utilize direct democracy mechanisms at the local

and some higher levels of policy making. Blends of electoral-constitutional, participatory, populist forms of democracy were being attempted in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador as we wrote this.

Although we see the presence of multiple models, Liberalism guided Latin American political and economic traditions from Independence onward. The region's constitutions embraced Liberalism's doctrines and structures—even under authoritarian regimes. When democratization occurred, the underlying Liberal principles (guarantees of participation rights, separation of powers, and checks on government power) emerged to inform the governmental design of most countries.

HISTORICAL-CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

Latin America's centuries of undemocratic governance constrained citizen participation. The institutionalist view (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of institutionalist and culturist approaches) suggests that this historical context would have left Latin Americans with little opportunity to develop democratic norms. Rather, their long experience with authoritarian governance would have engendered cultural norms that predisposed them to authoritarianism, that is, deference to established authority and preference for strong leaders and against citizen political participation.

After the 1970s, the predominant view among political scientists shifted to a culturist one that saw the accumulated weight of popular authoritarian values, such as a preference for a strong, unelected leader, locking Latin America into perpetual authoritarianism. On the other hand, more nuanced modernization theorists, though also culturists, advanced the possibility of evolution in political culture. Rather than entrenched views forming a lock, they contended that a change in political values would accompany economic development. Their view highlighted an expanded middle class as a source of democratic norms, sufficient to overcome the alleged grip of the authoritarian poor on the nature of the system.² Such democratic norms include a preference for democracy as the best form of government and belief in the right of all citizens to political participation, even for critics of the system.

In fact, most Latin American countries replaced their autocratic governments with electoral democracies during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Economic modernization and resulting resource redistribution had weakened some elites' ability to monopolize rule.³ However, some countries democratized sooner than modernization and resource redistribution theories predicted.⁴ A variety of other forces, unforeseen by theories,⁵ contributed to the adoption of democracy. Among these were the implosion of a military regime (as in Argentina), crisis-driven popular uprisings that caused revolutions (as in Nicaragua), negotiated transitions (as in Venezuela in 1959),⁶ elites renegotiating access to power (for example, in Colombia's National Front transition),⁷ and pressure by powerful external actors (in El Salvador and

Guatemala).⁸ These forces, often in combination, promoted democratization in Latin America independent of cultural change.

The institutionalist view of the formation of political culture suggests that electoral democracy, having been established through whatever processes, would begin to generate democratic attitudes among citizens or reinforce such attitudes adopted from and disseminated by other countries and actors. This idea of political culture emphasizes adaptation to the changed political context of having new freedoms to compete for office in elections, to associate, organize, and express political views. That is, democratic systems should produce adaptive democratic popular norms. In this chapter, we seek evidence of the adaptation to formal democracy in the region. We hone in on the ways and the strength with which Latin Americans embraced democracy in 2010.

Surveying Latin Americans' Commitment to Democracy: Three Basic Democratic Norms

Eight questions from the LAPOP AmericasBarometer surveys, displayed in Table 2.1, allow us to evaluate the degree of commitment to three basic democratic values: (1) citizens' endorsement that "democracy" is the best system of government—question 1; (2) support for citizen political participation rights—questions 2–4; and (3) support for what may be the most stringent test of democratic rights—tolerance of participation by those who criticize the political system—questions 5–8.

Before burrowing into the analysis, we want to clarify some ideas and terminology. The concept of "democracy" stands at the center of our interest. Democracy, as discussed above, refers to a style of government of a political system. In democracy, power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or indirectly through elected representatives. This chapter focuses on Latin Americans' views about democracy and democratic political systems. We use survey research to access these views. Survey research, in our case, uses individual *interviews* to measure opinions and attitudes through specific questions such as "Do you agree that democracy is always the best form of government?" or "Do you believe a system's critics should have the right to run for office?"

A survey question, or *item*, generates an answer that represents the opinion of each person, or *respondent*, interviewed. Respondents' replies are then systematically collected and analyzed to detect patterns about the attitudes of those surveyed. Survey research, based on a random sample of a population, tells us about the shared ideas and understandings in the population represented by the sample.

Opinions are generally considered transitory and focused on a narrow thing, while *attitudes* are more stable and general. For example, an evaluation of a president's performance is an opinion. Preference for democracy is an attitude. When many people share similar attitudes, we call them *norms*. Norms (we may interchangeably call them *values*) reflect common expectations and understandings about reality and behavior. Political culture consists of the grand patterns of persistent norms or values.

The eight items in Table 2.1 raise issues about the structure and nature of democratic attitudes and norms in Latin America. We are interested in the structure of attitudes toward democracy, that is, their makeup and underlying components, and their level, that is, how strongly people hold them. So, we first wish to know if each item simply represents an individual attitude separate from all the others. Or do the items instead cohere to produce a single grand democratic norm that pulls all the attitudes on the subject together? Or, a third possibility, do the items form distinctive clusters of similar attitudes indicating several democratic norms?

Social scientists have discovered that multiple survey items on the same general subject, when measured with questions such as these, often reveal patterns of association—an underlying dimensional structure. In essence, some items clump together, or correlate with one other, suggesting that each individual item captures a part of a shared whole, that in our case we may understand as a norm. We wanted to know whether such patterns exist within the answers Latin Americans give to these eight questions about democratic attitudes. To find out, we employed a statistical technique, widely used in such analyses, called *factor analysis*. This allows us to map the possible relationships among these eight attitudes.⁹

This factor analysis, performed on the items for all respondents in the 18 country surveys, produces three distinct factors or dimensions (see online Supplements A.1 and A.2 for factor analysis results at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e>). The first question, expressing preference for democracy as the best system of government, stands alone as one dimension of democratic norms. The three items asking about support for participation rights define a second dimension, and the four items about tolerance for those who criticize the regime yet a third dimension. The questions and the three dimensions are shown in Table 2.1.

