

Crime, Economics, and Government: How Perceptions Impact Political
Legitimacy in Latin American Countries

Jeanine Needles

University of Florida

Introduction

As the world becomes more globalized, it becomes increasingly important to understand the efficiency and inefficiency of different political structures around the world. Studying the numerous variables that have the power to impact levels of government legitimacy helps to provide researchers with an enhanced understanding of how certain factors like crime and poverty can change the way a citizen views the capabilities of the political system within their country. In several Latin American countries, high levels of poverty and crime coexist. The relationships between crime, poverty, and government legitimacy have long been under study by sociological and criminological researchers. It is reasonable to suggest that a poorly functioning economy that breeds inequality combined with a poor system for providing security to citizens may lead to a lack of trust or confidence in the political system of a country. Although the relationships existing between poverty rates, crime rates, and government legitimacy have already been studied by several researchers, this study aims to decipher how individual perceptions on the economy and on crime within a country impact individual perceptions on the efficiency of the government. Due to the high poverty levels and high incidence of crime in several Latin American countries, this analysis will focus on three democracies in Latin America: Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. This paper aims to provide evidence in the form of survey data to exhibit how negative perceptions on crime and negative perceptions on the economy in each of these three countries are accompanied by decreases in government legitimacy over time. This paper will take a historical and comparative approach and will compare data collected from Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia over a period of eighteen years (from 1998-2016). Data collected for the perceptions of crime, the economy, and government legitimacy in each of these three countries will then be compared next to significant dates in the

political histories of these three countries. In providing evidence for my previous claim, I aim to show a negative relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions of crime (as crime is perceived as rising, government legitimacy decreases) along with a positive relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions of the economy (as the economy is perceived as improving, government legitimacy will rise). I predict that these relationships will be exhibited in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia and that increases and decreases in government legitimacy in each of these three countries will correspond to significant political and historical dates.

Theoretical Review

In this paper, I will determine the relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions of crime as well as the relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions of the economy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. The measurement of government legitimacy (based on the index provided in the methods section below) will serve as the dependent variable. Perceptions of crime and perceptions of the economy (whose measurements will both be based on indexes provided in the methods section below) will serve as the independent variables in this study. In this section, I will discuss the theoretical relationships between these three variables.

It is important to have an understanding of the relationship between the economy and crime before considering how each of these factors impact government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. As previously mentioned, the relationship between the economy and crime has been studied extensively in sociology and criminology. It is generally agreed upon that poverty and crime have a positive relationship (meaning as poverty increases, crime rates increase). Research has shown how high levels of income inequality (based on the Gini Index) contribute to a high incidence of crime (Fajnzylber et al. 2002:25). Although this positive

relationship between poverty and crime is well-known, there are several different reasons for why this positive relationship exists in different parts of the world. Within Latin America, one of the reasons why a poor economy and high levels of poverty lead to an increase in crime rates is because of the lack of legal opportunities available to citizens for improving their own economic standing. (Soares and Naritomi 2010:41). This increases the attractiveness of illegal means of making money, therefore increasing the likelihood of crime. Additionally, issues with overcrowding and unemployment (which often accompany high poverty rates) are known to significantly increase the likelihood of crime. (Buvinic et al. 2005). Knowing that the relationship between a poor economy and crime is widely thought to be positive will help guide this research study in determining the relationship between perceptions of the economy and government legitimacy as well as the relationship between perceptions of crime and government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia.

Previous research has not only determined that the relationship between poverty and crime is positive, but it has also found that the relationship between poverty and government legitimacy is negative (meaning as poverty increases, government legitimacy decreases). Understanding the relationship between the economic state of a country and the government legitimacy within that country will help in determining the relationship between perceptions of the economy and government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. The relationship between poverty and government legitimacy has been studied by many researchers, including Bruce Gilley, who conducted a bivariate regression analysis to determine the individual relationships between state legitimacy and numerous economic, political, and social factors. In this study, he found that income level and economic governance both have a significant explaining power with regards to state legitimacy (Gilley 2006:54). Another study by Damaris

Canache and Michael Allison, which limited its data analysis to Latin America, shows through regression analysis that the evaluation of the economic situation in a country has a strong negative relationship with the perceived level of corruption within a country (2005:104).

Perceived level of corruption is a key indicator in the measurement of government legitimacy. Both of these studies exhibit how a poor economic situation within a country can negatively impact government legitimacy. This negative relationship provides my study with a framework for determining how perceptions on the economy impact government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia.

