

THERE IS NO LEGITIMACY CRISIS: SUPPORT FOR JUDICIAL INSTITUTIONS IN MODERN LATIN AMERICA

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While important for every political institution, diffuse support—also called institutional legitimacy—is especially vital for courts. Obdurate conventional wisdom suggests that the public support the U.S. Supreme Court enjoys is unique while widespread pessimism colors extant assessments of high courts’ legitimacy throughout the Americas. Using data from the AmericasBarometer, we show that not only is the U.S. Supreme Court not an anomaly, but the widespread assumption that Latin American courts are lacking in legitimacy is fundamentally wrong. Our analysis of the institutional loyalty measure—which has been identified by scholars as a more appropriate measure of institutional legitimacy—lends important insights into the origins of diffuse support for judicial institutions in Latin America, many of which challenge assumptions advanced by scholars of the U.S. Supreme Court. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of this research for future endeavors and make our case for more careful measurement of these critical concepts in future research.

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All political institutions require the support of the public in order to be effective (Easton 1965). Not only are political institutions meant to respond to the preferences of “the people” in democratic systems of government, but institutions must be considered legitimate by their constituents in order to serve their intended function in representative democracy. Legitimacy enables institutions to secure implementation, acceptance, and compliance even when the institution’s decisions are unfavorable to those most acutely affected by them (Caldeira and Gibson 1992).¹ Scholars widely agree that legitimacy is of unique importance for courts because these institutions typically lack the ability to enforce their decisions directly. Instead, courts must rely on other actors to implement their decisions and coerce acquiescence (Gibson, Lodge and Woodson 2014).

That institutional legitimacy is necessary for courts around the world suggests that understanding variation in judicial legitimacy is essential for a full understanding of the role that high courts play in politics and governance worldwide. Understanding aggregate shifts in public support is essential for an understanding of interbranch relations in separation of powers systems (e.g. Clark 2010; Nelson and Uribe-McGuire 2017) while understanding cross-national variation in the determinants of legitimacy at the individual level helps us to understand the microfoundations of judicial power writ large (Gibson, Caldeira and Baird 1998; Walker 2016).

In the United States, diffuse support for the U.S. Supreme Court is generally high and has been stable—at least at the aggregate level—over time (Gibson 2007). Support for the Court, as Easton (1965) predicted, is rooted in obdurate democratic values, such as political tolerance and attitudes toward the rule of law. Moreover, there is a positive relationship between exposure to the Court and diffuse support, which Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003*b*) has colorfully suggested means that “To know courts is indeed to love them, in the sense that to know about courts is to be exposed to these legitimizing symbols” (553).

¹For reviews of legitimacy, see Tyler (2006) and Gibson and Nelson (2014).

In other work, Gibson and colleagues have shown this “positivity bias” empirically: the symbols of judicial authority stimulate subconscious psychological processes which, in turn, dampen displeasure with disagreeable decisions, culminating in respect for the high court (Gibson and Caldeira 2009; Gibson, Lodge and Woodson 2014; Gibson and Nelson 2016).

In the case of the U.S. Supreme Court, a now-mature corpus of scholarly research demonstrates that the Supreme Court stands apart in contrast to other domestic institutions for its high levels of public support and is an outlier relative to its peers of other national high courts. Reviewing the work on the institutional legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court from the past 20 years, Gibson (2007) argues that “in comparison to other national high courts, the U.S. Supreme Court enjoys an extraordinarily wide and deep ‘reservoir of goodwill’—only a handful of institutions has support percentages approaching those of the American court” (522).

Beyond the U.S. separation of powers system, widespread pessimism colors extant assessments of public support for national high courts. Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) suggested the U.S. Supreme Court was a standout anomaly compared to constitutional courts across Western Europe: while the American public appeared quite trusting and supportive of its high court, publics throughout Western European nations generally viewed their national high courts with caution and skepticism. Beyond Western Europe, scholarly consensus is even more cynical: pointing to the universally low levels of public confidence in the national high courts, scholars, politicians and pundits claim the judicial institutions throughout the Americas to be in a perpetual state of crisis, wholly lacking in legitimacy and institutional efficacy (Prillaman 2000; Domingo 2004; Helmke 2010*a*; Helmke and Ríos-Figueroa 2011).

In this paper, we challenge this conventional wisdom by cataloging variation in support for courts throughout the separation of powers systems in the Americas. Our objectives are threefold. First, we show that, contrary to common opinion, the assumption that

Latin American courts are lacking in legitimacy is generally misplaced. Though public trust in supreme courts throughout the region is admittedly quite low, the public displays remarkable consensus in its institutional loyalty to its supreme courts. Second, we argue that the source of this broad misconception is the frequent use of the judicial trust and confidence measure from public opinion surveys, which is often the only cross-sectional time-series metric available to researchers. We show that, as in the case of the United States (Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003a), the judicial confidence measure in standard public opinion surveys captures relatively short-term evaluations not only of the court, but also the government and broader political environment. Third, our analysis of the institutional loyalty measure—which has been identified by scholars as a more appropriate measure of the sort of institutional legitimacy that Easton (1965) originally described—lends important insights into the origins of diffuse support for judicial institutions, many of which challenge assumptions advanced by scholars of the U.S. Supreme Court. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of this research for future endeavors, and make our case for more careful measurement of these critical concepts in future projects.

I. CONCEPTUALIZING SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

All institutions need public support in order to fulfill their roles in the political system; without public support, institutions are unable to implement their decisions, rendering them impotent. In his pioneering work on public support, Easton (1965) differentiates between two types of public support that institutions require: diffuse support and specific support.

The first type of institutional support is *diffuse support*, which Easton (1965) suggests “forms a reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effect of which they see as damaging to their wants” (273). Other terms for diffuse support are institutional legitimacy or

institutional loyalty.² Legitimacy represents longer-term satisfaction with an institution; it is generally “sticky” and resistant to change over time (Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003*a*). Scholars generally measure institutional legitimacy in surveys using a battery of questions that assess the extent to which individuals are comfortable making fundamental changes to the institutional structure of a court, such as whether they believe the Court should be made less independent, whether the public should have a stronger means of controlling the court, or whether the court should be done away with completely (Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003*a*).

Specific support is a second type of institutional support. Unlike diffuse support, which is obdurate, specific support refers to performance satisfaction. Easton (1965) suggests that specific support is essentially “a *quid pro quo* for the fulfillment of demands”: specific support for an institution increases when an individual likes an institution’s outputs, and it declines in the face of disagreement with an institution’s decisions (268). Specific support therefore refers to shorter-term agreement or disagreement with a political institution’s outputs (Easton 1965; Caldeira and Gibson 1992). Scholars generally measure specific support in surveys by asking respondents about the extent to which they think the institution is doing a “good job” or “bad job,” and whether they think a Court’s decisions are “too liberal”, “too conservative”, or “about right” (Gibson and Nelson 2015).

The two major types of institutional support have a complicated relationship; low levels of specific support can harm diffuse support, but generally only over a long period of time. Easton (1965) writes:

The strength of [diffuse support] derives from the fact that it is not contingent on specific inducements or rewards of any kind, except in the very long run.

On a day-to-day basis, if there is a strong inner conviction of the moral validity

²As is common in this literature, we use these terms interchangeably throughout this manuscript.

of the authorities or regime, support may persist even in the face of repeated deprivations attributed to the outputs of the authorities or their failure to act (278).

Indeed, if the reservoir of goodwill evaporated in the face of a single disagreeable decision, then it would conceptually be no different than specific support. Generally, as Easton (1965) first suggested, there is some evidence that sustained disagreement with a court's policies can reduce support for the institution (Gibson and Caldeira 1992), as can subjective ideological disagreement (Bartels and Johnston 2013; Bartels, Johnston and Mark 2015); however, the effect of disagreement is less than the effect of democratic values (Gibson and Nelson 2015) and only has a statistically significant effect under some conditions (Gibson and Nelson 2017).

While a great deal of research has established the validity of specific support, diffuse support, and the survey questions used to measure these two concepts (e.g. Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003a), other measures of these concepts persist. Commonly, scholars rely on a general measure of *institutional confidence* or *institutional trust* as a measure of institutional support (e.g. Benesh 2006; Salzman and Ramsey 2013; Çakir and Şekercioğlu 2016). Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003a) decompose the variance in the “confidence” measures in public opinion surveys. Considering batteries of questions that enable the differentiation of both short- (specific) and long-term (diffuse) measures of institutional support, the authors find that while diffuse support correlates positively with expressed confidence and trust in the high court, short-term evaluations of the Court and other political actors are stronger predictors thereof. The authors report that many respondents who appear wary or outright skeptical of the Supreme Court's trustworthiness may nevertheless display high levels of institutional fealty,³ and are nevertheless unwilling to accept or tolerate funda-

³Specifically, more than 70% of those who don't have confidence (or don't know) are nonetheless unwilling to do away with the institution.

mental changes to the Supreme Court as an institution. Thus, they caution that “low levels of confidence should certainly *not* be interpreted as indicating low institutional legitimacy” (361). Instead, “[c]onfidence thus seems to reflect to some considerable degree what we think of as specific support” (364).⁴ In other words, this measure appears to capture short-term approval more akin to specific support than to diffuse support.

Moving beyond the United States, the subject of public support for national judiciaries has also been a ripe subject of research for cross-national researchers. The most well-known consideration of both specific and diffuse support for national courts is Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998), who analyzed public opinion survey data on citizens’ evaluation of national judicial institutions in 19 European countries and the United States. Including a battery of questions tapping into respondents’ awareness of their national high courts, their agreement with specific decisions, and willingness to tolerate fundamental changes to the judiciary’s institution, Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) conclude that, though many Europeans approve of their national high courts, the United States Supreme Court generally enjoys more institutional legitimacy than its European counterparts. Moreover, Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) found a positive relationship between support and institutional age, likely because more mature judicial institutions provide citizens with more exposure to legitimizing symbols and more salient judicial decisions (357). By and large, Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) corroborated U.S. scholarship that demonstrates a positive relationship between awareness and high court support, but also documented cross-national variability in the correlation between specific and diffuse support for national judicial institutions.

Similar efforts have expanded the geographic and theoretical scope of inquiry in recent years. Salzman and Ramsey (2013) consider cross national variance in public confidence

⁴For additional discussion of the “confidence” measure in the U.S. setting, see Ura (2014).

in Latin American judiciaries, considering how both judicial performance and corruption can undermine the public’s evaluation of high courts. Moreover, their results reveal an inverse relationship between awareness and confidence in the court, a finding that runs counter to the patterns found in the U.S. and Western Europe (Gibson, Caldeira and Baird 1998; Gibson 2007). Similarly, Çakir and Şekercioğlu (2016) analyze public support for the judiciary writ large in a larger sample of countries, and report that confidence in the judiciary is inversely related to various metrics of political sophistication in consolidating democracies, but positively related in consolidated democracies. Taken together, these results may suggest an important scope condition to positivity theory: the “to know a court is to love a court” logic may only apply in fully consolidated democracies.