So we have discovered that, rather than eight separate attitudes, Latin Americans' orientations toward democracy actually group together into three clusters (dimensions) of democratic norms. Since these norms all link in some way to how people perceive and relate to the democratic political system, we explore how each connects to the others. Figure 2.1 presents a "map" illustrating the relationship among these democratic norms. Each norm is represented as an oval with the numbers along the connecting lines showing the strength of correlation among the norms. The numbers beside each line are correlation coefficients that can range from zero (indicating no relationship) to 1.0 (indicating a perfect association between two attitudinal dimensions).

The coefficients demonstrate that the three norms are related, though distinct. (If they were effectively identical, the three coefficients would each approach a value of 1.0. If each were totally separate and unconnected, the coefficients would be zero.) Preference for democracy is weakly related to tolerance of dissenters' rights, with a coefficient of .20. This means that by knowing the values of Latin Americans' expressed preference for democracy, we can predict about 4% of their tolerance levels.¹⁰ A larger coefficient, .28, between

TABLE 2.1 AmericasBarometer Questions on Support for Democracy and Citizen Participation Rights

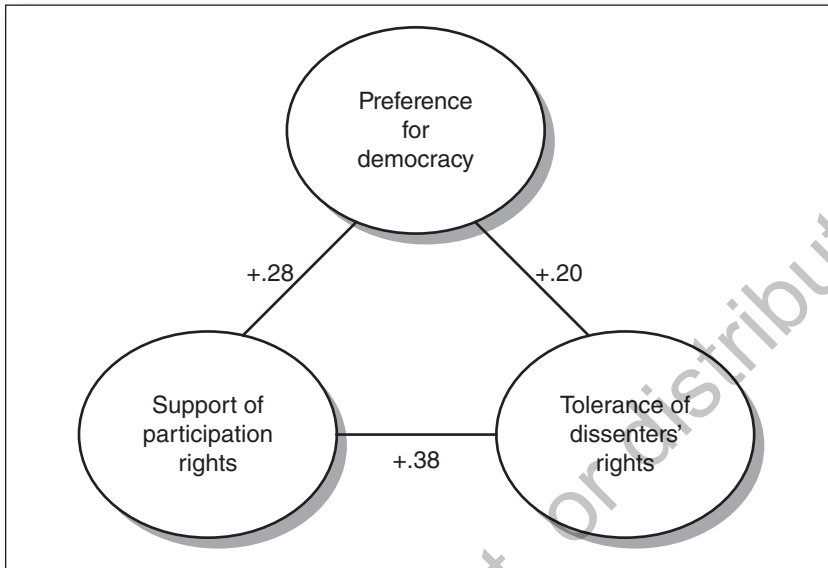
<p>Preference for democracy as a system of government:</p> <p>1. <i>Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? 1(Completely disagree) . . . 7 (Completely agree).</i></p>
<p>Support for basic participation rights:</p> <p><i>I am going to read you a list of some actions people can take to achieve their political goals and objectives. On a scale of 1 (strongly disapprove) to 10 (strongly approve), how strongly would you approve or disapprove of people taking the following actions:</i></p> <p>2. <i>Of people participating in legal demonstrations?</i> 3. <i>Of people participating in an organization or group to try to solve community problems?</i> 4. <i>Of people working for campaigns for a political party or candidate?</i></p>
<p>Political tolerance (support for dissenters' participation rights):</p> <p><i>There are people who only say bad things about [this country's] form of government, not just the incumbent government but the system of government. On a scale of 1 (strongly disapprove) to 10 (strongly approve), how strongly do you disapprove or approve of the following?</i></p> <p>5. <i>Of such people's right to vote?</i> 6. <i>That such people should be allowed to conduct peaceful demonstrations in order to express their views?</i> 7. <i>Of such people being permitted to run for public office?</i> 8. <i>Of such people appearing on television to make speeches?</i></p>

Source: LAPOP AmericasBarometer, 2010 surveys; www.LapopSurveys.org.

preference for democracy as a system of government and support for basic participation rights, indicates that by knowing either of these, one can predict almost 8% of the value of the other. The strongest association is between support for participation rights and tolerance, with a coefficient of .38; these two democratic norms explain 14% of each other's variation. Each norm expresses a basic orientation toward democracy that is positively associated with the others, but distinct. Based on our measurement, Latin Americans have a loosely and positively interrelated set of prodemocracy norms.

Now that we know the structure of democratic norms in Latin America, we turn to how strongly they are held. We address this by examining support for each norm across the region and by country. For simplicity of presentation and analysis, we have converted each norm into an index ranging from 0 to

FIGURE 2.1 A Map of Democratic Norms, Latin America 2010



Source: Authors' analysis of AmericasBarometer 2010 surveys, www.LapopSurveys.org.

100, with 100 representing the highest possible degree of democratic support, shown in Figure 2.2.

LATIN AMERICANS' SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC NORMS

As we stated above, we are interested in how deeply implanted democratic norms are in Latin America. Thus, we analyze the level of support for each democratic norm in all 18 countries. This paints pictures of where each norm is stronger and weaker. The AmericasBarometer data also allow us to make comparisons to the United States and Canada, the two oldest democracies in the Western Hemisphere, where one might reasonably assume these norms would be strong.