Finally, the connection between crime and government legitimacy is the last important relationship to assess before determining the relationship between perceptions of crime and government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. The relationship between crime and government legitimacy can be measured through either crime rates or rates of victimization. It is important to keep in mind that measuring crime through victimization rates may in fact over represent the level of crime and insecurity in a given location. Individuals being surveyed may know of others who have been victimized (not including themselves) and this may lead them to feel that where they live is more dangerous. This being said, crime rates tend to under report actual crime. In one study that sampled from nineteen Latin American countries, victimization was proven to be strongly correlated with lack of trust in national-level institutions such as the judicial system (Corbacho et al. 2012:28). Another study by Michael Carreras shows that, in Latin America, a high victimization rate has a negative impact on citizens' confidence in political institutions (2013:100-101) This means that high incidences of criminal violence (which explain the high levels of exposure to violent crime) decrease government legitimacy. Both studies mentioned above indicate that the relationship between crime (measured through

victimization) and government legitimacy is negative. This relationship will guide this study in determining the relationship between perceptions of crime and government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia.

Despite the relationships between crime, economics, and government legitimacy that have been determined by numerous researchers, there are possible limitations to such studies that must be taken into consideration. First and foremost, every researcher has a different definition for a given concept. The ways in which researchers conceptualize and operationalize concepts like crime, poverty, and government legitimacy vary. Therefore, while looking at these studies, it is important to keep in mind that although each of them provide significant findings for the relationships between crime, the economy, and government legitimacy, these relationships are all derived from different methodologies and by using different definitions. The second important item to consider is that not all the studies mentioned above have limited their samples to Latin American countries. It is possible that relationships between crime, the economy, and government legitimacy differ depending on the context. For this reason, my study is limited to Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. Reasons for choosing these three Latin American countries will be explained in detail in the following section. Lastly, there is an important distinction between the studies outlined above and the study that I will be conducting. In the studies outlined above, several researchers utilized survey data to determine the relationships between crime, the economy, and government legitimacy. However, none of these studies correlate their findings with the political structures or histories of the countries that were sampled. In this study, I will first look at perceptions of the economy as they correlate to government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. Then, I will look at perceptions of crime and how they compare with measures of government legitimacy in these three countries. After compiling all this data, I will

compare fluctuations in the government legitimacy of each country over time with significant political events as they occur throughout history (between 1998-2016). This correlation between measures of government legitimacy, perceptions of crime, and perceptions of the economy will provide for a more robust understanding of how different political structures and histories impact the relationship between perceptions of crime and government legitimacy as well as the relationship perceptions of the economy and government legitimacy.

Historical Case Study Review

This paper will focus on the political histories of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia in order to find correlations between significant political events throughout each country's history and the perceptions of the economy, crime, and government legitimacy. In facilitating a study that analyzes the government legitimacy of three different countries, it is vital to understand the political structures of these countries. Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia were chosen as the samples of this study because all three countries are fairly new democracies in Latin America. Choosing three democratic countries from the same region aids the process of making comparisons between political systems and their legitimacies. Brazil's first democratic constitution was put in place in 1988 (Scholastic 2018). Mexico's 1917 constitution called for the implementation of democratic institutions, however this did not occur until a multi-party system was formed out of the presidential election in 2000 (Council of Hemispheric Affairs 2011). Before the 2000 election, all of Mexico was controlled by one political party, the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional). In Colombia, the first democratic constitution was adopted in 1991 (Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Colombia 2018). As fairly new democracies, all three of these Latin

American countries face similar issues with government stability. I will discuss this in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Another important aspect of the political structures of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia is the difference in presidential terms. Although both Brazil and Colombia have four-year terms with the possibility of re-election, Mexico allows only a single six-year term (O'Neil et al. 2013). This distinction is important because it highlights how in Brazil and Colombia it may be easier for one president to maintain power over a longer period of time than it is in Mexico. Although this seems to be the case when solely looking at the presidential terms of these countries, it is also important to keep in mind that the PRI in Mexico still influences much of the government from behind the scenes although it is no longer the only political party represented in the country's politics (BBC 2018).

Finally, in analyzing government legitimacy, it is imperative to keep in mind the level of political participation in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. The average voter turnout for each of the three countries vary greatly. In Brazil, the average voter turnout is 79.54% while in Mexico the average voter turnout is only 58.25% and in Colombia it is 43.83% (Election Guide 2018). This difference in voter turnout may impact the levels of government legitimacy expressed in each of the three countries. In completing the analysis for this study, this significant difference between Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia must be kept in mind.

