A Crisis of Representation? Protest and Parties in Latin America

Una crisis de representación: partidos y protesta en Latinoamerica

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Abstract:
Does the increasing disconnect between citizens and parties create a crisis of representation which results in citizens taking to the streets? In this article, we question whether lack of connections to political parties explains protests. Using 2018 data from LAPOP, we find that protesters who are linked to political parties are actually more likely to participate in protest than those who are not. However, the overall share of protest accounted for by people plugged into the party system is decreasing. Our results raise concerns about the perils of increasing distrust of political parties in Latin American countries.

Resumen:
¿La creciente desconexión entre los ciudadanos y los partidos crea una crisis de representación que hace que los ciudadanos salgan a la calle? En este artículo, nos preguntamos si la falta de conexiones con los partidos políticos explica las protestas. Utilizando datos de 2018 de LAPOP, encontramos que los manifestantes que están vinculados a los partidos políticos son en realidad más propensos a participar en la protesta que los que no lo están. Sin embargo, la proporción general de protestas que representan las personas conectadas al sistema de partidos está disminuyendo. Nuestros resultados plantean preocupaciones sobre los peligros de la creciente desconfianza en los partidos políticos en los países latinoamericanos.

Key Words:
Parties, protest, representation, democracy.

Palabras clave:
Partidos, protesta, representación, democracia.

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The last decade has not been kind to Latin American parties. Since the onset of the global economic crisis in 2008, the percentage of the population that identifies with any political party has declined in all but three Latin American countries (the exceptions being Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Venezuela).[1] By 2018, the latest date for which comprehensive data are available, about a quarter of the population identified with a political party compared to 38% of the population in 2006 (the first year of systematic LAPOP surveys). Distrust of political parties has hit record highs. Incredibly, nearly 35% of the population claims to trust political parties "not at all," roughly double the percentage (about 17%) who trust the police "not at all."

During this same time frame, many Latin American nations have been repeatedly roiled by waves of protest, from the *jornadas de junho* in Brazil in 2013 to the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS) protests in Bolivia in 2011 to the upheavals in Chile and Colombia in 2019-2020. Overall, the percentage of the population that reports having participated in at least one protest in the previous 12 months rose from 8% to nearly 10% between 2010 and 2018 (see Table 1). The apparent correlation between these trends raises an obvious question: Does the increasing

[1] We consider here the cases of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela as well as the Central American nations (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama).

disconnect between citizens and parties create a crisis of representation which results in disruptive protest?

Table 1. Protest rates across Latin America (percentage)

	Protested in last 12 months (2018)	Protested in last 12 months (2010)*
Bolivia	16.6↑	11.4
Venezuela	15.6 (2016) ↑	8.2
Peru	14.3 ↑	12.2
Argentina	13.7 ↑	15.4
Nicaragua	11.5 ↑	9.8
Colombia	11.1 ↑	6.8
Uruguay	11.0 ↑	11.5
Brazil	10.6 ↑	5.4
Guatemala	10.3 ↑	8.5
Costa Rica	10.2 ↑	5.4
Chile	9.7 ↑	4.7
Panama	9.2 ↑	4.8
Paraguay	8.8 ↑	12.0
Honduras	8.1 ↑	6.6
Ecuador	7.7 ↑	7.9
Mexico	7.1 ↑	6.4
El Salvador	3.4 ↑	4.3
Average	10.2 ↑	8.3

* 2010 was the first year the question was asked in reference to a 12-month period.

This paper addresses the individual correlates of protest, using a question from the 2018 LAPOP survey which asks whether the respondent participated in any act of protest over the previous twelve months. Contrary to the impression created by Latin America's protest waves, we find that protesters who are linked to political parties are more likely to participate in protest than those who are not. Moreover, there is little evidence to indicate that once we account for such affiliations, individual attitudes

such as interpersonal trust, support for democracy, or evaluations of economic performance result in higher rates of protest. These findings hold across contexts of relatively high and low levels of partisan identification. Nevertheless, an ever-greater share of protest is accounted for by citizens who have an active interest in politics but no stable party identity.