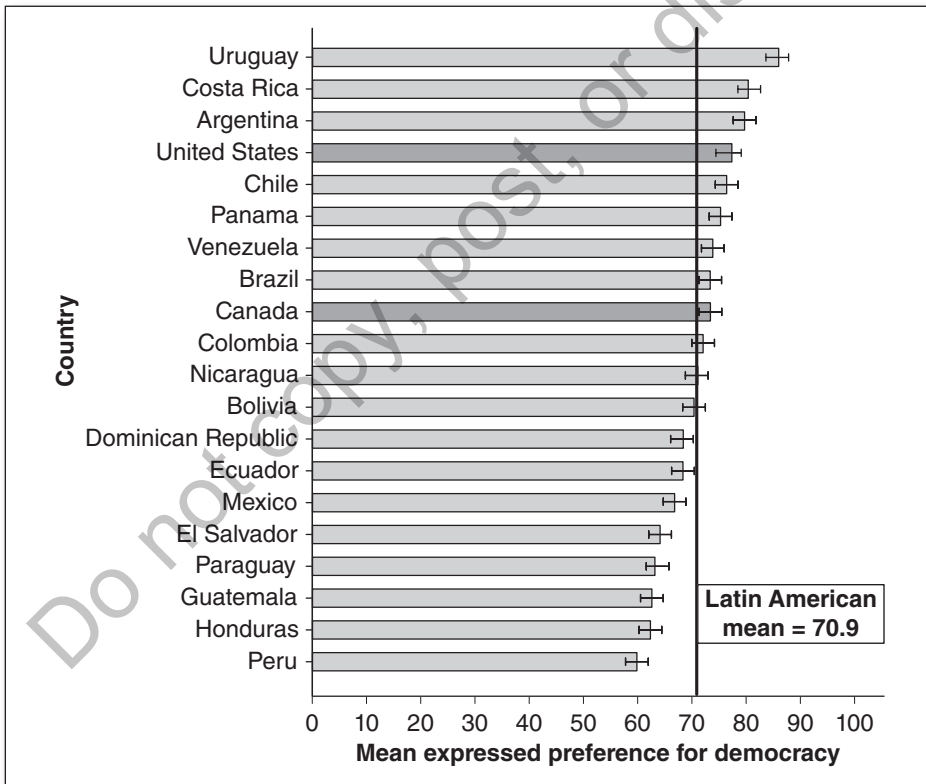
Preference for Democracy: Higher in Uruguay Than in the United States

Winston Churchill famously said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried. By this, he both celebrated democracy and acknowledged its frustrations. In countries with more recent histories of other forms of government, citizens may not have come to believe democracy is an improvement. And in countries with longer democratic experience, its creakiness may have disheartened citizens. Figure 2.2 presents

national levels of preference for democracy as the best form of government. If one values support for democracy, this graph brings good news. The regional mean on the 0 to 100 scale is 70.9. Latin Americans, as well as U.S. and Canadian citizens, weigh in heavily in favor of democracy as the best type of government, with country scores ranging from 60 (Peru) to 86 (Uruguay).¹¹

We see that Latin Americans average only 6 points behind the United States and three behind Canada in preference for democratic government. The citizens of three Latin American countries—Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Argentina—express more approval of electoral democracy than either U.S. citizens or Canadians. Uruguayans show statistically significantly higher support for democracy as the best form of government than do U.S. citizens. (See

FIGURE 2.2 Expressed Preference for Democracy by Country



Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 surveys, www.LapopSurveys.org.

Note: Cases weighted for equal size per country.

Error bars: 99% CI.

the note in Box 2.1 on interpreting statistical findings.) Canadians' average of 74 is statistically similar to those of Chileans, Panamanians, Venezuelans, Brazilians, Colombians, Nicaraguans, and Bolivians. The similarities among most Latin American countries and the United States and Canada suggest that, once Latin American countries adopted democratic rules of the game, their citizens embraced the idea that democracy is the best form of government in relatively short order. If the institutionalist view holds true, citizens' norms adapted quickly. It also may mean that citizens in nondemocratic countries saw democracy as the best option even before it came.

BOX 2.1 A Note on Interpreting Statistical Findings—Survey Research

In evaluating survey data throughout the book, we take into account **statistical significance**, which indicates the probable accuracy of findings from a survey based on a sample of a larger population. We also present the **confidence interval (CI)**, represented by the small bracket (or error bar) across the end of each bar in the graph, which gives the range of variation above or below the observed scale mean within which the actual value for the population should fall. These recognize that samples may diverge from what one would find if able to query the entire population. All surveys should note sample size, sample methodology, statistical significance, and confidence interval. (Extensive details about sample designs may be found at www.LapopSurveys.org.) Observations whose error bars overlap each other are not statistically different from one another.

- For example, in Figure 2.2, the confidence interval for the mean of U.S. citizens overlaps those for Costa Ricans, Argentines, Chileans, Panamanians, and Venezuelans. The U.S. mean is, however, significantly lower than that of Uruguay.
- A note below each graph indicates the standard of statistical probability for the analysis in the graph. A 95% confidence interval (CI) means that the real value for the population will fall within the error bracket 19 times out of 20; a 99% confidence interval indicates likely accuracy within the bracketed range of 99 times out of 100. The survey research industry standard is a 95% confidence interval. Our very large samples, however, usually permit the more accurate 99% standard when comparing many nations.