In completing this study to determine the relationship between perceptions of the economy and government legitimacy as well as the relationship between perceptions of crime and government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia, it is important to first develop an adequate understanding of how the political histories of these three countries compare to one another. These three Latin American countries were chosen for this study because their histories

exhibit similarities in their governments' issues with maintaining stability, in their problems with high crime rates, and in their economic difficulties. The first historical aspect that Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia have in common is their issues with government instability. In Brazil, this problem with government instability began with the first president. Fernando Collor de Mello, elected in 1989, was impeached in 1992 due to corruption charges (O'Neil et al. 2013:595). This corruption theme is present in much of Brazil's history as a democracy. In 2007, the speaker of the Brazilian senate resigned as the result of a corruption scandal. Later in 2011, the chief of staff of the first female president, Dilma Rousseff, resigned due to corruption allegations. And finally, in 2015, evidence was found concluding that President Rousseff misused funds from her 2014 election campaign and she was later impeached by the senate in 2016 (BBC 2018). This issue with corruption has most likely had a negative impact on the government legitimacy in Brazil.

In Mexico, as stated previously, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional has retained their power and influence over the Mexican government since the beginning of the democracy. This creates instability in the government being that it is highly unlikely for any other political party in Mexico to achieve the same level of power and authority over Mexican politics as the PRI. In addition, Mexico has had several issues throughout its history with government entities being involved in criminal activity. In 2002, secret security files were released from the 1960s and 1970s that exhibited the torture and killing of hundreds of political activists by security forces (BBC 2018). Also, in 2015, arrest warrants were issued to many suspects, including a former mayor (Jose Luis Arbarca), for the kidnapping of 43 students in Guerrero (Romo and Botelho 2014). Involvement in crime and violence by government entities and political figures has a negative impact on the level of stability in a government. Along with the political

domination of the PRI in Mexican politics, the government system in Mexico has many flaws that have the capacity to contribute to a low level of government legitimacy.

Colombia also faces many issues with maintaining a stable government. There are several examples of how the Colombian government went through periods of instability throughout the country's history. For example, in 1996, President Ernesto Samper Pizano was charged with receiving drug cartel money to fund his election campaign. Although he was acquitted by Congress, his political influence was significantly weakened as a result of the accusation (Pérez-Liñán 2007:1). Also, in Colombia, the presence of FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), a powerful guerrilla rebel group, has caused the Colombian government to make decisions that could possibly have a negative impact on the stability of the political system. In 1998, the Colombian government formulated a "safe haven" for FARC that was off-limits to Colombian security forces. In 2001, FARC is accused of using this space to rearm their rebels, to prepare new attacks, and to conduct drug trades (BBC 2018). It is understandable why this might make citizens wary of the actions that their government has taken in response to FARC. Additionally, in 2007, the Colombian government released dozens of captured FARC guerrillas in the hopes that the rebel group would release some of their hostages as well (BBC 2018). However, this did not occur. This second scenario in 2007 represents another time the government made a decision in attempting to work with FARC that ended up with negative consequences. As a result of the ways in which the Colombian government has chosen to deal with the guerrilla group, it is highly likely that these poor decisions have had a negative impact on the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of citizens.

A second way in which the histories of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia are similar is that they have all had serious difficulties in facing high levels of violent crime. Much of the violent

crime in these three Latin American countries was committed by gangs and militant groups. This similarity between the three Latin American countries is important to note when looking at the relationship between the perceptions of crime and the government legitimacy in each country. In Brazil, violent crime has occurred in great numbers both at the hands of police and at the hands of militant groups like the PCC (Primeiro Comando da Capital). In 2005 was the first rogue police killing and following into 2006, large numbers of people were killed in gang attacks and police backlashes (BBC 2018). This pattern has continued up into the present day. Numerous police in Brazil are killed each year by the PCC, however these killing receive almost no attention from society because the Brazilian population assumes that most police are corrupt (Denyer Willis 2015.) As a result of the fear that policemen in Brazil have of being killed by the PCC, they are quick to shoot in their line of duty and end up contributing to the violence and crime in Brazil (Denyer Willis 2015). This high level of crime and violence in Brazil throughout history has the possibility of exacerbating perceptions of crime and, in turn, negatively impacting the government legitimacy in the country.