The attitudinal basis for protest

Much of the early literature on political parties and protest singles out parties as the antidote to social malaise. Samuel P. Huntington, for example, posited that "violence, rioting and other forms of political instability are more likely to occur in political systems without strong parties than in systems with them".[2] Only parties could absorb the pressures for participation that came with socioeconomic modernization. More recent work argues, similarly, that parties "help groups express their interests while allowing governments to govern", that they "channel political demands and can dampen political conflicts".[3]

Strong parties, then, should weaken the impetus for various forms of protest by giving subaltern groups way to express their demands by institutional means. Strong parties are more likely to be "socially rooted", meaning that they have developed relationships with existing organizations. These ties pay off for the party in electoral votes as well as greater social peace. Affective attachment, in turn, should make individuals more responsive to party cues, more likely to believe in the efficacy of institutional democratic participation, and less likely to protest. Declining party membership, in this reading of events, might result in more protest and more disruptive protest overall.

However, under two conditions, partisan attachment might promote protest. First, parties themselves may call for protest against a rival, or to

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2 Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 409.

3 Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, "Introduction: Party Systems in Latin America", in S. Mainwaring and T.R. Scully (eds.), *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 23.

demonstrate their support for a popular cause. People with ties to a political party may therefore be more likely to be asked to participate in a protest. Second, people who join parties may be systematically different than people who do not—more likely to have an interest in politics, more likely to see themselves as efficacious, and more likely to be informed about public issues. These characteristics, in turn, could lead them to participate in protest as well as more conventional types of behavior.

The idea that protest is not the alternative to voting, but a complementary form of action, has been suggested by a number of scholars. For example, Pippa Norris, Stefaan Walgrave and Peter Van Aelst find that "people who demonstrate are also significantly more likely to be civic joiners, party members, and labor organization members".[4] Likewise John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson suggest that "involvement in organizations often produces direct or indirect political engagement".[5] Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema include formal and informal networks in arguing that "networks condition whether people become targets of mobilization attempts".[6] Karl-Dieter Opp and Christiane Gern analyze the impact of social networks, including "first of all, social groups and organizations".[7] And Steven E. Finkel and K. Opp examine the implications of party identification for mobilizational behavior, finding that at least in some cases, parties do promote protest.[8] Others suggest on the contrary that it was disaffection from parties

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4 Pippa Norris, Stefaan Walgrave and Peter Van Aelst, "Who Demonstrates? Antistate Rebels, Conventional Participants, or Everyone?", in *Comparative Politics*, vol. 37, no. 2, January 2005, p. 201.

5 John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Political Legitimacy and Participation in Costa Rica: Evidence of Arena Shopping", in *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, December 2005, p. 541.

6 Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema, "Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers: Steps Towards Participation in Social Movements", in *American Sociological Review*, vol. 52, no. 4, August 1987, p. 520.

7 Karl-Dieter Opp and Christiane Gern, "Dissident Groups, Personal Networks, and Spontaneous Cooperation: The East German Revolution of 1989", in *American Sociological Review*, vol. 58, no. 5, October 1993, p. 659.

8 Steven E. Finkel and K. Opp, "Party Identification and Participation in Collective Political Action", in *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 53, no. 2, May 1991, pp. 339-371.

among the post-materialist generation that contributed to rising protest in the advanced industrial democracies,[9] while S.E. Finkel and K. Opp find that "non-identifiers are more active than most party groups in legal and illegal protest".[10]

However, most approaches to the study of protest fail to adequately distinguish between the effects of actual membership in political parties and/or civil society organizations (such as being asked to participate in protests) and the underlying differences that may lead to joining a political party. Such individuals may just be more politically active, leading them both to protest and to join a party, so that party membership per se is actually irrelevant. This paper takes on that task, using the variable of political interest as an indicator of the underlying differences between individuals and comparing the implications of party sympathy and attendance at different types of organizational meetings as an indicator of factors increasing the likelihood that one will be invited to protest. We test these variables against other attributes often linked to protest.

With respect to these attributes, two classes of variables have concerned scholars: performance and trust. Michelle Benson and Thomas R. Rochon find that "interpersonal trust makes it easier to take part in protest, particularly with more militant forms of protest".[11] Trust serves as "both a personal and social capital resource that fosters collective action in the form of protest".[12] In a mutual assurance game, high levels of trust give rise to lower expectations of the costs of participation and optimistic estimates of both the willingness of others to contribute and the likely benefits of protest.[13]

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9 *E.g.* Samuel H. Barnes and Max Kaase, *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1979; Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977.