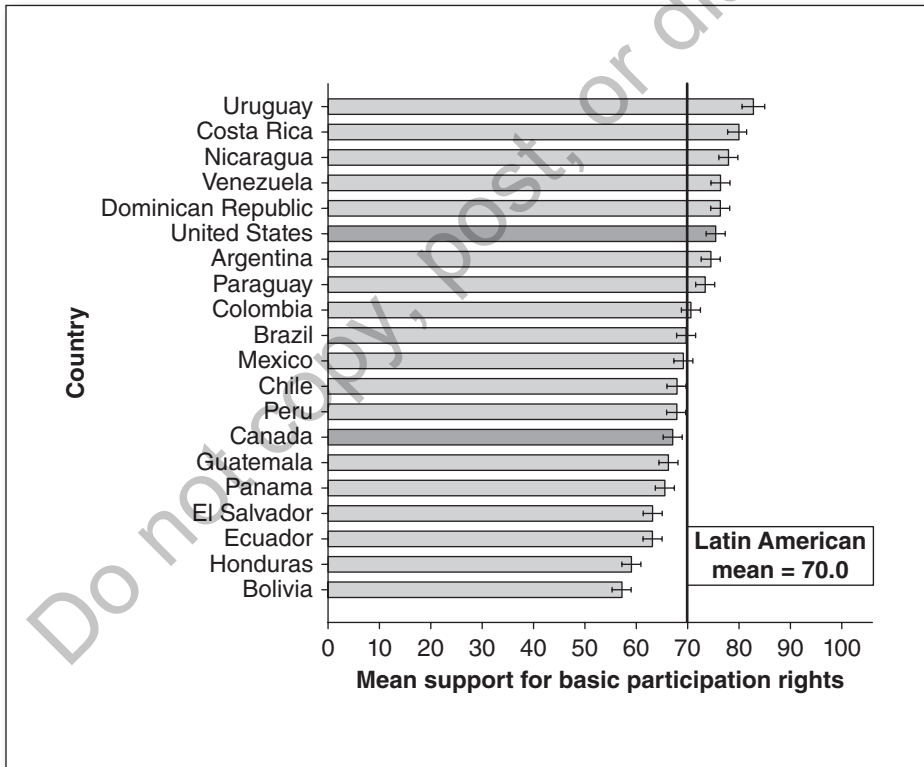
Support for Basic Participation Rights

The second democratic norm addresses support for the essential democratic right to take part in politics. One cannot believe in democracy and reject citizens' rights to vote, run for office, organize, and make demands to

officials. These rights describe essential elements of any democracy. Figure 2.3, like Figure 2.2, provides a national breakdown on a 0 to 100 index representing support for participation rights. Once again, we find Latin Americans robustly take a prodemocratic position. The mean score for support for participation rights is roughly the same as for preference for democracy, at 70.

Support for these rights is highest in Uruguay, 83, followed by Costa Rica at 80 (a statistical tie). These two nations are among those in Latin America that have enjoyed the longest experience with electoral democracy, so we are not particularly surprised to see such scores there. Both register significantly higher than the average for U.S. citizens at 75.

FIGURE 2.3 Support for Basic Participation Rights by Country



Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 surveys, www.LapopSurveys.org.

Note: Cases weighted for equal size per country.

Error bars: 99% CI.

Intriguingly, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans express very high support for participation rights statistically tied with U.S. citizens. Nicaragua has a relatively short experience with formal democracy, and, indeed, system-level democracy is presently eroding.¹² In Venezuela, the behavior of the late populist President Hugo Chávez (1999–2013) undermined formal democratic rules of the game in order to concentrate great executive power in his hands, which then passed to his successor Nicolás Maduro. Although, under Chávez, Venezuela's system-level democracy eroded, his Bolivarian movement trumpeted citizen participation rights. It also involved many citizens in decision making and implementation who had been effectively excluded from influence under the old party system. Nicaragua's successful revolution of 1979 to 1990 likewise heavily emphasized establishing and increasing citizens' participation rights. In these ways, the two countries promoted democratic participation values, perhaps creating a democratic culture beyond short-term institutional experience. Thus, we are not surprised by the high level of support for participation rights in either of these countries.

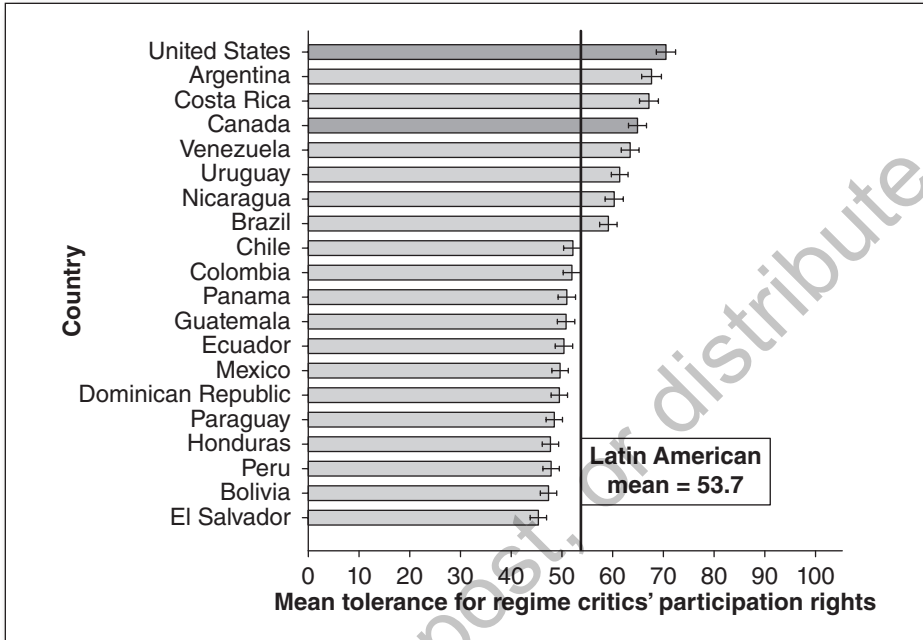
In Bolivia and Honduras, support for basic participation rights is lowest. Evidence suggests that the 2009 coup in Honduras, which happened not long before this survey was done, affected attitudes there.¹³ As we move forward, we will watch for signs that countries like Honduras and Bolivia reveal a pattern of consistently low democratic norms. If detected, such a pattern might indicate a potential weakness in those countries' prospects for democracy to consolidate and survive.