Like Brazil, Mexico has also faced issues with high crime rates throughout its history as a country. In addition to the violence and crimes committed by the government entities and political figures mentioned previously, Mexico has also experienced high levels of crime due to gang violence. In 2006 a federal post of specialized prosecutors had to be formed to deal with hundreds of violent crimes against women that had been previously ignored. Later in 2006, a new federal police force had to be created to handle the increasing number of crimes committed at the hands of drug cartels (BBC 2018). Drug related killings in Mexico continue to soar every year up into the present. In 2015, hundreds of armed gang members took over Chilapa in Guerrero, Mexico as a result of a turf war between drug gangs and in 2016 when El Chapo (an

infamous drug lord in Mexico) was extradited to the United States, drug violence surged as gangs competed for power (BBC 2018). This violent crime has been occurring in Mexico for several years and continues to worsen. This most likely has a significant impact on the perceptions of crime of the citizens in Mexico. This high level of crime also has the possibility of having a strong negative impact on the government legitimacy of the country.

Much like the other two countries, Colombia has also had plenty of difficulties with crime throughout its history as a democratic country. This issue can be dated all the way back to 1985 when eleven judges and ninety civilians were murdered by the M-19 guerrilla group when they broke into the Palace of Justice (BBC 2018). Violent crime at the hands of militant guerrilla groups continued into the 2000s. In 2002, the Colombian government declared a war zone after FARC rebels setup attacks in the south and in 2008, Colombia extradited fourteen paramilitary warlords to the United States due to drug trafficking charges (BBC 2018). In 2011, FARC rebels began facilitating hit-and-run raids on civilians and in 2017, although FARC formally ended their existence as a guerrilla group, protestors of FARC continue to battle with Colombian armed forces (BBC 2018). Similar to Brazil and Mexico, Colombia has dealt with crime at the hands of a rebel groups. The violent crime committed by these groups has been a part of Colombia's history before its implementation as a democracy. This existence of crime in Colombia for decades most likely has a strong impact on the perceptions of crime of citizens. And much like Brazil and Mexico, this has the possibility of decreasing government legitimacy.

The third and final way in which the histories of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia are similar is that they have all three had difficulties in maintaining a stable economy. This can have a direct impact on the perceptions that citizens have on the economies of each of these three countries. In Brazil, economic difficulties have been present since the first democratic election.

The first president, Fernando Collor de Mello, promised that he would bring about economic reform (O'Neil et al. 2013:593). However, this economic reform never occurred. In 2002, Brazil's currency hit a record low and financial markets were fearing the possible election of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a left-wing presidential candidate (BBC 2018). Much to the dismay of the financial markets, Lula was elected later that year. He made the same promise to reduce poverty and pledged to rid the country of hunger (O'Neil et al. 2013:579). In 2011, a program called Brasil Sem Miseria (Brazil Without Poverty) was founded in an effort to free millions of civilians from extreme poverty. And finally, in 2013, protestors made their voices heard in their complaint over the poor public services offered in Brazil (BBC 2018). This historical pattern of an unstable economic system may have an impact on the perceptions of the economy held by Brazilians. A poor economic system may also lead to a decrease in government legitimacy.

Mexico has also had a troubling economic history. Back in 1994, the stock market crashed and the peso lost a third of its value (BBC 2018). In 2013, nearly half of the Mexican population was considered to be at or below the poverty line (Cohen 2013). A study on the income distribution in Latin American countries shows how between the years 2000-2013, there was little to no fluctuation in the number of citizens living in poverty in Mexico (Stampini et al. 2015:8). This shows that almost half of Mexico's population has been at or below the poverty line for a little more than a decade. This pattern of extreme poverty in Mexico has a high likelihood of having a great impact on the perceptions of the economy held by citizens. It is plausible that having a poor economic system that has maintained a large poverty rate for many years would have a negative impact on the government legitimacy of the country as well.

Like Brazil and Mexico, Colombia has also faced issues with upholding a stable economy. In 2000, the Colombian government instituted a program called "Plan Colombia"

which would bring in about a billion dollars in military aid from the United States because the country could not afford to arm themselves properly to fight rebel groups (BBC 2018). In 2008, a huge collapse of pyramid investment schemes caused citizens to become angry with the economic situation in Colombia and led to many violent protests. And in 2011, the United States passed a free trade agreement with Colombia even though they expressed concerns over the poor economic conditions in Colombia's history (BBC 2018). Much like Mexico, almost half of Colombia was living at or below the poverty line in 2013. However, Colombia has been more successful than Mexico in decreasing this number from 2000- 2013 (Stampini et al. 2015:8). Much like Brazil and Mexico, Colombia has also faced plenty of economic issues throughout its history as a country. This may have a significant impact on the perceptions of the economy in Colombia and may result in changes in the government legitimacy as well.