Though this research is insightful and theoretically informed, Easton’s distinction between the multiple conceptual dimensions of institutional support—much less their empirical differentiation—is never directly considered. Though comparativists are often constrained by the data which is readily available, analyses of institutional confidence measures are often interpreted as measures of institutional legitimacy (Helmke 2010*a,b*, 2017; Kapiszewski 2012; Salzman and Ramsey 2013; Çakir and Şekercioğlu 2016). Moreover, given the Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003*a*) findings about the ambiguous conceptual grounding for measures of public confidence, it is unclear the extent to which the appropriate scope condition relates to confidence (rather than diffuse support), or to the nature of the political regime of which the court is a member.

Walker (2016) is a noted exception, in his careful conceptual and empirical differentiation of both diffuse and specific support. Incorporating country-level indicators of judicial independence and regime type, Walker shows that judicial independence fosters both specific and diffuse support for the national judiciaries of Latin America, though the effect is partially conditioned by the extent to which liberal democracy is fully entrenched. Not only does this distinguish between *Specific* and *Diffuse Support*, but Walker integrates in-

sights from the literatures on democratic values and support for democratic regimes with those on institutional explanations and judicial independence.⁵ Importantly, though he finds that institutional covariates (such as a court’s level of judicial independence) strongly condition the influence of partisanship and democratic values on citizens’ reported *Specific Support*, his multivariate analyses reveal no such effect of institutional effects on citizens’ self-reported *Diffuse Support*.

Despite these gains, a considerable gap exists in our knowledge of public support for the national judiciaries. There has generally been limited engagement with the theoretical contributions of those who study support for the U.S. Supreme Court, and researchers have been constrained by both an overall lack of available data and a dearth of questions that validly measure diffuse and specific support. Consequently, the inferences that have been drawn about the institutional legitimacy of Latin American courts are incomplete at best, and fundamentally wrong at worst.

In light of these open opportunities, we bring data to bear on three questions. First, how do the supreme courts of Latin America compare in terms of institutional trust and institutional loyalty? Second, to what extent are the predictors of each type of support the

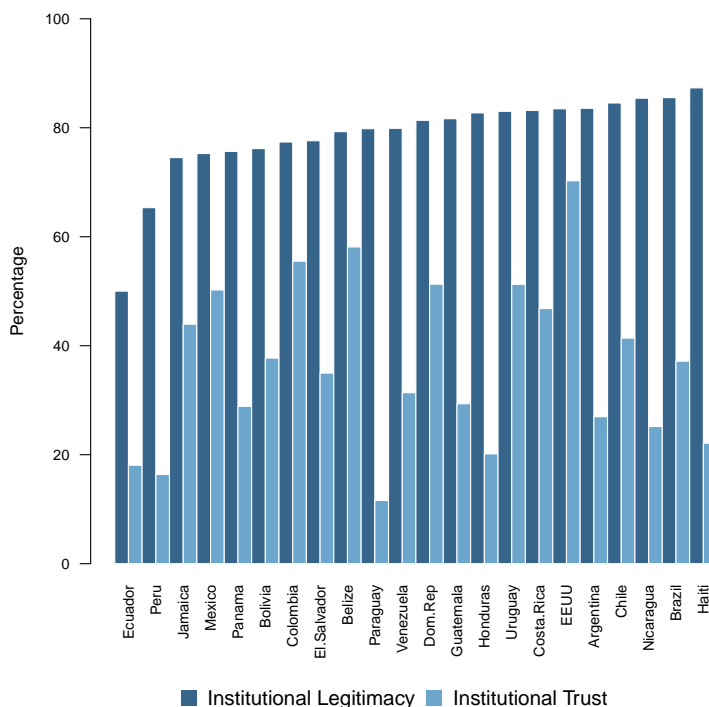
⁵Though Walker takes care to distinguish between *Specific* and *Diffuse Support* in his analysis, his measure of *Diffuse Support* taken from the 2008 AmericasBarometer surveys is a composite measure of both the institutional fealty measure (“Would you support doing away with the court?”) and a measure of citizens’ willingness to tolerate non-compliance with the Supreme Courts’ decisions. Though these two measures are statistically related, Easton and others stress they are conceptually distinct (Easton 1965, 1975; Gibson and Caldeira 1998). Moreover, because the measure for compliance is an 8-point scale, and the measure for *Diffuse Support* a dichotomy, the bulk of the variance in Walker’s measure is attributable to the variability in citizens’ opinions with respect to (non)compliance, as opposed to institutional commitment.

same, both overall and across countries? Third, and viewing these results in the context of the broader literature on the subject, how do these patterns fit with or challenge extant research, most of which has focused on a single (potentially anomalous) North American case? It is to these questions that we now turn.

II. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE JUDICIARY IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

To many scholars, reformers, politicians or casual observers of Latin American courts, there is one indisputable fact: the high courts of the Americas are not popular. Though a strong majority of the American public has long expressed support for the U.S. Supreme Court (Gibson and Nelson 2014), the regional average of public trust for supreme courts throughout the region has hovered around 35% for as many years as the data have been collected. Among politicians and would-be reformers, this fact is cited as a motivation to tinker with, vilify, or overhaul judicial institutions (Prillaman 2000; Domingo 2004; Hammergren 2007; Helmke 2010a, 2010b, 2017; Kapiszewski 2012). For outside observers, this low level of support provides *prima facie* evidence of courts' institutional impotence, inefficacy, and lack of institutional legitimacy (Prillaman 2000; Domingo 2004; Helmke 2010a; Helmke and Ríos-Figueroa 2011).

Figure 1: Uniformly High Diffuse Support, Variable Trust for Supreme Courts, 2008



Darker colored bars represent the percentage of respondents answering in the negative to the question “Do you believe that there might be a time in which the president would have sufficient reason to dissolve the Supreme Court, or do you think that sufficient reason could never exist?” Lighter colored bars represent the percentage of respondents reporting trust in the supreme court, taken from the question “To what extent do you trust the Supreme Court?”⁶ The percentage of people reporting “Trust” includes all respondents claiming a 5, 6 or 7 on that 7-point Likert scale. To facilitate cross-national comparisons, the figures reported for the United States are taken from the 2006 AmericasBarometer. The question on diffuse support was not included in the 2008 U.S. questionnaire.

Figure 1 lends additional credence to the assertion that the region’s high courts suffer from a deficit of the public’s trust. The lighter colored bars represent the percentage of

respondents who reported a high level of trust for their national supreme court in 2008.⁷ Two conclusions are immediately apparent. First, the United States Supreme Court far outpaces its institutional counterparts throughout the rest of the Americas. More than 75% of U.S. respondents claimed trust for the Supreme Court. Comparatively, public trust in national high courts is generally lacking; the regional average is only 38%. The difference between the U.S. Supreme Court and the high courts of Latin America is particularly stark in some countries. Fewer than 20% of respondents report trust for the supreme courts of Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay and Honduras. As such, the prevailing wisdom is correct that many Latin Americans profess a fundamental lack of trust in national judicial institutions.

Second, Figure 1 underscores the difference between institutional *legitimacy* and institutional *trust*. The darker colored bars represent the percentage of respondents who profess a more fundamental institutional loyalty to their supreme court. The bars represent the percentage of respondents who answered in the negative to the question “Do you believe that there might be a time in which the president would have sufficient reason to dissolve the Supreme Court, or do you think that sufficient reason could never exist?” This question taps a concept similar to one identified by Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003a) and Gibson and Caldeira (1992) as an accurate measure of Easton’s (1965) original concept of

⁷Though the AmericasBarometer surveys do differentiate between national supreme courts and constitutional tribunals in the countries where both exist, we focus here on the trust as it pertains to the supreme court, as the measure of institutional loyalty makes specific reference to the nations’ supreme courts. Notably, this feature of the AmericasBarometer is a distinct advantage over alternative cross-national public opinion studies, which tend to conflate citizens’ evaluations of the supreme court, the constitutional tribunal, other national courts, lower courts, and other justice system institutions or authorities into a blanket question about “the justice system” or the “judiciary” (Kapiszewski 2012).

“diffuse support.”⁸ Indeed, in their discussion of the various indicators of diffuse support, Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003a) contend that, lacking a multivariate composite score for diffuse support, this question alone is the next best option.

Viewing institutional loyalty and institutional trust side-by-side, Figure 1 shows that, contrary to extant assertions and concerns about the overwhelming lack of institutional legitimacy, supreme courts throughout Latin America enjoy relatively high levels of institutional loyalty. A large percentage of the population professes an unwillingness to tolerate fundamental changes to their national high courts’ institutional integrity. Though the United States has long been assumed to be unique in its “reservoir of goodwill,” Figure 1 suggests that it is in fact not unique, nor is it a particular outlier, relative to the other supreme courts of the Western Hemisphere. With roughly 81% of U.S. respondents being unwilling to do away with the supreme court, the U.S. stands only slightly above the hemispheric average of 79%. Even in Ecuador, which stands out as an outlier for its unusually low levels of both institutional commitment and institutional trust owing to a 2007-08 constitutional crisis in which the supreme court was directly implicated (Basabe-Serrano 2011; Helmke 2010b), an absolute majority of Ecuadorans surveyed claimed they would be unwilling to do away with the court altogether. Far from implying widespread institutional crises, these figures paint a picture of national high courts that, despite the public mistrust they inspire, are nevertheless considered widely legitimate.

Table 1 takes a longer view of these two measures, reporting the national levels of *Diffuse support* and *Institutional Trust* between 2006 and 2012. *Diffuse support* was coded as “1”

⁸The item recommended by Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003a) reads “If the U.S. Supreme Court started making a lot of decisions that most people disagree with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether.” Gibson (2007) provides information on the percentage of supportive replies for that item over time in the US case, with 82.7% of respondents agreeing with the item in 2001 and 68.9% supporting the Court in 2005.