Tolerance of Regime Critics' Participation: Latin Americans' Least Supported Democratic Norm

The third democratic norm, tolerance for political participation by those critical of the regime, receives less support in Latin America than the norms already examined. The issue is whether critics of the political system should be allowed to participate. By recognizing this right, a citizen endorses protecting the political participation of minorities, dissenters, and government opponents from oppression by majorities and governments. The data in Figure 2.4 present a Latin American mean of 53.7. In seven of our 18 countries, the national mean falls below the scale midpoint of 50. From the "glass is half empty" perspective (and considering statistical significance), in 28% of the countries, the majority attitude toward political participation rights by system critics resides in the intolerant end of the scale. From the "glass is half full" view, on the other hand, in 44% of the countries, the mean tolerance score falls on the tolerant side. The remaining 28% has national means too close to the tolerance scale midpoint to say one way or the other.

The averages for the countries with the strongest tolerance for regime critics, Argentina and Costa Rica at 67 and 66 respectively, fall between those for the United States (71) and Canada (64). Political tolerance in the United States is statistically tied with Argentina and Costa Rica but is higher than all the

FIGURE 2.4 Tolerance for Regime Critics' Participation Rights by Country



Source: AmericasBarometer 2010 surveys, www.LapppSurveys.org.

Note: Cases weighted for equal size per country.

Error bars: 99% CI.

countries surveyed including Canada. Here we encounter an important difference from the previously examined democratic norms—U.S. citizens' tolerance exceeds the Latin American average by a much wider margin than for preference for democracy and support for basic participation rights (compare Figures 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4). This suggests that political tolerance may be the slowest democratic norm to develop. It is strong in the United States and Canada where the forms and practice of constitutional democracy and open political competition have been in place for 100 to 200 years longer than in most of Latin America.

The country with the lowest tolerance score is El Salvador, with Hondurans, Peruvians, Bolivians, Paraguayans, Mexicans, and Dominicans statistically tied just slightly above. The Honduran coup of 2009 may have created an environment hostile to regime critics' rights (see the case study of the Honduran coup in Chapter 3). Salvadorans and Bolivians have ranked among the least democratically inclined and the most authoritarian

in the hemisphere in earlier AmericasBarometer surveys, so national historical traits may condition these norms. This could indicate either cultural persistence rather than cultural adaptation or slow adaptation from a very low starting point. In addition to low tolerance, Peruvians also expressed the lowest preference for democracy among all Latin Americans (see Figure 2.2) and below average support for participation rights (see Figure 2.3). Peru's recent experience of populist-oriented unconstitutional rule by President Alberto Fujimori (1992–2000) may have undercut Peruvians' democratic norms.

To sum up, we have identified three major democratic norms, examined their levels across Latin America, and compared them to the United States and Canada. Latin Americans generally give strong support both for democracy as the best form of government and for basic political participation rights. Their positions on these norms differ little from those of U.S. and Canadian citizens. Latin Americans are, however, more evenly divided over tolerating dissent, and on this lag further behind their neighbors at the northern end of the hemisphere. We have also found broad ranges in the averages of these three democratic norms among Latin American countries—variations of roughly 25 out of 100 scale points on each. We noticed some of the same countries repeatedly clustered near the top or bottom. Latin America is not, therefore, homogeneously prodemocratic nor does it have a uniform political culture. As we move forward in the book, we will watch for more such patterns. These varied levels of democratic norms among the countries raise the very important question of what accounts for these differences. We turn to the sources of democratic attitudes in the next section.

SOURCES OF DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES

Our next step is to identify the sources of these democratic norms, which comprise a significant aspect of political culture. We seek to discover what factors influence how strongly Latin Americans hold their democratic norms. The statistical technique that enables us to do this, widely used in the social sciences, is multiple regression analysis (see Box 2.2 for an explanation of how to understand the results of this type of analysis). Because the presentation of multiple regression models and the explanation of them is simultaneously complex and boring, we summarize our findings about what “contributes to” or “accounts for” each of the democracy norms and refer those who seek fuller details to the online supplements found at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e>. In the sections below, we examine two types of explanations for why people have certain views about democracy. Individual-level (micro) variables, that is, traits of individuals (their personal characteristics, experiences, and other attitudes) as well as political-system (macro) characteristics of countries (such as economic development levels, public policies, and the nature of the political system) may shape democratic norms.

BOX 2.2 A Note on Interpreting Statistical Findings—Multiple Regression Results

Multiple regression analysis takes a single **dependent variable** (the characteristic of interest, such as support for democracy) and determines how a set of possible explanatory **independent variables** shapes it. The technique “models” the dependent variable on other variables by identifying these explanatory variables’ separate, independent contributions to the dependent variable. Many key multiple regression results are not shown in this printed volume to conserve space, but are available in the online supplement to this volume at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e>. These supplementary results contain further explanatory notes to facilitate their interpretation.

We include several categories of micro level variables, beginning with four that address a person’s position within the society: sex, age, education, and wealth.¹⁴ Because many studies have found that how interested a person is in politics (political interest), a person’s general level of trust in others (interpersonal trust), and a person’s evaluation of the political system affect other political attitudes and behaviors, we include a number of such attitudes that bear on a person’s orientation toward the political system. Finally, we have four measures to tap citizen evaluations: satisfaction with the way democracy works in one’s country, and assessments of the basic competence of the government, of presidential performance, and of the government’s economic performance. The last item may have particular resonance because Latin America, like most of the world, experienced a serious economic crisis in 2008–2009. (See Appendix 2.1 for the phrasing of the questions employed on each of these points.)