Although these three countries have great similarities that aid in the process of analyzing data and making comparisons, a few issues must be addressed. First, even though all three of these countries have faced issues with maintaining stability in the government, this has been expressed in widely different ways in each country. In Brazil, corruption impacted this aspect the most heavily. For Mexico, government entities' and political figures' participation in crime and violence impacted the stability government. In Colombia, government decisions in response to rebel groups influenced government stability. Although these three aspects all impacted each country in similar ways with regards to stability, it cannot be assumed that these various events allowed for the same response in each of these countries. And although it is reasonable to assume that corruption, government involvement in crime, and poor decisions at the hands of the government would all lead to a lack of stability in the government, this is also an assumption. Secondly, although crime and violence took place in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia throughout

their histories as democratic countries, it is difficult to compare them directly. The size of each country is one factor that has not been considered as well as the concentration of incidences of crime. For example, Brazil is a much larger country than both Mexico and Colombia and the crime in Brazil is highly concentrated in urban areas (Stampini et al. 2015:14). Lastly, even though all three of the countries in this study have experienced economic instability, Mexico and Colombia have experienced far more difficulty than Brazil (Stampini et al. 2015:8). Additionally, the same issue with size and concentration of poverty comes into play.

Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia are three fairly new democracies in Latin America. They have all faced similar issues throughout their histories as democracies. All three countries have faced problems with maintaining stability in their governments, with lowering crime rates, and with maintaining a stable economy. Although these issues have not been experienced in each country in the same way or at the same level, these similarities all have the possibility of impacting perceptions of the economy, perceptions on crime, and government legitimacy levels over time. As a result, these similarities in the histories of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia are all significant to this study in determining the relationship between perceptions of the economy and government legitimacy as well as the relationship between perceptions on crime and government legitimacy in each country.

Research Goals and Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between government legitimacy and both perceptions of the economy and perceptions of crime in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia over a period of eighteen years (from 1998-2016). Increases and decreases in government legitimacy will be compared with the dates of significant political and historical events in all

three countries. I hypothesize that the relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions on the economy will be positive and that the relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions on crime will be negative in all three countries. I also hypothesize that increases and decreases in government legitimacy will correspond with significant historical and political dates such as elections or impeachments.

This is a macro-level study that focuses on patterns between concepts at the national level. In analyzing data compiled from Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia, this paper will focus on three key concepts: government legitimacy, perceptions on the economy, and perceptions on crime. All three of these concepts will be operationalized through the secondary analysis of survey data compiled by Latinobarómetro. Six different survey questions will serve as indicators for government legitimacy, perceptions on the economy, and perceptions on crime.

In this study, crime perceptions will be operationalized through two different survey questions on levels of crime and levels of victimization. These questions will tell us how citizens of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia perceive crime within their countries. Not only will these questions show what citizens believe to be the crime rate within their countries, but they will also show how self-reported victimization is tied to perceptions of overall crime. Perceptions on the economy will be operationalized through two different survey questions on both the economic situation of the country and on the economic situation of the respondent. By determining both the respondents' opinions on their country's economic situation as well as where they feel they stand as an individual economically, this study will provide a clearer idea of how successful respondents feel the economic structure of their country is. The last concept, government legitimacy, will be operationalized through two different survey questions that specifically focus on the democratic structures of each country and whether they are perceived as being effective

by respondents. Through analyzing levels of satisfaction with democracy and confidence in political parties, this study will be able to approximate the levels of government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia.

Conducting a secondary data analysis brings many possible limitations to a study. One large limitation to conducting secondary data analysis is that the variables being measured for may not entirely match-up with the concepts being studied. For example, this study focuses on government legitimacy, crime perceptions, and economic perceptions through analyzing survey data and specific survey questions. Although these particular survey questions may capture my own definition of these three concepts, everyone has a different definition of what counts as government legitimacy, crime perceptions, and economic perceptions. This issue poses a threat to the validity of the study. Another limitation to conducting secondary data analysis is that often the metadata concerning the sampling design and the data collection are unclear. For example, methodological reports from Latinobarómetro are only available for the years 2006-2015 (Latinobarómetro 2015). This also poses a threat to the validity of this research study.