Table 1: Diffuse Support and Institutional Trust in the Supreme Court, Country-year Averages

Country	Question	2006	2008	2010	2012	Country Average	Country St. Dev
Argentina	Diffuse Support		83.57			83.57	
	Institutional Trust		26.98			26.98	
Bolivia	Diffuse Support		76.18		89.02	82.06	9.08
	Institutional Trust	31.28	37.73		23.23	30.74	7.26
Brazil	Diffuse Support		85.53	87.54	86.93	86.66	1.02
	Institutional Trust	35.01	31.93	49.32	42.27	42.22	6.91
Chile	Diffuse Support	88.97	84.55			86.76	3.13
	Institutional Trust	36.59	40.21			39.37	2.86
Colombia	Diffuse Support	71.38	77.39	90.53	88.82	82.03	9.18
	Institutional Trust	40.17	51.9	47.48	40.74	48.54	4.88
Costa Rica	Diffuse Support	81.01	83.19	86.52	88.06	84.69	3.18
	Institutional Trust	49.93	44.67	46.47	35.38	48.47	8.93
Dom. Rep.	Diffuse Support	82.00	81.36	86.77	87.39	84.38	3.13
	Institutional Trust	43.67	47.51	42.27	39.95	45.22	4.54
Ecuador	Diffuse Support	44.72	50.02	84.97	78.92	64.65	20.23
	Institutional Trust	13.06	17.40	20.5	29.47	20.46	6.44
El Salvador	Diffuse Support	73.53	77.62	85.98	84.22	80.33	5.79
	Institutional Trust	38.06	33.89	47.23	43.09	43.19	5.59
Guatemala	Diffuse Support	79.57	81.66	82.98	91.32	83.88	5.15
	Institutional Trust	28.57	26.20	27.59	27.50	30.37	1.15
Honduras	Diffuse Support	86.69	82.73	90.06	86.23	86.42	2.99
	Institutional Trust	22.02	18.46	48.68	19.16	30.24	13.38
Mexico	Diffuse Support	80.58	75.27	84.85	87.74	82.11	5.42
	Institutional Trust	49.42	47.56	47.70	43.78	48.69	4.19

Table 1: Diffuse Support and Institutional Trust in the Supreme Court, Country-year averages

Country	Question	2006	2008	2010	2012	Country Average	Country St. Dev
Nicaragua	Diffuse Support	77.24	85.44	90.20	89.23	85.52	5.89
	Institutional Trust	26.33	23.70	27.53	45.79	32.90	8.40
Panama	Diffuse Support	80.33	75.67	92.40	96.57	86.24	9.85
	Institutional Trust	30.60	27.99	38.80	34.75	34.81	4.35
Paraguay	Diffuse Support	67.60	79.83	74.08	80.47	75.49	5.99
	Institutional Trust	18.97	11.49	23.17	26.75	20.91	7.01
Peru	Diffuse Support	56.80	65.33	82.46	82.08	71.66	12.72
	Institutional Trust	18.27	15.87	17.80	24.47	19.58	3.72
Uruguay	Diffuse Support	85.19	83.02	91.87	92.58		
	Institutional Trust	46.83	48.40	60.2	48.94	55.01	6.21
Venezuela	Diffuse Support	82.94	79.90			81.42	2.15
	Institutional Trust	36.29	29.33			34.39	4.25
Haiti	Diffuse Support	92.19	87.32	87.35	82.94	87.45	3.77
	Institutional Trust	15.38	21.16	14.84	17.70	17.76	3.14
Jamaica	Diffuse Support	81.96	74.52	92.15	93.77	85.59	9.04
	Institutional Trust	34.29	39.49	40.23	50.87	45.89	5.92
Guyana	Diffuse Support	79.95	79.63	91.37	93.69	86.16	7.41
	Institutional Trust	44.24	50.20	42.92	56.90	51.09	5.97
Belice	Diffuse Support		79.29	89.03	94.08	87.46	7.51
	Institutional Trust		50.45	47.07	66.47	58.40	9.78
EEUU	Diffuse Support	83.48				83.48	
	Institutional Trust	69.29	44.27			57.12	18.18
Canada	Diffuse Support	78.93				78.93	
	Institutional Trust	76.37	71.95			75.53	3.38
Regional Average	Diffuse Support	76.00	77.20	87.24	88.10		
	Institutional Trust	33.4	35.89	37.66	38.22		

if respondents answered either “No, there’s no sufficient reason [to dissolve the SC]” (2006, 2008), or when they responded “No, it is not justified” to the later surveys (2010, 2012).⁹ Where no country averages are reported, the question was not asked in that country-year.

The figures shown in Table 1 suggest that the 2008 values just discussed are not anomalous. Indeed, diffuse support for national courts is consistently high throughout the region. Though there appears to be a modest upward trend in most cases, the change in the wording of the question between 2008 and 2010 may also be to blame for this shift. As was the case in 2008, the national averages for diffuse support remain consistently high across cases, while the percentages of respondents reporting high levels of trust are consistently low.

Generally speaking, however, diffuse support is not less variable than institutional trust. Recall that Easton (1965) suggested that specific support evaluations should be more fleeting—and therefore more apt to change over time—than diffuse support. In 11 of 19 cases, however, the standard deviation for diffuse support exceeds that of institutional trust when measuring the variance in the national averages over time. Of course, the relatively limited span of time covered by these surveys, coupled with the change in the question wording make us are hesitant to make too much of this difference.

Again, Ecuador is an instructive case to consider. Though Ecuador is an outlier in both respects, it stands out as an example of the wide variability in diffuse support by the public that legitimacy theorists such as Easton (and others) generally conceived to be impossible.

⁹The measure for *Diffuse Support* is a dichotomous response to the question(s): “Do you believe that there might be a time in which the president would have sufficient reason to dissolve the Supreme Court, or do you think that sufficient reason could never exist?” In later surveys (2010, 2012), the question was posed with more context: “Do you believe that when the country is facing difficult times it is justifiable for the president to dissolve the Supreme Court and govern without it?”

The upshot of the Ecuadorian example, however, is that though the Ecuador Supreme Court appeared to have suffered a crisis of relative legitimacy throughout 2006 and 2008, its institutional solvency bounced back quickly. Though Easton did not envision diffuse support to have this sort of volatility, it is perhaps promising that the court’s institutional legitimacy can recuperate so quickly after institutional crises.

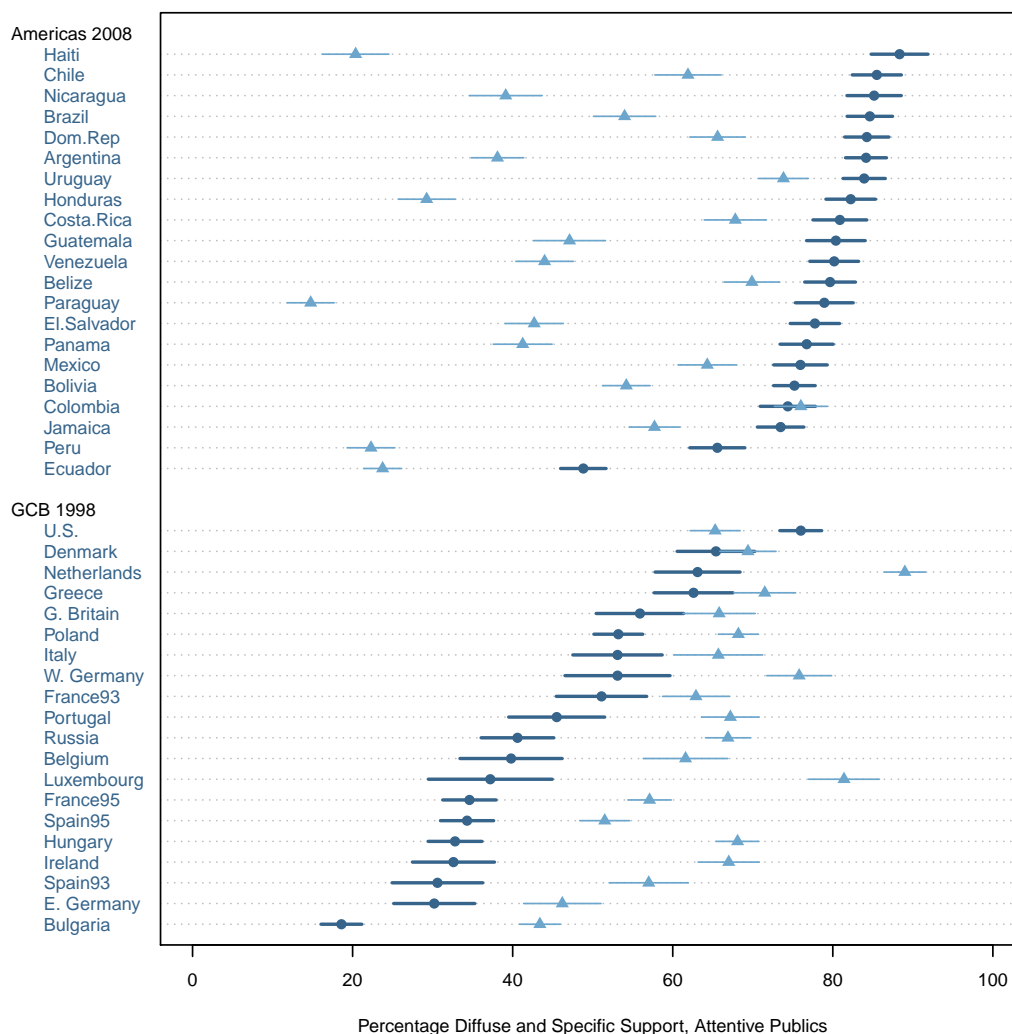
As a final point of comparison, we situate these data in a broader cross-sectional landscape. Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) provided the most prominent analysis of cross-sectional attitudes regarding national high courts to date, a subset of which we replicate in Figure 2 for the sake of a broader cross-sectional comparison. Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) focus their analysis on the “Attentive Public,” limiting their empirical analysis to only those respondents who reported a sufficiently high level of awareness of the national supreme courts.¹⁰ Constraining our analysis to the more attentive half of respondents, we recreate Gibson, Caldeira and Baird’s data to enable a more direct cross-regional

¹⁰Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) directly gauge respondents’ awareness of high courts by simply asking them about their awareness. To our knowledge, this was the last time (circa 1992) said question was included on a cross-sectional public opinion survey, so we are unable to replicate this directly.

comparison.¹¹

¹¹We created *Attentiveness*, an interaction between respondents' self-reported *Interest* in politics and an index of respondents' self-reported news consumption. See the Appendix for more details on this measure. To identify the attentive public, we include only those respondents who were above the median value for this variable (the median value is 10, the mean is 12). This excludes most of the respondents who claimed to have no interest in politics—including only those who scored the highest on our composite measure of news consumption (indicating they access the news with great frequency from virtually all media sources). For those with intermediate values of political interest (some or little), this has the effect of including those who also access news media routinely, minimally 2–3 times per week from multiple sources. For those respondents who claimed to be very interested in politics, this includes all who report daily access to one or more source of news media, excluding those who are interested but who only access the news intermittently throughout the week.

Figure 2: Relationship between Institutional Legitimacy and Institutional Trust, Among Attentive Publics



Lighter bars represent the percentage of respondents (with 95% confidence intervals) reporting trust in the supreme court. Darker bars represent the percentage of respondents (with 95% confidence intervals) reporting diffuse support for the supreme court. The data from the LAPOP surveys comes from 2008, with the exception of the U.S. whose values are taken from 2006. The question on diffuse support was not included in the 2008 U.S. questionnaire. The data from Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) is from Table 4.