10 S.E. Finkel and K. Opp, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

11 Michelle Benson and Thomas R. Rochon, "Interpersonal Trust and the Magnitude of Protest: A Micro and Macro Level Approach," in *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 37, no. 4, May 2004, p. 445.

12 *Ibid.,* p. 435.

13 *Ibid.,* p. 437.

Expectations with respect to performance and protest have been more mixed. On the one hand, poor performance, framed as unresolved grievances, is one of the older explanations of protest behavior and has been extensively analyzed.[14] Various forms of issue-specific discontent animate protest in research by David Kowalewski and Karen L. Porter, Michel S. Lewis-Beck and Brad Lockerbie, and Edward N. Muller, Henry A. Dietz and Steven E. Finkel.[15]

More broadly, "the most common explanation of the growth of protest politics […] focuses on political disaffection".[16] Thus, higher rates of alienation/lower rates of support for the political system are associated with more aggressive forms of political participation.[17] Similarly, S.E. Finkel finds that "there exist strong and significant reciprocal causal effects between [low system support] and aggressive behavior".[18] Thus, "system support […] negatively predicts protest"[19] and "when the opponent has a high degree

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[14] *E.g.* K. Opp, "Grievances and Participation in Social Movements", in *American Sociological Review*, vol. 53, no. 6, December 1988, pp. 853-864; K. Opp, "Adverse Living Conditions, Grievances, and Political Protest after Communism: The Example of East Germany", in *Social Forces*, vol. 79, no. 1, September 2000, pp. 29-65; S.E. Finkel, Edward N. Muller and K. Opp, "Personal Influence, Collective Rationality and Mass Political Action", in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 83, no. 3, September 1989, pp. 885-903.

[15] David Kowalewski and Karen L. Porter, "Environmental Concern Among Local Citizens: A Test of Competing Perspectives", in *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, vol. 21, no. 1, Summer 1993, pp. 37-62; Michel S. Lewis-Beck and Brad Lockerbie, "Economics, Votes, Protests: Western European Cases," in *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 155-177; E. N. Muller, A. Dietz, and S. E. Finkel, "Discontent and the Expected Utility of Rebellion: The Case of Peru", in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 85, no. 4, 1991, pp. 1261-1282.

[16] P. Norris, S. Walgrave and P. Van Aelst, *op. cit.* p. 189.

[17] Edward N. Muller, Thomas O. Jukam and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior: A Comparative Analysis", in *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 26, no. 2, May 1982, pp. 254.

[18] S.E. Finkel, "The Effects of Participation on Political Efficacy and Political Support: Evidence from a West German Panel", in *Journal of Politics*, vol. 49, no. 2, May 1987, p. 457.

[19] Amy Erica Smith, "Legitimate Grievances Preferences for Democracy, System Support, and Political Participation in Bolivia", in *Latin American Research Review*, vol 44, no. 3, 2009, p. 113.

of legitimacy, it will be harder to mobilize large crowds of protesters".[20] In the case of what she calls "fragile democracies", Canache argues that "strong support for violence is found only when there is dissatisfaction with the status quo coupled with disdain for democracy".[21]

On the other hand, J.A. Booth and M.A. Seligson's analysis of Costa Rica finds "inconclusive" results with respect to how legitimacy affects protest. The relationship between support for regime principles and protest is significant and negative, but higher evaluation of regime performance "positively relates to protest".[22] Melo notes that "democracy seems intensely alive in its movements of crisis," observing that protest movements often seem to express a more direct form of democracy than the (unsatisfactory) representative type; in this way, those protesting may even have more democratic values than those who do not.[23] And P. Norris, S. Walgrave and P. Van Aelst argue that, "system support indicators fail to predict demonstration activism".[24] Instead, the same resources that explain conventional behavior should explain protest as well: "Far from threatening or even challenging democracy, demonstrations have become one of the major channels of public voice".[25]

Our analysis focuses on the implications of political party affiliation and political interest on the likelihood that individuals will participate in protest. We focus on Mexico, where the decline in partisan attachments has been particularly steep, due in part to the collapse of the established Mexican left (the Party of the Democratic Revolution, or PRD) and its replacement by a new, popular-inspired center-left party, known as MORENA (the Movement for National Regeneration). Within this case, we examine the links between

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20 Petter Grahl Johnstad, "When the Time Is Right: Regime Legitimacy as a Predictor of Nonviolent Protest Outcome", in *Peace & Change*, vol. 37, no. 4, October 2012, p. 517.