Although there are several potential confounding factors to a research study that utilizes secondary data, there are several benefits to conducting such a study. First, these types of studies are low in cost since the data has already been collected. In addition, studies that conduct secondary data analysis are broadly representative and provide data from many different time points. Also, this type of data is standardized, which makes drawing comparisons a much simpler feat. Despite all the possible limitations in this study, the strengths of conducting secondary data analysis outweigh the costs.

Methodology and Data

In determining the relationships between government legitimacy, perceptions on crime, and perceptions of the economy, this study will analyze data collected from Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. All of the data being analyzed in this study has been collected by Latinobarómetro. Latinobarómetro is a private non-profit organization that is based in Chile. As described on their database, Latinobarómetro is an annual public opinion survey that interviews in 18 different Latin American countries and represents more than 600 million citizens living in Latin America (Latinobarómetro 2015). Latinobarómetro provides the public with reliable and representative data. Although Latinobarómetro samples from 18 different Latin American countries, for this study I will be sampling data from only three countries: Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. Latinobarómetro provides in-depth technical records that inform researchers of the sampling procedures taken each year in each country being studied. Provided below are Tables 1-3 that exhibit the different sampling techniques used in conducting surveys in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia from 1998-2015. The first column shows the country, the second column shows the organization used, the third column shows the year, the fourth column shows the N sample, the fifth column shows the percent sample error, and the sixth column shows the representativeness for the whole country.

Unfortunately, Latinobarómetro has not yet uploaded their technical records and sampling procedures for 2016. However, Latinobarómetro provides sampling information for all the other years being analyzed in this study. As shown in Tables 1-3 below, each country utilizes a different organization to conduct surveys and these organizations vary depending on the year. Surveys conducted by Latinobarómetro are not panel studies. Although panel studies allow researchers to draw conclusions and make correlations between concepts more simply, this

method of sampling is usually too expensive to complete. In addition to working with different organizations depending on the year, different methods of sampling are used for different years within each country. Both of these pieces of information are important to keep in mind while conducting this study. The use of different organizations and different sampling methods may have an impact on the results of annual surveys. It also may impact the ability to make significant associations between variables. Another possible confounding factor of the sampling procedures described above is that the representativeness of the samples is relatively low for each country before the early 2000s. Even though this study focuses on the dates between 1998-2016, the lack of representativeness in the early years of sampling may have caused some variation in the data compiled for those years. Another important note is made at the bottom of Table 3 with regards to data collected in Colombia. It states that there was no consideration for territories in conflict. This could greatly impact the data collected for Colombia and how representative it is for measuring government legitimacy, crime perceptions, and economic perceptions. Although these items mentioned serve as possible limitations, an advantage to the sampling procedures used by Latinobarómetro is that the N sample is close to the same for all years sampled in all three countries.

Country	Company/ Organization	Method of Sampling	Year	N Sample	Sample Error	Representiveness (% total of the country)	
Brazil	CBPA, MORI	Three stage probability sample in two stages and by quotas in the last stage	1995	1200	2.80%	68%	
			1996				
	Vox Populi		1997	1996	3%		
	IBOPE		1998	1200	2.80%	75%	
			2000		2.60%		
			2001		3%		
			2002				
			2003				
			2004				
			2005		2.80%	100%	
			2006				2.80%
			2007				2.70%
			2008				
	2009						
	IBOPE Intelegracia Brasil		Modified probability sample, probability in three stages and by quotas in the last stage	2010	2.80%	100%	
2011							
Instituto Ver Pesquisa e	2013	2.80%		100%			
	2015						

Table 1

Country	Company/Organization	Method of Sampling	Year	N Sample	Sample Error	Representiveness (% total of the country)
Mexico	MORI México	Three stage probability sample	1995	1204	3%	93%
			1996	1526		
			1997	1105		
			1998	1200		90%
			2000			
	Mundamericas	Three stage probability sample in two stages and by quotas in the last stage	2001	1253	2.80%	88.30%
			2002	1210		95%
			2003	1200		96.40%
			2004			97.70%
			2005			
	BGC México	Modified probability sample (probability in four stages in urban zones and in three stages in rural zones) and by quotas in the last stage	2006	1200	3%	100%
	Oliveras Plata Opinión y Mercado	Modified probability sample, probability in two stages and by quotas in the last stage	2007		2.80%	
			2008			
	Oliveras Plata Consultores S.A., Valera y Asociados	Modified probability sample, probability in three stages and by quotas in the last stage	2009		2.80%	
			2010			
2011						
		2013	2.80%			
		2015				