We utilize a number of macro or social system level variables that address the economy, the political system, public policies, and social structure. We capture overall economic prosperity with the Human Development Index (HDI) a year prior to the survey¹⁵ and by the percentage unemployed. Prosperity under democracy might encourage greater support of democratic norms. We have two measures of characteristics of the political system: level of democracy, or how thoroughly aspects of democracy are embedded in the system, employing a widely used Freedom House measure;¹⁶ and the age of democracy, or the number of years from the establishment of electoral democracy until 2010 (see Appendix 1.1). The institutionalist interpretation of political culture suggests that the nature of the system and its duration affect the values that citizens hold. We consider measures of public policy concerning education and health, namely education and health expenditures as percentages of gross domestic product (GDP). Both express a society’s effort in developing its human capital.¹⁷ Higher expenditures by governments for these

endeavors should enhance citizens' satisfaction with their democratic political regime. Finally, we introduce five measures related to the countries' social structure: how urban, how indigenous,¹⁸ and how fractionalized by language, ethnicity, and religion.¹⁹ The percentage of the population living in urban areas has been repeatedly shown to matter for political processes. Urbanites, for example, have more exposure to national government agencies and activities than do small town and rural dwellers and have been found to be more critical of them. Some countries in our study have large indigenous populations (for example, Guatemala) and many have social cleavages based on language, ethnicity, and religion (for example, Brazil). These may create fault lines, marginalization, and discrimination in political systems (see Chapters 7 and 8). We want to see which, if any, of these variables influence democratic norms.

Preference for Democracy: Age, Education, and Experience With Democracy Increase Support

The three individual variables that most increase the preference for democracy are age, schooling, and satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country (see online Supplement B at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e> for full details). The fact that satisfaction with democracy enhances preference for it makes sense on its face (if one is happy with how democracy is working out, it seems logical to prefer it as the best system). The relationship with age is less straightforward. One could argue that, given the youth of democracy in most of Latin America, older people's experience with other types of regimes may propel them to a stronger preference for democracy, or that their longer life experience reveals the benefits of a democratic system. On the other hand, the institutionalist theory suggests that growing up under a democratic regime shapes adaptive democratic norms, in which case younger citizens might have been expected to show a stronger preference for democracy than their elders. If longer experience with democracy deepens the strength of democratic norms, assuming these countries maintain their democratic systems, then support for democracy as the best form of government should grow over time. For example, Costa Rican democracy was 57 years old in 2010; its citizens expressed the second highest preference for democracy in the region (Figure 2.2). In contrast, citizens of Latin America's two youngest democracies, Peru and Honduras, expressed relatively low preference for democracy. In countries with longer experience with democracy, older citizens have had more time to acculturate to democratic preference.

The impact of education on preference for democracy may turn on the opportunity of those with more education to learn democratic values and on their enhanced abilities to compare democracy against other types of government. In countries with the least educated citizens, such as Guatemala and Honduras, preference for democracy is low (Figure 2.2).

We find that being female and being satisfied with government economic performance have the strongest associations with a lower preference for democracy. The explanation for the former may lie in female gender roles. Although

gender roles are changing (we focus on them in Chapter 7), the residue of ideas about the public sphere being a male arena may depress women's enthusiasm for democracy relative to men's. We point out that two of the countries with highest preference for democracy, Argentina and Costa Rica, have each had female presidents, cracking the glass ceiling and perhaps with it traditional gender roles, at least to some degree. Those more satisfied with their government's economic performance place less value on a democratic form of government.

Among our nonfindings (things we expected might matter but did not), we especially note that citizens' perceptions of their personal economic situations, as well as the national economic situation, did not affect their preference for democracy. Thus, preference for democracy may endure even when people think the economy is doing poorly (although satisfaction with the government's economic management—a different opinion—does lower it).

Of the system level variables, health expenditure as a percentage of GDP stands as the most influential national trait for expressed preference for democracy. Years of democracy is the next most important variable (see online Supplement C at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e> for full results). It seems unlikely that health spending as such would increase preference for democracy; it is more likely that the relationship is reciprocal. That is, democracies tend to spend more on social services, which in turn generates positive evaluations and preference for democracy.²⁰ We note that Peru spends the lowest percentage of its GDP on health, a level more than doubled by Argentina; Peruvians are low on preferring democracy, Argentines high. One could view the positive association between democratic duration and democracy preference as an endorsement of the benefits of living in a democracy, such as greater investment in human capital: the longer the experience, the greater the preference. This, unlike the relationship with respondent age, bolsters the institutionalist argument that cultural norms accommodate to regime conditions. Because the strength of democracy as measured by Freedom House also contributes to citizens' preference for democracy, it appears that democracy breeds support for itself.

Again, we take notice of our nonfindings. National-level ethnic, language, and religious cleavages and the percentage of indigenous population exert little influence on preference for democracy. Another way to state this is that knowing the level of ethnic and religious differentiation of Latin American countries allows us to predict virtually nothing about their citizens' preferences for democracy. Although a nonfinding in the sense of no relationship, this is very important because it suggests that Latin America faces little risk of such cleavages undermining preference for democracy as the best form of government.

Support for Participation Rights: Education and Age of Democracy Have Greatest Effect

Four individual factors most strongly enhance support for citizens' rights to take part in politics: interest in politics, education, standard of living, and trusting in others (see online Supplement B at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e>). Other factors detract from support for participation rights. Being a

woman somewhat lessens support for this democratic norm, as it did for preference for democracy. We will see additional sex differences as we move forward and will consider how and why they arise in Chapter 7. Those who see presidential incompetence and eroding economic circumstances, whether national or familial, also uphold participation rights less.

At the national system level (online Supplement C at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e>), the country's age of democracy contributes more than any other variable to support for basic participation rights. For example, Honduras and Ecuador are young democracies (Appendix 1.1) whose citizens support participation rights considerably less than citizens of much older democracies such as the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Costa Rica. Other positive contributors are health expenditure and percentage of urban population.