21 Damarys Canache, *Venezuela: Public Opinion and Protest in a Fragile Democracy*, Coral Gables, North-South Center Press, 2002, p. 129.

22 J.A. Booth and M.A. Seligson, *op. cit.*, p. 546.

23 Daniela Melo, "Women's mobilization in the Portuguese revolution: context and framing strategies", in *Social Movements Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, March 2016, pp. 403-416.

24 P. Norris, S. Walgrave and P. Van Aelst, *op. cit.* p. 200.

25 *Ibid.,* p. 203.

party sympathy, engagement in broader civil society organizations, and political protest. We then compare Mexico to two additional cases where rates of party identification are lower (Chile), and higher (Uruguay).

Our control variables include variables tapping into government legitimacy. However, as J.A. Booth and M.A. Seligson warn that legitimacy has multiple dimensions, we must take care to look at several indicators of legitimacy. Booth and Seligson suggest eight dimensions, including political community, support for core regime principles, support for political actors, support for regime institutions, system support, and support for local governments.[26] We group these indicators into two categories: satisfaction with democracy as a political system and satisfaction with economic performance (a pocketbook variable reflecting personal economic well-being). Unhappiness with current political actors should trigger participation, but in the presence of strong support for the principles of the regime this action might well promote conventional participation in voting rather than protest.

Interpersonal trust should also matter, with higher levels of trust expected to facilitate participation, even in protest. The odd feature of trust is that if it extends to the government in power, the most likely reaction may be lack of action. We therefore focus on the issue of trust in other persons. According to theory, higher levels of social trust should make collective action less costly and therefore more likely.

Finally, we include measures for standard demographic variables that might affect the likelihood of protest, such as gender, age, income, and education.[27] Younger citizens should have more time and energy to engage in protest than older people with families and work obligations.[28] Women should be less likely to participate than men, especially where traditional

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[26] J.A. Booth and M.A. Seligson, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

[27] See D. Canache, *op. cit.*, p. 123; Glen Sussman and Brent S. Steel, "Support for Protest Methods and Political Strategies among Peace Movement Activists: Comparing the United States, Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany", in *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 3, September 1991, pp. 519-540.

[28] Max Kaase and Alan Marsh, "Political Action Repertory: Changes overt Time and A New Typology", en S. Barnes and M. Kaase *op. cit.*, pp. 137-166; E.N. Muller, *Aggressive Political Participation,* Princeton, Princeton University Pres, 1979; R. Inglehart, *op. cit.*

expectations of women's roles apply.[29] Wealthier citizens should have less to protest about. Education, however, should contribute to personal efficacy and therefore enhance the likelihood of participation in protest as well as voting.[30] Finally, since it may be easier to coordinate protests in larger cities, we include a variable for the size of the community in which the resident lives (urban/rural). Our data come from the 2018 version of LAPOP. LAPOP, a survey research lab at Vanderbilt University, offers biannual surveys from 34 Western Hemisphere countries using a tested and reputable method of stratified surveys.[31]

Our specific measures are thus as follows:

1. Participation in at least one protest in the previous 12 months (coded so that 1 = yes and 0 = no). This is the main dependent variable. Given the small number of individuals who participate in protest (about 10% across all countries), the variable has a zero-inflated distribution, requiring zero-inflated negative binomial regression.
2. Political interest[32]
3. Party sympathy[33]
4. Support for democracy[34]
5. Own economic wellbeing[35]

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29 M. Kaase and A. Marsh, *op. cit.*

30 *Idem*.