Table 2

Country	Company/Organization	Method of Sampling	Year	N Sample	Sample Error	Representiveness (% total of the country)	
Colombia	Yankelovich Partners	Three stage probability sample	1996	1200	2.80%	25%	
			1997			43.70%	
			1998			65.40%	
			2000			70.90%	
			2001			50.5%*	
	Yanhaas	Three stage probability sample in two stages and by quotas in the last stage	2002		3%	50.7%*	
			2003				
			2004				
	Centro Nacional de Consultoria	Modified probability sample, probability in four stages and by	2005		3.50%	100%	
			2006		2.40%		
	INVAMER S.A. Colombia	Probability sample in four stages	2007		3.50%		
			2008		3%		
	IPSOS Napoleón Franco	Modified probability sample: clustered, stratified, and multi-stage	2009		3.20%		99.90%
			2010				
	Centro Nacional de Consultoria	Modified probability sample: clustered, stratified, and multi-stage (by quotas in the last stage)	2011		3.50%	100%	
2013							
2015			3.10%				

**Territories in conflict were not considered in this study*

Table 3

One of the most important elements of this research study is the time dimension. This research study takes a historical and comparative approach. As mentioned previously, this study aims to determine the relationships between government legitimacy and perceptions on crime and the economy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. The study then aims to find correlations between high and low points of government legitimacy and significant historical and political events in each country. Data were collected for Latinobarómetro surveys between the years 1998-2016. Survey data were collected every two years (and on even years only). This is because elections for Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia all occur on even years. In addition, I believe that it is important to collect data a year after each inauguration. Therefore, this study focused on data from 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. There is one important note I would like to make about the use of time in this study. As with much secondary research,

Latinobarómetro presents some gaps in the data available to the public. These gaps in the data, however, are not due to different issues each country was facing at the time. The gaps present in the data provided by Latinobarómetro are consistent for the same questions in all countries being studied. For the questions that do not have data for the specific years that I aim to look at, I will look at the data for the next closest year available (2011 and 2015 instead of 2012 and 2014).

Each concept being measured in this study (government legitimacy, perceptions of crime, and perceptions on the economy) will be operationalized through two different survey questions from Latinobarómetro. Crime perceptions will be operationalized through two key survey questions. The first question asks the respondent whether they think crime in their country has increased or decreased over time (Latinobarómetro 2015). The second question asks the respondent if they or a family member of theirs has ever been a victim (Latinobarómetro 2015). These two questions will tell us how citizens of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia perceive crime within their countries. Unfortunately, the first question regarding crime rates provides very limited data (only has data for 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005, and 2011). However, when looked at next to the self-reported victimization rates in question two, the two variables prove to vary in similar fashions. Consequently, the second question helps to fill some of the gaps in data in the first.

Perceptions on the economy will be operationalized through two different survey questions as well. The first question asks the respondent whether they think the current economic situation in their country is very good, good, average, bad, or very bad (Latinobarómetro 2015). The second question asks the respondent what they think their own socioeconomic status is, on a scale of very good, good, average, bad, or very bad (Latinobarómetro 2015). These two

questions tie both micro and macro level thinking into a holistic picture of the economic perceptions of citizens in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia.

The last concept, government legitimacy, will also be operationalized through two key survey questions. The first question asks the respondent how satisfied they are with democracy in their country (Latinobarómetro 2015). The second question asks the respondent how much confidence they have in political parties in their country (Latinobarómetro 2015). These two questions measure for government legitimacy in a way that specifically looks at the democratic structures of each country and whether they are perceived as being effective by respondents.

In completing this research study, there are both advantages and disadvantages to conducting secondary data analysis using comparative survey data. Comparative research is limited because it focuses on large aggregates and does not pay attention to individual-level phenomena. Because of this, it is possible to accidentally miss the heterogeneity existing within a sample population. Another limitation to comparative research is that the units being analyzed and measured as independent variables may not actually be independent. In this case, perceptions on crime and perceptions on the economy serve as independent variables although there are likely other variables that influence the measurement of these concepts. Using survey data in a research study comes with certain limitations as well. Survey data does not provide rich detail since there are no open-ended questions. As a result, respondents may feel confined by the limited answer choices and choose one that does not fully explain their answer to a given survey question. Despite the limitations to using comparative survey data, there are also advantages. For example, survey data is considered to be reliable since questions are standardized. Also, conducting a secondary analysis of survey data allows for the evasion of any ethical issues in data collection.