Figure 2 compares the results from the 2008 LAPOP sample (top panel) with the data reported in Table 4 of Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) (bottom panel). Again, the

LAPOP measure of diffuse support (shown in dark blue) is the percentage of respondents (with 95% confidence intervals) who reported opposition to the question “Do you believe that there might be a time in which the president would have sufficient reason to dissolve the Supreme Court, or do you think that sufficient reason could never exist?” The analogous question in the Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) surveys is the percentage of respondents who disagreed with the following statement: “If the [HIGHEST COURT OF THE COUNTRY] started making a lot of decisions that most people disagreed with, it might be better to do away with the [HIGHEST COURT OF THE COUNTRY] altogether.” The lighter indicators throughout both panels correspond to the level of Institutional Trust throughout the respective samples. In the LAPOP survey, respondents were asked “To what extent do you trust the Supreme Court?”, and the figures provided are those answering above the midpoint of the 7-point scale. In the Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) study, respondents were coded as having trust in the Supreme Court if they gave an affirmative answer to the statement “The [HIGHEST COURT OF THE COUNTRY] can usually be trusted to make decisions that are right for the country as a whole.”

Two trends are immediately apparent. The first is that, with few exceptions, the recorded levels of *Diffuse Support* in our sample of Latin American countries exceed those reported by Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998). Of course, the two samples of countries resist direct comparisons on several dimensions: geographic coverage, question wording, and timing. As such, we cannot rule out the possibility that worldwide attitudes towards national supreme courts have uniformly improved in the past 10 years, or that the discrepancies we observe are not simply a result of inconsistent question wording. Nevertheless, we have an important bridge case to facilitate this comparison. In Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998), the United States stood out from its European counterparts with 79% of U.S. respondents expressing resistance to the notion that the Supreme Court should be disbanded if its decisions ran counter to the wishes of government or the majority. By way

of contrast, our data show that as of 2006, 83% of U.S. respondents expressed the same sort of resistance, which is a figure not too far out of line with what Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) reported nearly one decade before (and what we would expect from a broadly legitimate national court).¹² Our data suggest that the U.S. is quite typical among its pure presidential system peers in the Western Hemisphere, all of which appear to outpace the public support (at least among attentive publics) afforded to the high courts of Western Europe.

A second trend relates to the variability and distribution of the public's institutional trust in their high court. Across the two samples, we see entirely opposing trends: public trust among attentive publics appears, on average, much lower and more variable throughout the Americas than throughout the United States and Europe. On the other hand, Latin American respondents appear to ascribe institutional legitimacy to the supreme courts *in spite of* their general mistrust of those institutions. In Europe the opposite dynamic appears to be at play: though respondents find their courts to be generally trustworthy, Europeans reported a lower level of diffuse support.

As with the data presented in Figure 1 and Table 1, these patterns are merely descriptive, and without considerably more analysis we cannot draw decisive conclusions about exactly what these patterns might imply. But they stand as a striking challenge to previous research by suggesting that the relationship between trust and legitimacy is reversed in Latin America when compared to Europe, and that the United States Supreme Court is not an outlier in terms of its institutional legitimacy. Taken together, these patterns

¹²This finding leads the authors to report: "It is certainly a widely supported institution in the United States, but, in comparative perspective, it is not inordinately well supported. The high courts of the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany (among West Germans), Greece, and even Poland have at least as much institutional legitimacy as the Supreme Court" (349).

suggest that we have more to learn about the origins of institutional trust and more profound institutional fealty for the high courts of Latin America, which may well lead us to reconsider many claims about the institutional legitimacy of high courts across the region.

III. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

While the descriptive analyses of trust and legitimacy for high courts are informative, they lead naturally to a second question: to what extent do the predictors of institutional trust differ from those of institutional commitment, and, by extension, to what extent do those predictors vary across countries? With this in mind, we return to the well-developed literature on public support for the U.S. Supreme Court for theoretical guidance on the specification of a multivariate model of institutional support.

First, attention to the court has widely been regarded as an important predictor of institutional support. Early scholars of institutional legitimacy were generally skeptical of the public's ability to monitor, comprehend and evaluate institutions and political authorities, owing to widespread ignorance of American politics (Adamany and Grossman 1983), even Easton (1975) acknowledged his doubts that the specific and diffuse support concepts are relevant for the politically unsophisticated. This general skepticism that people could understand and evaluate political institutions, coupled with the empirical fact that many Americans know little about the political environment that surrounds them, led many early scholars to focus exclusively on 'elites,' "opinion leaders" (Caldeira and Gibson 1992), and "aware publics" (Gibson, Caldeira and Baird 1998). Kessel (1966) suggested that exposure to political information, partisanship, agreement with Court decisions and support for political rights are all associated with higher support and approval for the Court. Caldeira and Gibson (1992) find that among the various indicators of attentiveness or political sophistication, attentiveness to the Supreme Court is the strongest (and lone, in fact) predictor of diffuse support. This emphasis on awareness of the high court's work has

led to the widespread finding that Americans' knowledge and/or awareness of the Supreme Court consistently predicts their level of support. These findings also hold cross-nationally: Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) demonstrated that citizens' awareness of national high courts is generally associated with stronger ascription of *Diffuse Support*, owing to greater short-term approval of the work of the court, as well as exposure to legitimizing symbols. Thus, *higher levels of awareness should correlate positively with institutional support*.

Second, the relationship between satisfaction with outputs and levels of institutional support has been an ongoing debate among scholars of judicial public support. Early work found that issue disagreement and partisanship were strong predictors of diffuse support for the Supreme Court (Dolbeare and Hammond 1968; Murphy and Tanenhaus 1968), while trust and satisfaction with the Supreme Court correlated highly with satisfaction with government and other political institutions (Almond and Verba 1963). Caldeira and Gibson (1992) find some evidence that issue specific disagreement diminishes diffuse support, but find no evidence of partisanship's impact. However, the authors suggest its impact is minimal, and found no evidence that trust in government or trust in institutions more generally predicts diffuse support for the Court. Taking the long cross-temporal view, Caldeira (1986) finds judicial confidence is sensitive to presidential popularity and the broader political context, so political events such as Watergate and Nixon's resignation had an appreciable effect on public confidence in the judiciary. Caldeira (1987) traces public opinion over a six month period during FDR's court packing episode and demonstrates fluctuations in public opinion in response to key decisions, an insight that inspired considerable work on the strategic behavior of courts and judicial authorities, who might actively seek to cultivate—or minimally not to offend—the public's good opinion (Staton 2006, 2010; Staton and Vanberg 2008; Clark 2010).

More contemporary research has pushed the boundaries of this logic, stressing how specific and diffuse support for the judiciary is conditioned by not only individuals' ideological

convictions, but also their perceived divergence from the preferences of the court. In their analysis of Americans' opinions of the U.S. Supreme Court, Bartels and Johnston (2013) suggest that there is a strong ideological foundation to the Court's political legitimacy, and present experimental evidence that even a single disagreeable decision can ruin the Court's legitimacy. Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003*b*), examining cross-sectional survey data and the Court's support after *Bush v. Gore*, finds no evidence that the Court's aggregate support changed over time. This finding is reiterated by Christenson and Glick (2015) with regard to the Court's ruling on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (though Christenson and Glick (2015) do note individual-level change in response to the ruling). Thus, *dissatisfaction with outputs should have a negative, but not overwhelmingly large, relationship with institutional support.*

A third body of scholarship relates citizens' attitudes about procedural justice to their willingness to ascribe trust or institutional legitimacy to the supreme court or other legal or law enforcement institutions. Tyler (1988) stresses that citizens' perceptions of procedural justice are positively associated with institutional support. In other words, even when faced with an outcome with which they do not agree, those who believe they were treated fairly throughout the judicial process will still be willing to accept the court, and its controversial decisions, as legitimate and binding. However, Gibson finds scant evidence to support this assertion in his evaluation of other public opinion surveys (Gibson 1991), and Mondak (1991) finds mixed evidence of the procedural hypothesis in his laboratory experiments. We expect that citizens use perceptions of procedural justice to make performance evaluations—a concept closely related to specific support—but not more global evaluations of diffuse support. In other words, a belief in the fairness of the judicial process should affect one's evaluations of institutional performance, but not more global assessments of fundamental institutional loyalty. As such, *levels of institutional trust should be higher among respondents who have higher perceptions of procedural justice, but diffuse support*

should be unrelated to perceptions of procedural justice.

Finally, recent work by Gibson and Nelson (2015) demonstrates that the most venerable predictor of diffuse support is individual-level democratic values. The strong relationship between democratic values and diffuse support has been widely established; Easton (1965), for example, writes that “part of the readiness to tolerate outputs that are perceived to run contrary to one’s wants and demands, flows from a general or diffuse attachment to regime and community” (272). These values include support for minority liberty and the rule of law (Gibson and Nelson 2015). Cross-nationally, where democratic norms vary widely, there is a wider expanse of possible support for democracy and democratic institutions. Indeed, democratic values are the strongest predictor of diffuse support in the model presented by Gibson and Nelson (2015). Thus, we expect that *greater support for democratic values will be associated with more institutional support for a supreme court.*

A. Outcome and Explanatory Variables

We focus our multivariate analyses on the Americas Barometer public opinion survey data from 2008. This year provides the largest number of countries in which data were collected for both our outcome and key explanatory variables. All told, our analysis includes representative public opinion samples from 21 countries throughout the Western hemisphere.

Our first outcome variable is the cross-national metric of individuals’ *Institutional Trust* in their judicial institutions described above. Because respondents answer on a 7-point scale, we use the full response set as the outcome variable rather than the collapsed indicator used for Figures 1 and 2. As those figures showed, the modal response in our data is one that indicates a lack of institutional trust. Because the outcome variable has seven possible values, we estimate a linear regression; our results are unchanged if we use an ordered logistic regression, the results of which are reported in the Appendix.

Our second outcome variable captures individuals’ *Diffuse Support*. As in the descriptive

analyses, the measure is dichotomous. A respondent is coded as having diffuse support for the court if she indicated “No, there’s no sufficient reason [to dissolve the SC].” As described above, this was the modal answer in all the countries in our survey. Because this dependent variable is dichotomous, we use logistic regression to estimate the regression equation.

The model specifications include a variety of variables of substantive interest and are nearly identical for both outcome variables. We draw on measures of individuals’ knowledge and awareness of the supreme court, attitudes regarding short-term satisfaction with the courts and other actors in the political system, attitudes about procedural justice, and evaluation of democracy more generally. Finally, in both cases, we estimate a final model that confines the analysis to the universe of “Attentive Publics” in our sample, so that we might compare our results to the analysis of Western European publics undertaken by Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998).