Three national characteristics associate with lower support: education spending as a percentage of GDP, unemployment, and Freedom House democracy scores. While education spending and the democracy scores appear to run counter to what one might expect, we note that richer countries such as Argentina and Chile spend less of their budgets on education (the simple correlation $r = -.24$) because more of their citizens attend private schools²¹ and because better-educated populations generate higher levels of economic activity. Richer countries tend also to have better educated populations than poorer ones ($r = .13$) and be more democratic at the system level ($r = .23$). Support for democracy rights relates positively to individual educational attainment ($r = .09$). It is, therefore, not surprising that, controlling for other influences, democratic norms are lower in Latin American countries with higher education spending as a portion of their budgets because these tend to be poorer nations and have citizens with lower educational attainment.

The two final macro variables with a negative impact speak to issues of national social cleavages. The more indigenous people in a country and the higher the ethnicity fractionalization index (the greater the ethnic division within the country), the less people support democratic participation rights. This finding stands in contrast to expressed support for democracy, which showed neither of these social cleavage effects. Apparently, greater ethnic division fails to undermine support for the ideal of democratic governance, but residents of more ethnically divided countries and those with many indigenous people²² express greater reluctance to support participation rights. Support may shrink in countries where ethnic groups compete with each other for political influence. (We explore political culture norms of ethnic groups in more detail in Chapter 7.) Results by countries (Figure 2.3) elucidate these findings. Guatemala, Bolivia, and Panama—countries with large indigenous populations (34%, 19%, and 8% respectively; see Appendix 7.1)—have citizenries less supportive of participation rights. Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Panama have high ethnic fractionalization, which incorporates not only the size of the indigenous population but also Afro-Latin Americans and any other large ethnic groups (see Appendix 7.1). All, except for Colombia, demonstrate low support for participation rights.

Political Tolerance: Divisions by Gender, Political Interest, and Social Spending

Of the individual factors, sex, education, political interest, and dissatisfaction with presidential performance exert the greatest influence on tolerance of critics of the political regime. Men, those with more education and higher levels of political interest, are more politically tolerant (see online Supplement B at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e>); all may be more attuned to the importance of this hardest democratic norm. Those dissatisfied with the performance of the president report much less tolerance of regime critics, an intriguing relationship. To simultaneously criticize the president and be intolerant of participation by others critical of the system seems inconsistent. Perhaps people see their own negative views as “reasonable” but critiques offered by others as “destructive.” In fact, holding at least apparently contradictory opinions is not unusual. For example, in the United States, public opinion polls regularly show that most people want lower taxes and more benefits and services.

At the macro level, the strongest contributor to tolerance is national health expenditure as a percentage of GDP (see online Supplement C at <http://study.sagepub.com/booth1e>). For example, Costa Rica and Argentina rank high on health expenditure, a measure of overall economic development, and are high tolerance countries. Peru is the anchor case for low health spending and low tolerance. This pattern mirrors our findings about preference for democracy and support for participation rights. The age of democracy in the country is the second strongest contributor to tolerance, again supporting the idea that system traits lead to an adjustment of citizens’ political culture. Percentage of urban population also exerts positive influence on political tolerance. This pattern suggests that urbanization and governmental investment in citizens’ well-being—indicators of social and political development—contribute to political tolerance. Higher unemployment in a country lowers the level of tolerance. El Salvador, for example, had the highest unemployment of our 18 cases, and the lowest average tolerance.

We look further at the depth of democratic norms in Latin American political culture by focusing on the country with the strongest democratic values, Uruguay.

CASE STUDY: URUGUAY IS THE MOST CULTURALLY DEMOCRATIC LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY

Uruguay has the strongest combined democratic values of all 18 Latin American countries with the highest scores on preference for democracy and support of participation norms and the fourth highest on tolerance norms. Here, we provide a brief picture of this most culturally democratic country, in particular its current progressive politics and some idea of their historical origins.

Uruguay is small in both area and population, about the size of the U.S. state of Oklahoma, with fewer than 3.5 million people. Most Uruguayans are of European origin, mostly Spanish and Italian (indeed, about a quarter of the population is of Italian descent), with mestizos accounting for less than 10% and people of African descent an even smaller portion.²³ Like most Latin American nations, Uruguay is a constitutional republic with a president and bicameral legislature. It has compulsory suffrage for those aged 18 and older.

In the early twentieth century, Uruguay emerged from a century of foreign intervention and intermittent civil war between agrarian Blanco (conservative) Party interests and urban Colorado (liberal) Party interests. Eventually, the Colorado Party President José Batlle y Ordóñez, victorious in the last civil war and serving multiple terms between 1903 and 1929, engineered a democratizing transformation to prevent a resurgence of violence. The reforms instituted included voting by secret ballot, proportional representation, and the complete separation of church and state. Made prosperous by meat and wool exports, Uruguay, under Batlle y Ordóñez, established Latin America's first welfare state. During this period and in successive elected governments through 1972, democratic political culture took root.²⁴

In the mid-twentieth century, Uruguay suffered economic stagnation as its exports declined. In the 1960s, during a period of Blanco Party administrations, a violent Marxist urban guerilla movement called the Tupamaros developed. A brutal counterinsurgency followed, and a military coup overthrew the civilian government in 1973. Although the Tupamaros were quickly defeated, the military continued to expand its hold over the next decade, using fear and terror and taking many political prisoners. In 1980, the military council ruling the country, overconfident of its support, held a constitutional referendum to legalize its rule. Uruguayans voted down these changes by a wide margin, which began the undoing of the military regime. Protests against the dictatorship and a general strike boiled up in 1984 and persuaded the armed forces to relinquish power to civilians. Following national elections later that year, constitutional democracy, civilian rule, and full political and civil rights were restored in 1985. As this brief overview shows, Uruguay had early experience with democratic government and progressive policies, as well as an interlude of military dictatorship and repression before its reestablishment of democracy.²⁵