31 It is available free to researchers at http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/.

32 Responses to the question "how much interest do you have in politics?".

33 We report here responses to the question "Do you currently identify (simpatiza) with a political party?". In some surveys an additional question was asked about attendance at party meetings. When we substitute this question for party sympathy, the results do not change significantly.

34 We report here responses to the question, "In general, would you say you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works?". We also tried a more generic question asking whether the respondent agrees or disagrees with the statement that democracy is better than any other form of government. Neither reaches statistical significance.

35 Substituting different performance evaluation measures, such as perceptions of corruption or perceptions of insecurity, does not change the significance of the results.

6. Interpersonal trust[36]
7. Demographic variables (education, gender, age, income. and urban/rural residence)
8. Participation in two types of civil society association (religious and neighborhood improvement)[37]

Results

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics of our variables of interest for the case of Mexico. Protest has a mean of 0.07, indicating a rate of participation in protest (7% of respondents) which is lower than the Latin American average of 9.7%, and a median of zero.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Mexico

Variable	Min.	Median	Mean	Max.	SD
Protest	0.00000	0.00000	0.07107	1.00000	0.2570166
Party Sympathy	0.0000	0.0000	0.1977	1.0000	0.3983999
Political Interest	1.000	3.000	2.785	4.000	0.9834786
Support for Democracy	1.000	3.000	2.612	4.000	0.7710974
Own Economic Wellbeing	1.00	2.00	2.03	3.00	0.680041
Interpersonal Trust	1.000	2.000	2.361	4.000	0.9446344
Education	0.000	9.000	9.846	18.000	4.364675
Gender	1.000	2.000	1.509	2.000	0.5000681

[36] "Would you say that people in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy, or untrustworthy?".

[37] The question asks about frequency of participation in meetings: once a week, once or twice a month, once or twice a year, or never.

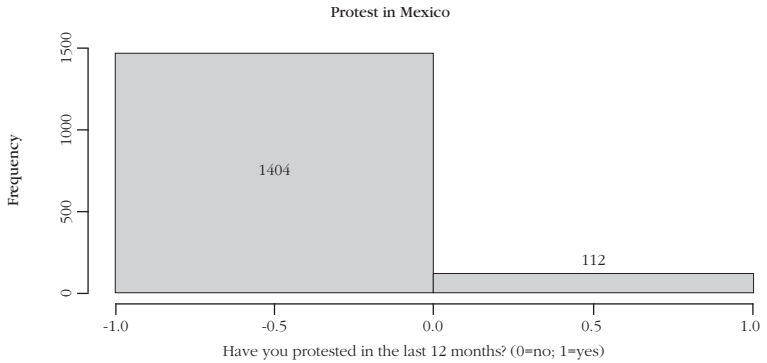
Age	18.00	40.00	42.09	88.00	17.02655
Urban Residence	1.000	1.000	1.201	2.000	0.4006007
Income	0.000	8.000	7.978	16.000	NA
Participation in Religious Associations	1.000	4.000	2.871	4.000	1.277156
Participation in Groups to Improve Neighbor-hood	1.000	4.000	3.544	4.000	0.7887869

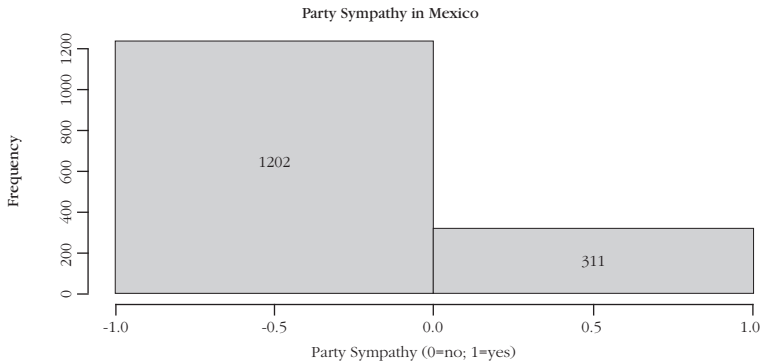
Our first independent variable reflects engagement with parties. Specifically, we use a variable measuring "sympathy" with political parties (yes/no). To explore how membership in other civil society organizations affects protest, we employ two additional variables. One is participation in religious associations, which we anticipate will not have much impact on protest (as religious practice is mostly private participation) and participation in a group to improve the neighborhood, which we anticipate will promote more public engagement.