First, to evaluate the impact of citizen awareness of high courts, we include measures of respondents’ level of *Information* based on the frequency of news consumption and their *Political Interest*. Though the ideal measure would probe the issue of citizens’ awareness of high courts directly, no such question has been included in the LAPOP AmericasBarometer surveys, nor any other cross-national survey since 1992/3 (Gibson, Caldeira and Baird 1998). The *Politically Informed* index is a composite of four separate survey items which query the frequency of respondents’ news consumption via newspapers, the radio, television and the internet.¹³ To gauge *Political Interest*, respondents were simply asked how much politics interested them.

Second, keeping with Easton (1965), we evaluate the connection between individuals’ *Diffuse* and *specific support* for the supreme court. Lacking direct questions, such as a job

¹³The original items’ scores were inverted such that higher scores represent more frequent consumption of news, then summed to create the composite index, which ranges from zero (no news consumption) to 12 (daily news consumption from all four sources).

performance question (Gibson and Nelson 2015), to evaluate respondents’ perceptions of institutional performance, we draw upon the conclusions of Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003a)—namely, that measures of institutional confidence tend to represent short-term performance evaluations—and use the institutional trust measure as a surrogate for specific support.

We also include measures of both *Executive Trust* and *Government Trust*, measured on a 1-7 scale, in the model. As a result, the interpretation of the *Institutional Trust* variable is the effect of trust in the supreme court, holding constant other general evaluations of political trust.¹⁴

In the models with institutional trust as the outcome variable, we include *Diffuse Support* as an explanatory variable, seeking to determine whether, holding all else constant, respondents’ levels of institutional loyalty predict their level of trust in their supreme court.

Third, we include respondents’ perceptions of procedural justice. Though direct questions regarding respondents’ experience with the justice system as well as their perceptions of procedural experiences would be ideal in this respect, and experimental instruments still better, we rely instead on a battery of questions regarding respondents’ evaluation of the courts and justice system more generally. Respondents were asked whether they believed courts could ensure a *Fair Trial*, and in the case of their victimization, whether they ex-

¹⁴A factor analysis of the data suggest that respondents’ reported trust in the supreme court correlates strongly to their attitudes towards other actors and institutions in the system, loading on a common factor analytic dimension. Moreover, the *Executive Trust* and *Government Trust* questions load strongly onto a common factor analytic dimension, and are highly correlated ($\rho = .70$). We chose to include both in the individual-level analysis because the question relating to *Diffuse Support* included references to both the political executive and their subsequent governing, so our inclusion of both variables covers these references. Our results are unchanged if we include either, one, or both.

pected the national courts would *Punish the Guilty* parties. A final measure evaluates the political system more broadly, in the extent to which it guarantees citizens' *Basic Rights*.

Finally, we evaluate the effect of democratic attitudes on institutional support for the supreme court using a battery of questions meant to tap into respondents' evaluations of the democracies in which they live and more general attitudes regarding the political institutions, majoritarianism, minority rights, and the relative value of electoral democracy as opposed to strong leadership. *Democratic Satisfaction* queried the extent to which respondents were satisfied with democracy as a system of governance, with most people in our sample responding in the affirmative. *Respect for Institutions* respondents' professed respect for the political institutions of the country, as with *Democratic Satisfaction*, a majority of respondents reported above average levels of respect for political institutions. Three variables we include tap into respondents' attitudes towards majoritarianism and the protection of minorities' rights: *Majority Rule* evaluated the extent to which respondents would prioritize the viewpoints of the majority above all other perspectives; *Minority Threat* gauged the extent to which minorities are viewed as a threat to the country; and *Opposition Voting Rights* considered whether voting rights ought to be suspended for extremists or members of the political opposition. *Strong Leader* presents respondents with a hypothetical tradeoff: would they prioritize an unelected, but "strong" leader, or do they believe electoral democracy is always preferable, even if sometimes imperfect? Finally, we include a measure of *Interpersonal Trust*.

We also include controls for a variety of standard demographic characteristics, including *Age*, *Gender*, *Ethnicity*, *Education (Years)*, and *Socioeconomic Status*. Such demographic characteristics may be correlated with institutional trust or democratic values as well as with diffuse support. A full description of each of these variables, including statistics of their relative distribution, is detailed in the Appendix.

Finally, we include in these models country-level fixed effects, to control for both the

clustering of respondents into countries as well as for heterogeneity in our outcome variable owing to unobserved and unmeasured national factors. The completely unpooled country-level regressions are shown in the Appendix.

Table 2: Individual-level Predictors of Public Trust for National Supreme Court (OLS)

	Awareness & Knowledge	Diffuse Support & Political Attitudes	Procedural Justice	Democratic Values	Full Model	Attentive Public
Informed	0.00 (0.00)				-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)
Political Interest	0.19* (0.01)				0.03* (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)
Diffuse Support		0.22* (0.02)			0.17* (0.02)	0.18* (0.03)
Trust Executive		0.28* (0.01)			0.22* (0.01)	0.22* (0.01)
Trust Government		0.27* (0.01)			0.16* (0.01)	0.13* (0.01)
Fair Trial			0.27* (0.01)		0.20* (0.01)	0.23* (0.01)
Punish Guilty			0.23* (0.01)		0.15* (0.01)	0.17* (0.01)
Basic Rights			0.29* (0.01)		0.13* (0.01)	0.11* (0.01)
Democratic Satisfaction				0.39* (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)
Respect Institutions				0.29* (0.01)	0.07* (0.01)	0.08* (0.01)
Minority Threat				0.02* (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
Majority Rule				0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
Opposition Voting Rights				-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)
Strong Leader				-0.11* (0.03)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.09* (0.04)
Interpersonal Trust				0.11* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
(Intercept)	2.97* (0.07)	1.09* (0.06)	1.00* (0.06)	1.33* (0.08)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.22 (0.12)
<i>N</i>	30871	27417	28701	24779	20937	10781
Country-Level F.E.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls†	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	123248.25	99164.61	105674.89	94768.86	72385.74	36796.84
BIC	124182.06	100118.00	106633.60	95807.93	73657.62	37962.53
log <i>L</i>	-61512.13	-49466.30	-52721.45	-47256.43	-36032.87	-18238.42

Standard errors in parentheses, * indicates significance at $p < 0.05$. †Controls include measures of *Age*, *Gender*, *Ethnicity*, *Education (Years)*, and *Socioeconomic Status* as well as country-level dichotomous indicators. A full description of each explanatory variable is provided in the Supplementary Information appendix.

Table 3: Individual-level Predictors of Diffuse Support for National Supreme Court (Logit)

	Awareness & Knowledge	Diffuse Support & Political Attitudes	Procedural Justice	Democratic Values	Full Model	Attentive Public
Informed	0.00 (0.01)				0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Political Interest	-0.03* (0.02)				-0.04 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)
Specific Support		0.11* (0.01)			0.10* (0.01)	0.11* (0.02)
Trust Executive		-0.06* (0.01)			-0.06* (0.01)	-0.08* (0.02)
Trust Government		-0.05* (0.01)			-0.06* (0.01)	-0.06* (0.02)
Fair Trial			0.03* (0.01)		0.02 (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)
Punish Guilty			0.00 (0.02)		-0.00 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)
Basic Rights			-0.00 (0.01)		-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.02)
Democratic Satisfaction				-0.04 (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)
Institutional Respect				0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.02)
Minority Rights				-0.06* (0.01)	-0.06* (0.01)	-0.07* (0.01)
Majority Rule				-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.04* (0.01)
Opposition Voting Rights				0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Strong Leader				-0.33* (0.04)	-0.34* (0.05)	-0.19* (0.07)
Interpersonal Trust				0.08* (0.02)	0.08* (0.02)	0.06* (0.03)
(Intercept)	1.27* (0.11)	1.24* (0.11)	1.08* (0.12)	1.20* (0.14)	1.19* (0.16)	1.17* (0.24)
<i>N</i>	28267	27417	26417	23176	20937	10781
Country-Level F.E.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls†	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	25950	25140	24340	20960	19000	9966.5

Standard errors in parentheses, * indicates significance at $p < 0.05$. †Controls include measures of *Age*, *Gender*, *Ethnicity*, *Education (Years)*, and *Socioeconomic Status* as well as country-level dichotomous indicators. A full description of each explanatory variable is provided in the Supplementary Information appendix.

B. Multivariate Results: Support for National High Courts

Table 2 reports the results of fixed-effects regressions of individual-level models of *Institutional Trust* in national supreme courts. Table 3 reports the same set of results for our

Diffuse Support outcome variable. In both tables, the first four columns report the results from a model that evaluates our main four hypotheses in isolation, while the fifth column presents a fully specified multivariate model. The final column in Table 2 constrains the analysis to respondents we believe likely to be “Attentive” to the politics of the supreme court, so as to emulate the analysis undertaken by Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998).¹⁵

We begin by assessing the relationship between attentiveness and support. Recall that Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) found a positive relationship between increased attentiveness and support for national supreme courts. Our data tell a different story. We have little evidence to suggest that *Awareness* is positively related to *Diffuse Support*, a finding which initially seems to run counter to Gibson’s famous conjecture that “to know a court is to love it.” Indeed, we have little evidence that *Information* has any explanatory value, at least statistically speaking, in explaining the variance in *Institutional Trust* or *Diffuse Support*, and we therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis of no effect. In fact, and in direct contradiction to the results of Gibson and Caldeira (2009) and a large number of studies of the U.S. Supreme Court, our constrained model points to a *negative* relationship between *Political Interest* and *Diffuse Support*, suggesting that those with more interest in politics (who may also be more attentive), are actually *less* likely to ascribe legitimacy to the supreme court. While consistent with other comparative research (Salzman and Ramsey 2013; Çakir and Şekercioglu 2016), this finding runs counter to a broad literature on diffuse support for the Supreme Court in the United States, which generally suggests that citizens with elite status, education, and political knowledge show more support for the courts (Murphy, Tanenhaus and Kastner 1973; Adamany and Grossman 1983; Caldeira

¹⁵The United States is not included in the current analysis because the *Diffuse Support* question was only asked in 2006 for that country. The 2006 survey did not ask a large number of questions that would allow us to test the hypotheses of primary theoretical interest, which is why the analysis is restricted to 2008.

and Gibson 1992; Gibson and Nelson 2015).¹⁶ Clearly, there is room to investigate these dynamics much further and to separate the effects of political knowledge—the concept to which Gibson referred directly—and general self-reported political awareness.

Second, we assess the relationship between institutional trust and diffuse support. Looking at both tables, it is clear that these two concepts are related, both in their own correlation and their shared explanations. *Diffuse Support* is a stronger predictor of *Institutional Trust* than the converse, but both coefficients are positively signed and statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. As with the research on the correlates of public support in the United States, Latin Americans' *Institutional Trust* in their national judicial institutions is positively correlated with both their *Trust in Government* and *Trust in the Executive* (Caldeira and Gibson 1992; Caldeira 1986; Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003a). Though earlier analyses revealed no systematic effects of ideology, likely owing to the cross-national specificity with which judicial issues are politicized, this supports the hypothesis of Dolbeare and Hammond (1968) that political heuristics like partisanship and support for the government provide a useful shortcut for citizens' evaluation of political institutions and the environment writ large. As such, and consistent with the analysis of Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003a), the cross-national measures of trust or confidence in the judiciary appear to be capturing relatively short-term responses not only to the court, but also to other political authorities and the broader political environment.