In the three decades since the return of democracy, political observers have come to consider Uruguay Latin America's most socially liberal and secular country. It has a very high literacy rate—over 98%. In 2004, the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) coalition, a coalition of leftist parties and more centrist social democrats, won national elections, ending 170 years of political control by the Colorado and Blanco parties. The current president, José Mujica, elected in 2009, was a cofounder of the Tupamaros and imprisoned for 14 years during the military dictatorship.²⁶

In terms of policies, Uruguay has the most progressive abortion rights law in Latin America. In 2009, it became the first country in the world to provide

a laptop for every primary school student.²⁷ It was also the first Latin American nation to allow civil unions (in 2008) and, in 2013, became the second Latin American country (after Argentina in 2012) and the twelfth in the world to legalize same-sex marriage. In December 2013, President Mujica signed into law the government's plan to create a regulated, legal market for marijuana. Home growing of marijuana became legal immediately with regulations for a national marijuana market to go into effect in early 2014. With this, Uruguay will be the first nation in the world to legalize the whole marijuana process from production through sales and consumption.²⁸ While Uruguay is one of the safest Latin American countries, with little of the drug or other violence seen in countries such as Colombia and Mexico, one third of Uruguay's prison inmates are serving time on charges related to narcotics trafficking as the country has turned into a transit route for Paraguayan marijuana and Bolivian cocaine. President Mujica argued for this initiative as a bid to regulate and tax a market that already exists but is run by and benefits criminals.²⁹

In summary, Uruguay's democratic political culture developed over the twentieth century. This evolution began under the visionary statesmanship of President José Batlle y Ordóñez, who crafted political structures that brought strong democratic processes, innovative political institutions, and social reforms. Unlike most of Latin America's early experiences, in Uruguay democracy survived the economic and social strains of the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II. Uruguayans appear to have deeply internalized democratic norms and also emerged with very low authoritarian attitudes (see Chapter 3). The democratic cultural values that evolved over seven decades survived the military dictatorship of 1972 to 1984, and remain vibrant in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSIONS

Democratic norms in Latin America take three basic forms: explicit support for democracy as the best system of government, support for participation rights, and tolerance of the participation of regime critics in the political system. These three norms are loosely correlated with each other, as was shown in Figure 2.1. The dimensions of democratic norms we found among Latin Americans have been discovered in other studies based on similar surveys.³⁰ We note that our analysis is limited by the questions asked in LAPOP surveys. While many of the items have a long record of use in survey research, other or additional questions might better or more fully capture the cognitive footprint of democratic thinking.

Based on what we have found this far about Latin Americans' political culture, how democratically minded can we say they are? For starters, they express support for democracy, participation rights, and tolerance of regime critics in the democratic range, above the scales' midpoints. The first two norms find much stronger endorsement than the third, and only on these two is every country on the democratic side of the scale. Latin Americans clearly

embrace the system of democracy as such and the rights of citizens in general to participate in politics. Even where support is weakest for tolerance of regime critics, it is narrowly the majority viewpoint for the region as a whole. In the culturist view, these results offer hope that political culture might shore up democracy by restraining political elites. (We return to this question in Chapter 9.)

Tolerance for the participation rights of system critics, those with gripes against the regime, falls in the intolerant end of the scale in five nations: El Salvador, Bolivia, Peru, Honduras, and Paraguay. As Aristotle argued 21 centuries ago, democracy can be a rather nasty system of government if the rights of minorities, including their very ability to participate in politics, are not protected.³¹ The idea of majority rule with minority rights undergirds robust democracy. Tolerance of critics' participation rights thus stands, in our view, as an essential normative element of democracy. The political cultures of the United States and Canada affirm such rights more than Latin America as a whole and more than 16 of the 18 Latin American countries. The entrenchment of values that undergird vibrant democracy has some distance to go in many countries in Latin America.

We have also learned something about what kinds of countries have citizens with the strongest democratic norms. Two factors stand out above all others. First, where democracy is older, democratic norms are stronger. This supports the institutionalist view of political culture, which contends that norms are adaptive and that those residing in a democratic regime develop views congruent with that type of system. This factor also suggests that democracy and democratic norms create a mutually reinforcing feedback loop (see Chapter 9 for further discussion). This does not resolve the question as to whether Latin Americans were once authoritarian because they lived in authoritarian regimes. If the institutionalist argument about political culture's adaptive function holds, then conjecture about past authoritarianism among Latin Americans seems reasonable.

The second national factor we found most strongly linked to democracy norms is health expenditure as a percentage of GDP. Along with urbanization, which increases democratic norms, and higher unemployment, which accompanies lower support for democracy, we may be observing impacts of overall levels of social and political development,³² which have been theorized to contribute to diminished authoritarianism.³³

A person's education level was the only individual variable that associated with stronger democratic attitudes in all three dimensions. While the more educated hold more democratic attitudes, women embraced democratic norms less strongly than men. These findings have implications for building strong and stable democracies. A public sector-oriented strategy to promote economic development involves building human capital by improving education systems and better health care. Our findings indicate that such a policy, irrespective of its economic effect, influences political culture. Formal education clearly enhances democratic values. Latin American countries' and their citizens' own

investments in education, therefore, indirectly strengthen democratic political culture in the generations receiving it. Education, as well as other policies providing health and family support and removing sex discrimination, would mitigate some of the obstacles for women's participation in economic and political life and reduce gender differences.

FURTHER ANALYSIS EXERCISES

Refer to Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

- Which countries appear to have the strongest and weakest democratic political cultures?
- Are there factors beyond the ones discussed here that might explain these divergences?
- What do the findings here suggest about change over time in these countries? Explore further male-female differences. How wide are they? Are they consistent across countries, age cohorts, education levels? What does this suggest about the sources of these differences and change over time?
- Delve into the situations in Venezuela or Nicaragua. What possible explanations exist for their standings on these democratic norms measures?

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