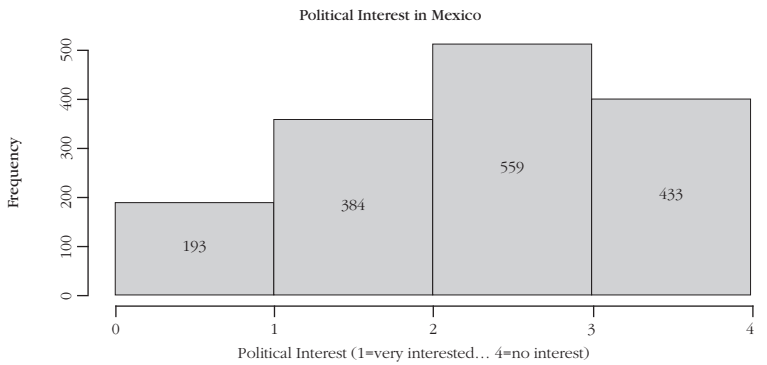
Second, we attempt to see whether party sympathy remains significant when we control for the effects of political interest, which may drive both protest and involvement in party politics. Graph 1 shows histograms of the variables' statistical distributions.

To properly address the right-tailed distribution of our dependent variable, we employ zero-inflated binomial OLS models. We run two regression models. The first model estimates the effects of party sympathy and political interest on protest when controlling for a subset of variables that include legitimacy/performance factors, beliefs/values, and demographic variables. Model 1 coefficients suggest a positive association between party sympathy and protest. This outcome is statistically significant at .01. Similarly, a one-unit increment in the political interest variable corresponds an increment of 0.4 in the likelihood of protest. This coefficient is statistically significant at .01. In sum, our model 1 results suggest that party sympathy increases the likelihood of protest even after controlling for political interest, and vice versa.

Graph 1. Main variables histograms







The model 2 uses the same dependent, independent, and control variables, but it includes two additional variables to estimate the effects of participation in civil society. The effects of party sympathy and political interest are similar and statistically significant, as in model 1; a one-unit increment of party sympathy corresponds to a 0.50 increment in the likelihood to protest. In addition, participation in groups to improve neighborhoods is associated with a 0.63 increase in the likelihood to protest. This correlation is statistically significant at .01. However, as anticipated, participation in religious associations has no significant impact on protest.

We find similar results regarding the effects of party sympathy and political interest in cases with widely different levels of partisan attachment. At the low end, we analyze the case of Chile, where only 10.7% of the population indicates party sympathy, and at the high end the case of Uruguay, where 48% of the population indicates party sympathy. In each case, party sympathy and political interest have positive and significant effects on the likelihood of protest. Substituting attendance at party meetings for party sympathy does not change the results. In models that include civil society participation, attendance at neighborhood association meetings has similar effects as party sympathy, but attendance at religious association meetings does not. Variables for performance, system support, and trust do not have statistically significant effects. The implications are clear: engagement in the political system has a positive effect on protest even after we account for the effects of political interest. Tables 3 and 4 describe our results for the cases we analyze. Graph 2 shows the marginal effects plots reflecting our models' predictions for the case of Mexico.

Table 3. The effects of party sympathy on protest in Mexico, Chile, and Uruguay (model 1)

	Dependent variable		
Independent variables	Protest (Mexico)	Protest (Chile)	Protest (Uruguay)
Party Sympathy (yes = 1, no = 0)	0.563** (0.235)	0.404* (0.214)	0.352* (0.190)
Political interest (high values indicate higher interest)	0.469*** (0.112)	0.512*** (0.091)	0.646*** (0.103)