The same cannot be said for *Diffuse Support*. This is an important distinguishing factor

¹⁶As an alternative metric, the coefficient for *Education (years)* is positive and statistically significant from zero in the constrained model of *Diffuse Support*, with a magnitude of effect which is roughly one third of that of *Political Interest*. However, this coefficient does not meet conventional levels of statistical significance in the full model when other explanatory factors are controlled.

between the outcome variables of interest.¹⁷ Though *Trust in Government* and *Trust in the Executive* are positively correlated with citizens' trust in their judicial institutions, these two measures of government support are *inversely* related to citizens' evaluations of diffuse support. This finding provides further support for the assertion made by Gibson and Caldeira (2009) that citizens view courts as fundamentally different types of institutions, suggesting that their commitment toward the supreme court may be differentiable from their views of other branches of government, insofar as one's opposition or mistrust of the government may not jeopardize one's commitment to a national court. Yet on the other side of the coin, this finding is seemingly deleterious for the courts of the region, as it may imply that the national majority coalitions that support the government or political executive may also endorse the elimination of a national high court.¹⁸ Though this is impossible to decisively parse with observational data, this is an avenue for future research which is worthy of additional consideration.

Third, there has been considerable debate regarding the effect of citizens' perceptions of procedural justice on subsequent correlates of institutional support (Tyler 1988; Gibson 1989). Our analysis suggests that these factors are correlated with *Institutional Trust* in the supreme courts of the Americas, but are largely unrelated to said institutions' *Diffuse Support*. Principal-component analysis suggests that two of these three measures—in particular those relating directly to the courts—also load heavily on a common factor along

¹⁷In the country-level regressions, one or both of the *Trust* variables are statistically significant predictors of *Institutional Trust* in all 20 countries, though they are only statistically significant predictors in half of the country-level regressions of *Diffuse Support*

¹⁸Though recent inter-branch showdowns between presidents and high courts of Venezuela, Honduras, Bolivia and Ecuador (Basabe-Serrano 2011; Helmke 2017) stand as prominent examples, our country-level regressions suggest that these dynamics are widespread, and not driven by a single or small number of outlier cases.

with respondents' trust in the government and political executive. Though this does not allow for any definitive claims regarding the hypothesis as it relates to *Procedural Justice*, this reinforces the impression that the measure of institutional trust or confidence in the national high courts is really capturing a short-term performance evaluation—akin to specific support—rather than the broader institutional loyalty characteristic of diffuse support.

Fourth, some of the most interesting differences across the two outcomes come from the performance of the *Democratic Values* indicators. Respondents' reported *Democratic Satisfaction* is a strong predictor of their reported *Institutional Trust* for their national high court, though this variable has no explanatory value in the case of *Diffuse Support*. As with the case of *Government Trust*, this is further evidence that the oft-used measure of judicial trust is capturing citizens' relatively short-term attitudes towards the political environment and even the regime. Predictably, *Institutional Respect* is positively associated with both measures of support for supreme courts, though the magnitude of the coefficient is much larger in the case of *Institutional Trust*. Strikingly, attitudes about majority rule and minority rights, though only weakly correlated in either case, appear to work in *opposite* directions for our types of institutional support. Though the variables *Minority Threat* and *Majority Rule* jointly load on a common analytical factor, they are positively correlated with citizens' trust in high courts, though both inversely related to respondents' willingness to *Diffuse Support* for the supreme court. These patterns corroborate the assertions and findings of Walker (2016) and Gibson and Nelson (2015), who claim that democratic values are among the strongest predictors of *Institutional Legitimacy*. Moreover, our results suggest that omitting these critical explanatory variables is detrimental to our broader inferences and generalizations.

Finally, and also quite striking, is the effect of respondents' attitudes regarding a *Strong*

Leader, who may come to power from democratically dubious means.¹⁹ While the coefficient is negatively signed in both equations, implying that those who prefer a strong leader to democracy are less likely to profess support for the court, the coefficient for *Strong Leader* is far and away the largest in terms of the magnitude of effect in terms of explaining *Diffuse Support* for the judiciary. This appears to be a meaningful distinction between the *Institutional Trust* outcome and our outcome for *Diffuse Support*; *Strong Leader* is a statistically significant predictor in only 1 of 20 country-level regressions of *Institutional Trust*, though it is significant in 9 of 20 regressions of *Diffuse Support*. For those who a *Strong Leader* is preferred to an electoral democracy, the probability of protecting the institutional integrity of the court declines by about 7%. This is also the singular case where the distinction between “Attentive Public” appears to be meaningful, and also only in the case of *Diffuse Support*. Comparing the coefficient for *Strong Leader* in the “Attentive Public” model to that of the full population, we can see that the large coefficient on *Strong Leader* is largely fueled by those who are on the unsophisticated end of the political spectrum, at least with respect to political *Information* and *Interest*. These findings underscore the need to more fully explore Easton’s (1965) concept of personal legitimacy, which suggests that individuals—especially those who are relatively uninformed about politics and government—might generalize their attitudes from a charismatic leader to an institution and vice-versa.

IV. DISCUSSION

In this paper, we have evaluated institutional support for high courts across Latin America. Our results suggest that, contrary to conventional wisdom, these courts are not lacking in

¹⁹This question reads “There are people who say that we need a strong leader who does not have to be elected by the vote of the people. Others say that although things may not work, electoral democracy, or the popular vote, is always best. What do you think?”

diffuse support; they are widely perceived as legitimate political institutions. Indeed, our data suggest that Latin American supreme courts are just as legitimate as the U.S. Supreme Court, which has been widely regarded as the most legitimate constitutional court in the world.

This descriptive result calls into question existing conventional wisdom about the efficacy of Latin American judiciaries, as it pertains to both their institutional integrity as well as their potential efficacy. Institutional legitimacy—the profound public regard for the high court as an institution—is important, among other reasons, because it deters would-be institutional assailants and promotes compliance. The threat of public backlash has been theorized as a critical mechanism for protecting high courts from incumbent attacks, who would seek to influence or undermine high courts via court curbing attacks (Vanberg 2001; Whittington 2005; Clark 2009). In the Latin American separation of powers systems, this threat of incumbent infringement and institutional assault is ever present and real, and the high courts’ lack of institutional legitimacy is commonly posited to be at fault (Helmke 2010*a,b*; Kapiszewski 2012). The results presented herein suggest that there is more to the story here than meets the eye. If it is the case that Latin American courts are more widely legitimate than previously believed, then this begs the question as to what incumbents derive from their high court attacks (c.f. Driscoll 2012), and the extent to which the lack of public support for the judiciary is to blame for institutional instability in the region (Helmke 2010; Helmke 2017).

Second, but no less important, institutional legitimacy and the threat of public sanction is also a key mechanism in the assurance of compliance with judicial decisions—as in the case of court curbing, incumbents may acquiesce critical political territory to high courts when they believe the public will punish them for simply ignoring the court. This assumption—that public support is a key determinant of compliance, which is of primary import to the justices of national high courts—has motivated a broad literature on strategic

judicial behavior in high courts around the world, impacting everything from the decisions they craft (Clark 2010), to interbranch relations (Nelson and Uribe-McGuire 2017), to their procedural elements and publication decisions (Vanberg 2001; Staton 2010; Krehbiel 2016).²⁰ Often compliance is taken as a necessary precursor to the expansion of judicial power; after all, a court which can simply be ignored cannot be said to serve as a meaningful political check. Consequently, and coupled with the widely reported fact that Latin American courts lack public confidence, though there’s clear variance in the extent to which this is true (Helmke & Ríos-Figueroa 2011), it has been largely assumed that Latin American courts are generally impotent political actors and lacking in judicial power (Prillaman 2010). Broadly speaking, our results suggest that Latin American high courts have the institutional support necessary to be effective partners in governance and have a reservoir of support that is deep enough to stand up to overreach by the other branches of government and secure implementation of their decisions. Minimally, we have much more to understand.

The distinction we draw—between trust and institutional commitment—is one with a difference. At a most basic level, we show that judgments of institutional trust differ from judgments of institutional legitimacy. Moreover, drawing upon the important measurement work done by Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003*a*), we have demonstrated that institutional trust more closely follows performance satisfaction (specific support) than dif-

²⁰We acknowledge that the outcome we study here, *Diffuse support*, is conceptually and statistically different from compliance, a fact that Easton (1975) also explicitly acknowledged. Though we do not directly address this variable here and take issue with conflating the two, others often use “legitimacy” and “compliance” coterminously. As Tyler (2006) puts it, “Because of legitimacy, people feel that they ought to defer to decisions and rules, following them voluntarily out of obligation rather than out of fear of punishment or anticipation of reward” (375).

fuse support. We find that the strongest correlates of *institutional trust*, which we employ in the multivariate analysis as a measure of *specific support* following the conclusions of Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003a), are measures that tap into respondents' evaluations of the courts, as well as the broader political environment, including their reported trust for the government, the executive, and democracy more broadly. Diffuse support, by contrast, is most strongly explained by democratic values. This is consistent with the work of Easton (1965, 1975), as well as Gibson and Nelson (2015, 2017). The practical implication for future researchers is clear: measures of institutional trust or confidence should not be used as a measure of institutional loyalty or legitimacy, or minimally, they ought to be interpreted with the appropriate caveats.

Another important area of future research relates to the generalizability of positivity theory beyond the United States. The positive correlation between awareness and diffuse support has been repeatedly established in the United States (Caldeira and Gibson 1992; Gibson 2007), and Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) find similar evidence in their sample of European high courts. However, our data reveal a directly contrary relationship between reported awareness and diffuse support, a finding that is consistent with other cross-national comparative research (Salzman and Ramsey 2013; Walker 2016; Çakir and Şekerciöglü 2016). One reason for this differing finding may be that our measure of awareness is general self-reported political awareness rather than objective measures of court knowledge (e.g. Gibson and Nelson 2015), or self-reported knowledge about the country's judicial institutions (e.g. Gibson, Caldeira and Baird 1998) that these prior findings are based upon. But a different, and more theoretically interesting, reason for this reversal comes from the operation of judicial symbols. Recall that positivity theory suggests that the "good feelings" brought about by judicial symbols operate as the glue that binds increased awareness and diffuse support; when individuals are exposed to courts, they are exposed to symbols—things like robes and temple-like courtrooms—that they have posi-

tive associations with. The exposure to symbols, in turn, leads to increased loyalty. Given higher levels of corruption (Salzman and Ramsey 2013), nepotism, and institutional instability (Helmke 2010*a*; Castagnola and Pérez-Liñán 2010) in Latin America, it may be that the symbols of judicial authority operate differently outside of the U.S. and European contexts. Indeed, if the symbols of judicial authority read as symbols of oppression, rather than as some positive association, it would explain the robust negative relationship our data reveal.