Legitimacy/Performance			
Satisfaction with democracy (higher values indicate higher support)	0.115 (0.136)	0.393*** (0.116)	0.049 (0.117)
Own economic wellbeing (high values indicate dissatisfaction)	0.163 (0.155)	0.054 (0.121)	-0.008 (0.125)
Beliefs/values			
Interpersonal trust (high values indicate lower trust)	0.093 (0.113)	0.080 (0.103)	-0.077 (0.111)
Control variables			
Education	0.012 (0.027)	0.071** (0.035)	0.094*** (0.026)
Gender	0.077 (0.211)	0.083 (0.174)	0.457*** (0.169)
Age	0.008 (0.007)	-0.035*** (0.007)	-0.018*** (0.005)
Urban residence	0.041 (0.254)	0.287 (0.304)	1.461** (0.714)
Income	-0.034 (0.024)	0.003 (0.022)	0.022 (0.022)
Constant	1.117 (0.885)	1.502 (0.920)	0.425 (1.013)
Observations	1277	1336	1373

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

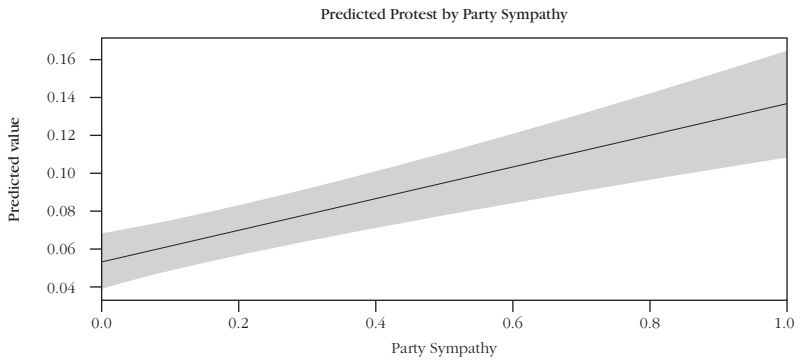
Table 4. The effects of party sympathy on protest in Mexico, Chile, and Uruguay (model 2)

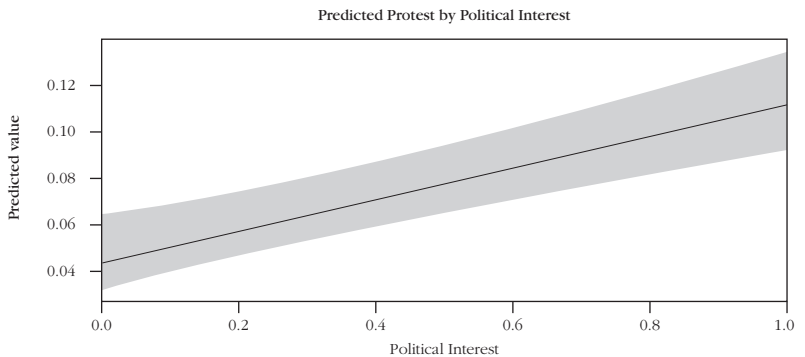
	Dependent variable		
Independent variables	Protest (Mexico)	Protest (Chile)	Protest (Uruguay)
Party sympathy (yes = 1, no = 0)	0.507** (0.240)	0.367* (0.215)	0.294 (0.193)

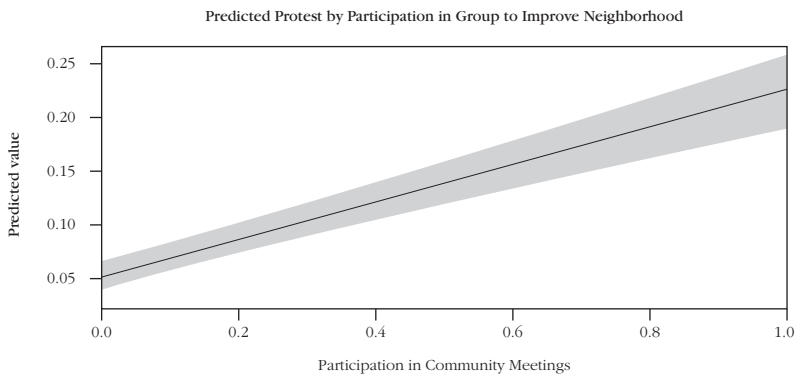
Political interest (high values indicate higher interest)	0.368*** (0.115)	0.491*** (0.093)	0.603*** (0.103)
Legitimacy/Performance			
Satisfaction with democracy (higher values indicate higher support)	0.089 (0.139)	0.358*** (0.117)	0.009 (0.116)
Own economic wellbeing (high values indicate dissatisfaction)	0.140 (0.153)	0.056 (0.120)	-0.009 (0.126)
Beliefs/values			
Interpersonal trust (high values indicate lower trust)	0.038 (0.111)	0.097 (0.104)	-0.052 (0.110)
Control variables			
Education	0.012 (0.028)	0.069* (0.035)	0.097*** (0.026)
Gender (female)	0.054 (0.214)	0.077 (0.175)	0.440*** (0.169)
Age	0.004 (0.007)	-0.036*** (0.007)	-0.021*** (0.005)
Urban residence	0.011 (0.258)	0.320 (0.305)	1.475** (0.714)
Income	-0.015 (0.024)	0.002 (0.023)	0.023 (0.023)
Alternate variables			
Participation in religious association (higher values indicate more participation)	0.062 (0.082)	-0.115 (0.095)	0.035 (0.093)
Participation in group to improve neighborhood (higher values indicate more participation)	0.637*** (0.100)	0.187* (0.104)	0.351*** (0.082)
Constant	0.713 (0.899)	1.178 (1.037)	0.626 (1.085)
Observations	1266	1333	1367