This research also serves as a call for more—and continuous—systematic research on the micro-foundations of public support for high courts and political institutions writ large. Much of what we know about public support for judicial institutions comes from a single cross-national study (Gibson, Caldeira and Baird 1998). Though seminal, the research presented here raises several discrepancies that simply cannot be reconciled with existing data. For example, the data on which the superior legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court rests—the Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) surveys—sampled a set of countries that varied widely in their institutional age, leading the authors to reason that diffuse support of the public was something that might develop and be actively cultured by courts over time. That Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998) found a positive relationship between institutional age and diffuse support and that the Latin American courts are broadly viewed as legitimate on par with the U.S. Supreme Court suggests an important scope condition for the institutional age hypothesis put forth by Gibson, Caldeira and Baird (1998): institutional age is particularly important for differentiating among the diffuse support of young courts but is less informative once a court is established. Yet an equally plausible hypothesis concerns political institutions and the constitutional separation of powers. Though Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird’s data contains a handful of semi-presidential systems (i.e. France and Russia) or parliamentary systems that include a ceremonial president, most are parliamentary systems, some of which adhere to a doctrine of strict parliamen-

tary supremacy. It seems plausible that this formal and constitutionalized separation of powers shapes citizens' expectations regarding the appropriate bounds of the division of power; future research should focus on developing survey instruments and sampling plans to disentangle this important effect.

Finally, we acknowledge the limitations of the data we analyze. First, we acknowledge that these data are observational in nature, and the causality among variables is not always particularly clear. More experimental approaches to the study of institutional support, like those that have become increasingly popular in the United States (Bartels and Johnston 2013; Gibson and Nelson 2016) are necessary. Second, we, like many scholars of Latin American public opinion, stand on the shoulders of the immensely important data gathering capabilities of those who run the Americas Barometer survey. While some of the questions on these large-scale survey operations are ideal for our purposes, others—like the lack of a general job performance measure of specific support—are not. Thus, our analysis is limited to the measures available to us. However, our analysis suggests that scholars, like us, who use existing surveys to study institutional support need to take care to interpret measures as applying to specific concepts only when such a linkage is clear. Also, when scholars have the opportunity to design and implement their own surveys, they need to take care to ask appropriate questions that provide valid representations of the concepts of interest. Indeed, our analysis, like Gibson, Caldeira and Spence (2003*a*) before us, underscores the important difference between institutional legitimacy and other types of support, like trust and confidence.

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THERE IS NO CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY: SUPPORT FOR
JUDICIAL INSTITUTIONS IN MODERN LATIN AMERICA
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

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A. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Data for the analyses in the main paper were taken from nationally representative public opinion surveys of LAPOP, which are administered between 2004 and 2012 as part of the Americas Barometer project at Vanderbilt University. Table A1 provides descriptive statistics for each of the main explanatory variables of theoretical interest, and details the original question wording as they were administered in the surveys. The descriptive statistics correspond to the distribution as of 2008, which are the same data we analyze in our multivariate regressions, above. Please note that the original scale of some variables have been inverted from their original coding, so as to provide a more intuitive interpretation.

Table A1: Individual level explanatory covariates

	Min.	Mean	Max.	St.Dev.
Incumbent Evaluations & Political Attitudes				
To what extent do you trust the Supreme Court?	1	3.81	7	1.82
To what extent do you trust the Executive?	1	3.99	7	2.08
To what extent do you trust the Government?	1	3.92	7	1.93
Awareness & Political Knowledge				
Political Awareness (Index)†	0	5.75	12	2.50
How much interest do you have in politics?	1	2.02	4	.95
Education (Years)	0	9.16	18	4.58
Democratic Attitudes & Political Tolerance				
To what extent do you respect the political institutions of (country)?	1	4.46	7	1.87
In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in (country)?	1	1.55	3	.74
Those who disagree with the majority represent a threat to the country. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?	1	3.71	7	1.99
Once a majority of people have decided what is right, we should stop a minority from impeding or interfering. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?	1	4.1	7	1.98
There are people who say that we need a strong leader who does not have to be elected by the vote of the people. Others say that although things may not work, electoral democracy, or the popular vote, is always best. What do you think?	0	.15	1	.36
There are people who only say bad things about the (country) form of government, not just the incumbent government but the system of government. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of such people's right to vote?	1	6.11	10	3.01
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...?	1	1.77	4	.90
Law, Order & Procedural Justice				
To what extent do you think the courts in (country) guarantee a fair trial?	1	3.83	7	1.72
If you were a victim of a robbery or assault, how much faith do you have that the judicial system would punish the guilty?	0	1.25	3	.99
To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of (country)?	1	3.73	7	1.71
Sociodemographic characteristics				
Gender	0	.51	1	.49
Ethnicity	0	1.13	2	.76
Age	16	39.52	101	16.09
Ownership (Index)‡	1	5.63	11	2.77

All data come from the LAPOP Americas Barometer, 2008. †The *Politically Informed* index is a composite of four separate survey items which query the frequency of respondents' news consumption via newspapers, the radio, television and the internet. The original items' scores were inverted such that higher scores more frequent consumption of news, then summed to create the composite index, which ranges from zero (no news consumption) to 12 (daily news consumption from all four sources). ‡The *Ownership* index is an 11-point composite measure of socioeconomic status, based on respondents' reported ownership of a variety of consumer goods. The goods range from those which would be associated with a minimal standard of living (i.e. running water and an indoor bathroom), to items which would be considered luxury purchases by today's standards in all of the countries under study (owning a personal computer). The index is a sum of each dichotomized constitutive ownership item, which ranges from 1 to 11.

Table 1: Individual-level predictors of Public Trust for National Supreme Court, Ordinal Logistic Regression

	Diffuse Support & Political Attitudes	Awareness & Knowledge	Democratic Values	Procedural Justice	Full Model	Attentive Public
Diffuse Support	0.265* (0.028)				0.224* (0.033)	0.231* (0.045)
Trust Executive	0.389* (0.009)				0.321* (0.011)	0.321* (0.015)
Trust Government	0.382* (0.009)				0.243* (0.011)	0.202* (0.016)
Informed		0.003 (0.005)			0.001 (0.006)	0.021** (0.011)
Political Interest		0.200* (0.012)			0.039* (0.015)	0.040 (0.024)
Democratic Satisfaction			0.450* (0.018)		-0.0003 (0.020)	0.011 (0.029)
Respect Institutions			0.358* (0.007)		0.102* (0.009)	0.128* (0.013)
Minority Threat			0.020* (0.007)		-0.005 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.010)
Majority Rule			0.044* (0.007)		0.013 (0.007)	0.005 (0.010)
Opposition Voting Rights			-0.003 (0.004)		0.003 (0.005)	0.014** (0.006)
Strong Leader			-0.133* (0.035)		-0.080** (0.039)	-0.129** (0.056)
Interpersonal Trust			0.123* (0.014)		0.044* (0.016)	0.025 (0.022)
Fair Trial				0.366* (0.008)	0.295* (0.010)	0.339* (0.014)
Punish Guilty				0.277* (0.012)	0.196* (0.015)	0.236* (0.021)
Basic Rights				0.392* (0.008)	0.201* (0.011)	0.183* (0.015)
Cutpoints 1 2	1.29	-0.991	0.86	1.42	2.95	3.25
2 3	2.24	-0.27	1.68	2.32	3.99	4.31
3 4	3.30	0.517	2.57	3.31	5.17	5.51
4 5	4.52	1.45	3.62	4.47	6.51	6.87
5 6	5.77	2.42	4.74	5.67	7.93	8.29
6 7	6.96	3.39	5.83	6.83	9.25	9.73
N	24,947	28,169	22,438	26,218	18,955	9,911
Country-Level F.E.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls†	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	81705.86	103183.90	78541.28	87561.45	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses, * indicates significance at $p < 0.05$. †Controls include measures of *Age*, *Gender*, *Ethnicity*, *Education (Years)*, and *Socioeconomic Status* as well as country-level dichotomous indicators.

Table 2: Individual level predictors of Institutional Trust for National Supreme Court, Country Regressions

	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dom. Rep.	Ecuador	El Salv.	Guatemala
Diffuse Support	0.09 (0.12)	0.34* (0.07)	0.35* (0.13)	0.15 (0.10)	0.27* (0.10)	0.16 (0.12)	0.13 (0.12)	0.12 (0.06)	0.03 (0.09)	0.10 (0.12)
Trust Executive	0.20* (0.04)	0.02 (0.02)	0.25* (0.03)	0.22* (0.03)	0.23* (0.03)	0.17* (0.03)	0.23* (0.03)	0.10* (0.02)	0.31* (0.03)	0.31* (0.03)
Trust Government	0.15* (0.04)	0.14* (0.02)	0.19* (0.03)	0.20* (0.03)	0.22* (0.03)	0.21* (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)	0.09* (0.02)	0.13* (0.03)	0.21* (0.03)
Informed	-0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)
Political Interest	0.13* (0.05)	0.09* (0.03)	0.10 (0.05)	0.08* (0.04)	0.14* (0.04)	0.10 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.11* (0.05)
Democratic Satisfaction	-0.15* (0.08)	0.05 (0.04)	0.09 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)	0.08 (0.05)	0.09 (0.08)
Respect Institutions	0.03 (0.03)	0.07* (0.02)	0.09* (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)	0.12* (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.08* (0.02)	0.06* (0.02)	0.07* (0.03)
Minority Threat	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.03)
Majority Rule	-0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.06* (0.03)
Strong Leader	0.27 (0.20)	0.02 (0.10)	0.04 (0.14)	-0.09 (0.10)	-0.07 (0.14)	-0.01 (0.13)	0.15 (0.18)	-0.01 (0.08)	0.02 (0.10)	0.17 (0.13)
Opposition Voting Rights	-0.04* (0.02)	0.02* (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.04* (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)
Interpersonal Trust	0.03 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.09* (0.04)	0.04 (0.05)
Fair Trial	0.24* (0.04)	0.38* (0.02)	0.16* (0.03)	0.25* (0.03)	0.13* (0.03)	0.22* (0.03)	0.30* (0.03)	0.23* (0.02)	0.18* (0.02)	0.11* (0.03)
Punish Guilty	0.21* (0.06)	0.12* (0.03)	0.06 (0.05)	0.15* (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	0.15* (0.05)	0.16* (0.05)	0.13* (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	0.12* (0.05)
Basic Rights	0.18* (0.04)	0.15* (0.02)	0.08* (0.03)	0.11* (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.15* (0.03)	0.15* (0.02)	0.10* (0.02)	0.14* (0.04)
(Intercept)	-0.16 (0.37)	0.28 (0.23)	-0.90* (0.36)	0.14 (0.31)	-0.04 (0.30)	0.41 (0.37)	0.54 (0.36)	0.67* (0.24)	0.13 (0.27)	-0.14 (0.38)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	782	2014	791	1098	1059	1036	930	2052	1322	776
AIC	2550.20	7235.31	2643.56	3543.62	3609.93	3657.49	3334.56	7527.88	4379.79	2592.74
BIC	2941.80	7706.37	3036.11	3963.72	4007.13	4072.71	3740.72	8000.51	4815.49	2983.69
log L	-1191.10	-3533.65	-1237.78	-1687.81	-1724.96	-1744.74	-1583.28	-3679.94	-2105.90	-1212.37