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Graph 2. Marginal effects plots







Discussion

Nevertheless, we have to put these findings in the context of larger trends in the region in terms of both party sympathy and protest. While party sympathy continues to decline, protest rates continue to rise. Thus, although identification with a party significantly increases the likelihood that an individual will participate in protest, most protesters are not party sympathizers. In the case of Mexico, only 38.2% of protesters reported party sympathy, leaving over 60% of protesters without any party affiliation. In Chile, an even smaller percentage of protesters—26% in total—sympathize with a political party. Only in Uruguay, where we find more party sympathizers, do more than half of those who reported protesting in the last year (in fact, 70%) declare that they are party sympathizers.

Political interest seems to be even rarer than party sympathy, although the four-part categorization of the political interest variable makes it a little difficult to compare to the binary "yes/no" approach of the question on party sympathy. Yet those who protested reported significantly more interest in politics than those who did not. In Uruguay, 52.3% of protesters report "a lot" of interest in politics, (versus 19% of those who did not protest). In Chile, most people report low interest in politics, but the level of political interest is highest among protesters (33% versus 7% among non-protesters). Oddly, in Mexico even protesters do not have much interest in politics: only 29% report "a lot" of interest. However, this is more than double the percentage of those who express a lot of interest in politics but did not protest (only 11%).

If we sum together the categories of "a lot" and "some" interest in politics, the results begin to look more logical, with over half of all protesters indicating at least some interest in politics. Nevertheless, even among protesters the level of political interest is limited. In Mexico, for example, 42% of people who protested in the previous 12 months said they had little or no interest in politics. People may protest about many things, and against many targets, including private actors. The LAPOP data does not allow us to determine what the targets of protests were.

Party sympathy and political interest do not have equally strong connections to voting, probably because the act of voting is more common (and often legally mandated). People who report having voted in the previous

election are more likely to sympathize with a political party and to indicate high levels of political interest. In all cases, protesters are likely to have also voted: in Chile, 73% of protesters voted (versus 58% of the population at large), in Uruguay, 86% of protesters voted, and in Mexico, 88% of protesters voted. Protesters are not disengaged from the political system; on the contrary, they are deeply engaged in it.

Conclusions

Between 2008 and 2018, confidence in and identification with political parties declined. At the same time, overall levels of satisfaction with democracy declined and the percentage of the population that participated in protest increased. Does declining party identification explain overall increases in protest or growing dissatisfaction with democracy?

The evidence presented here suggests that individual engagement with parties increases the likelihood of participating in protest as well as voting. Party sympathizers are more likely to express satisfaction with democracy than non-sympathizers, which suggests that the decline in party identification is a potential problem. However, protesters also indicate more satisfaction with democracy than non-protesters. People who protest, therefore, are on the whole politically engaged, with high levels of political interest, community engagement, and partisan identification. The opposite of protest may not be voting, but abstention and apathy. Protesters are certainly dissatisfied about something, but they do not necessarily (or even usually) translate their dissatisfaction into dissatisfaction with democracy writ large. On the contrary, they seem to feel that the system works well enough that their actions could make a difference.