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Individual level predictors of Institutional Trust for National Supreme Court, Country Regressions

	Haiti	Honduras	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Diffuse Support	0.16 (0.17)	0.09 (0.10)	0.14 (0.10)	0.13 (0.09)	0.03 (0.14)	0.02 (0.09)	0.21* (0.09)	0.09 (0.07)	0.29* (0.10)	0.33* (0.11)
Trust Executive	0.18* (0.03)	0.37* (0.03)	0.22* (0.03)	0.41* (0.03)	0.34* (0.03)	0.27* (0.03)	0.34* (0.04)	0.24* (0.03)	0.15* (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Trust Government	0.13* (0.04)	0.15* (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	0.26* (0.03)	0.12* (0.03)	0.25* (0.03)	0.23* (0.04)	0.24* (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)	0.32* (0.04)
Informed	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Political Interest	-0.05 (0.06)	0.08 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.08 (0.04)	0.00 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)
Democratic Satisfaction	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.07)	0.20* (0.07)	-0.07 (0.06)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.22* (0.05)	0.11 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.10 (0.06)
Respect Institutions	0.09* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.06 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)	0.04 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.13* (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)
Minority Threat	0.01 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.02)	0.08* (0.02)	0.00 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.07* (0.02)
Majority Rule	0.04 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Strong Leader	0.15 (0.16)	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.15 (0.12)	-0.15 (0.10)	-0.13 (0.15)	-0.37* (0.10)	-0.08 (0.10)	0.02 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.17)	-0.14 (0.20)
Opposition Voting Rights	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.03* (0.02)	-0.03 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Interpersonal Trust	0.11 (0.06)	0.05 (0.05)	0.07 (0.07)	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)
Fair Trial	0.06 (0.04)	0.07* (0.03)	0.24* (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)	0.10* (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.16* (0.03)	0.11* (0.02)	0.40* (0.03)	0.31* (0.03)
Punish Guilty	0.02 (0.06)	0.10 (0.05)	0.26* (0.05)	0.08* (0.04)	0.19* (0.05)	0.08 (0.04)	0.01 (0.05)	0.08* (0.04)	0.19* (0.04)	0.18* (0.05)
Basic Rights	0.11* (0.04)	0.17* (0.03)	0.13* (0.03)	0.10* (0.03)	0.17* (0.03)	0.16* (0.04)	0.08* (0.03)	0.19* (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	0.07* (0.04)
(Intercept)	1.35 (1.12)	0.42 (0.29)	-0.35 (0.66)	0.21 (0.29)	-0.24 (0.34)	0.30 (0.30)	0.25 (0.26)	0.34 (0.26)	-0.34 (0.29)	-1.17* (0.32)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	840	809	808	1072	951	1085	765	1183	1078	865
AIC	3037.58	2414.46	2686.96	3456.51	3417.48	3583.98	2153.08	3593.41	3551.65	2805.38
BIC	3435.19	2808.91	3081.30	3874.60	3825.51	4003.08	2542.83	4019.78	3970.21	3205.45
logL	-1434.79	-1123.23	-1259.48	-1644.25	-1624.74	-1707.99	-992.54	-1712.71	-1691.82	-1318.69

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Individual level predictors of Diffuse Support for National Supreme Court, Country Regressions

	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dom. Rep.	Ecuador	El Salv.	Guatemala
Institutional Trust	0.07 (0.08)	0.22* (0.06)	0.23* (0.08)	0.10 (0.07)	0.16* (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	0.07 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	0.06 (0.08)
Trust Executive	-0.14 (0.09)	-0.14* (0.06)	-0.24* (0.08)	-0.01 (0.07)	0.01 (0.05)	0.05 (0.06)	-0.11 (0.06)	-0.19* (0.05)	0.04 (0.06)	0.10 (0.07)
Trust Government	0.03 (0.10)	-0.15* (0.06)	0.19* (0.08)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.16* (0.07)	0.03 (0.06)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.15* (0.06)	-0.18* (0.08)
Informed	0.08 (0.05)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.05)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.09* (0.04)	0.06 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.04)
Political Interest	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.13 (0.12)	-0.10 (0.10)	-0.17* (0.08)	-0.04 (0.10)	0.08 (0.08)	-0.11 (0.08)	-0.11 (0.07)	-0.16 (0.11)
Democratic Satisfaction	0.15 (0.17)	-0.13 (0.12)	0.40* (0.16)	0.08 (0.14)	0.06 (0.11)	-0.00 (0.12)	0.12 (0.14)	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.11)	0.10 (0.16)
Respect Institutions	0.05 (0.07)	0.06 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.06)	0.05 (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	0.08* (0.04)	0.07 (0.06)
Minority Threat	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.12* (0.04)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.11* (0.05)	-0.12* (0.04)	-0.08* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.05)
Majority Rule	-0.12* (0.06)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.05)	(0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.12* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.17* (0.06)
Opposition Voting Rights	0.10* (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.05* (0.03)	-0.09* (0.03)
Strong Leader	-1.45* (0.35)	-0.42 (0.24)	-0.06 (0.31)	-0.52* (0.23)	-0.30 (0.24)	-0.53* (0.23)	-0.69* (0.27)	-0.17 (0.17)	-0.34 (0.18)	-0.58* (0.25)
Interpersonal Trust	-0.22 (0.14)	0.06 (0.09)	0.02 (0.13)	-0.18 (0.10)	0.24* (0.08)	0.07 (0.10)	-0.23* (0.10)	0.15* (0.07)	0.24* (0.07)	0.06 (0.11)
Fair Trial	0.15 (0.09)	0.06 (0.06)	-0.12 (0.07)	0.09 (0.07)	0.00 (0.05)	0.02 (0.06)	0.04 (0.06)	0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.08 (0.07)
Punish Guilty	0.36* (0.14)	-0.04 (0.08)	0.31* (0.13)	0.23* (0.10)	-0.07 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.09)	0.03 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.11)
Basic Rights	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.06)	0.03 (0.08)	-0.00 (0.08)	0.09 (0.06)	0.06 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.08)
(Intercept)	0.44 (0.80)	2.63* (0.62)	0.87 (0.78)	0.40 (0.72)	1.62* (0.54)	1.00 (0.70)	0.21 (0.64)	0.54 (0.52)	0.50 (0.51)	2.39* (0.77)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	782	2014	791	1098	1059	1036	930	2052	1322	776
AIC	659.27	972.05	653.00	928.76	1143.04	934.13	930.42	1469.79	1381.25	747.18
BIC	1050.86	1443.11	1045.56	1348.86	1540.25	1349.36	1336.57	1942.42	1816.95	1138.13
log L	-245.63	-402.03	-242.50	-380.38	-491.52	-383.07	-381.21	-650.89	-606.62	-289.59

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 5: Individual level predictors of Diffuse Support for National Supreme Court, Country Regressions

	Haiti	Honduras	Jamaica	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela
Institutional Trust	0.07 (0.08)	0.08 (0.09)	0.09 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)	0.02 (0.07)	0.01 (0.06)	0.23* (0.09)	0.08 (0.06)	0.19* (0.07)	0.21* (0.07)
Trust Executive	0.17* (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.12* (0.06)	-0.06 (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	0.20* (0.10)	0.08 (0.05)	-0.16* (0.07)	-0.11 (0.07)
Trust Government	-0.22* (0.08)	0.14 (0.09)	0.05 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.06)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.17* (0.09)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)
Informed	0.08 (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.09* (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)
Political Interest	-0.06 (0.13)	-0.27* (0.12)	-0.08 (0.09)	0.02 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.11)	0.16 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.09)	0.03 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.09)
Democratic Satisfaction	-0.06 (0.15)	-0.52* (0.16)	0.18 (0.12)	-0.15 (0.12)	0.03 (0.14)	-0.00 (0.10)	-0.23 (0.12)	0.17 (0.11)	0.30* (0.15)	-0.35* (0.13)
Respect Institutions	0.09 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.13* (0.06)	0.05 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	0.11 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.05 (0.05)	0.09 (0.06)
Minority Threat	-0.15* (0.07)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.19* (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.07 (0.05)
Majority Rule	0.11 (0.07)	-0.00 (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.09* (0.05)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)	0.02 (0.05)
Opposition Voting Rights	-0.05 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	0.04 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)	0.12* (0.03)
Strong Leader	-0.37 (0.34)	-0.58* (0.21)	0.62* (0.23)	-0.33 (0.20)	-0.42 (0.27)	0.13 (0.19)	0.12 (0.23)	-0.68* (0.16)	-0.80* (0.30)	-0.58 (0.38)
Interpersonal Trust	-0.09 (0.15)	0.11 (0.12)	-0.10 (0.12)	-0.00 (0.09)	0.21* (0.10)	0.00 (0.08)	0.11 (0.10)	0.08 (0.08)	0.22* (0.10)	0.37* (0.10)
Fair Trial	-0.16 (0.08)	0.04 (0.07)	0.03 (0.06)	0.08 (0.05)	0.06 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.11 (0.07)	0.06 (0.05)	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.36* (0.07)
Punish Guilty	0.09 (0.14)	-0.06 (0.13)	-0.20* (0.10)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.13 (0.10)	0.13 (0.09)	-0.15 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.10)
Basic Rights	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.14 (0.08)	0.00 (0.06)	-0.12* (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.08)	0.02 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.08)
(Intercept)	17.12 (594.96)	2.18* (0.69)	2.04 (1.34)	1.35* (0.56)	1.52* (0.65)	2.19* (0.56)	0.42 (0.57)	-0.09 (0.50)	0.28 (0.61)	0.74 (0.66)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	840	809	808	1072	951	1085	765	1183	1078	865
AIC	578.31	769.99	963.79	1207.78	792.91	1170.44	789.09	1515.19	979.73	837.16
BIC	975.92	1164.43	1358.13	1625.87	1200.94	1589.54	1178.84	1941.56	1398.29	1237.23
log L	-205.16	-300.99	-397.89	-519.89	-312.45	-501.22	-310.55	-673.59	-405.86	-334.58

Standard errors in parentheses
* indicates significance at $p < 0.05$