Analytical Techniques

When using secondary sources to conduct research and to find correlations between concepts, it is important to understand how the source being used has coded for each variable. Latinobarómetro provides notes on coding for some of their data sets. Unfortunately, Latinobarómetro is missing a significant amount of coding information. The site provides methodological notes solely for the years between 2006-2015. Between these years, I am only collecting data for 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012. However, the site only offers coding information for 2006 and 2010. In these code notes, Latinobarómetro clearly states that they use code cleaning procedures in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia in both 2006 and 2010. Also, in both years (and for all three countries) an important step in the coding process was checking that all questions were answered and that the formatting for each question was correct. We can assume these two steps were completed for each year of data collection. However, there is some visible variation in the coding procedures for these three countries. Depending on the year and the country, different percentages (ranging from ten to twenty percent) of the answers were randomly reviewed to compare to the full set of answers. This difference in coding along with the number of years with missing coding information both serve as limitations to analyzing this data set. Although these are limitations to using data provided by Latinobarómetro, this data set offers a broadly representative sample with a low percent sample error that is formatted in a reliable manner and facilitates comparisons. For these reasons, Latinobarómetro is a great secondary source for conducting this study.

This research study will use quantitative research methods. After obtaining data for each of the six survey questions mentioned in the previous section, I will conduct a statistical analysis in

order to determine the strength of the associations between government legitimacy, perceptions on crime, and perceptions on the economy. First I will formulate three tables (one for each country) that show the percentage of negative responses for each indicator. For example, for measuring government legitimacy I will indicate two different measures for the even years between 1998-2016: what percent of respondents are not at all satisfied or not very satisfied with democracy and what percent of respondents have no confidence or little confidence in political parties. The same rule follows for the measures of crime and the economy in each country (the percent of respondents that think crime has increased by a lot or by a little, the percent who have been victimized, the percent who think the economy is very bad or bad, and the percent who think their socioeconomic level is very bad or bad).

The analysis will then involve the use of multivariate descriptive statistics to evaluate relationships among the key variables. I will focus on percentages reporting specific opinions over time in each country. The measure of association being used in this study is Pearson's R since all variables being measured for are continuous (measured in percentages). The analysis is thus a time series analysis of the relationships among the key variables. A p-value of 0.05 will be used to determine significance of associations between variables. There are some limitations to conducting this type of a statistical analysis. Making conclusions based on multivariate descriptive statistics assumes that the data compiled was sampled randomly. Also, multivariate descriptive statistics will be able to determine whether the concepts above are associated, however, association does not mean causation. Despite these limitations to statistical analysis, this method of interpreting research is useful when handling a large aggregate of quantitative data and can help provide an understanding of the relationships being studied.

After conducting the statistical analysis described above, I will determine which years (between 1998-2016) show increases and decreases in government legitimacy for Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. For this study, I will start by looking at the percentages of positive and negative answers for both indicators for government legitimacy (including the question on satisfaction with democracy and the question on confidence in political parties) in 1998 to determine whether the legitimacy starts out high or low based on the majority percentage (whichever responses make up greater than 50% of the sample). Then, I will determine whether the government legitimacy increases or decreases each of the following years by looking at the percent of positive responses (that indicate higher levels of satisfaction with democracy and higher levels of confidence in political parties). A significant increase or decrease for this study is five percent. After determining which years have high and low levels of government legitimacy, I will compare these dates to significant political and historical dates for each country. This will provide insight into how different events (including elections, impeachments, corruption scandals, economic troubles, and gang violence) contribute to increases and decreases in government legitimacy within each country in this study.

Data Analysis Part 1

The completion of the statistical analysis provided unexpected results. Relationships found between perceptions on crime, perceptions of the economy, and government legitimacy were not as clear cut as predicted. Relationships between these three variables also differed depending on the country being analyzed. For each analysis, there were only ten data points. This is because the study is limited to 10 years (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2015, and 2016). For measuring perceptions on crime (whether it is perceived as increasing or

decreasing), there were only five samples due to limited data points. The years sampled for this question were 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005, and 2011. Below in Tables 4-6 are the results of the Pearson's R statistical analysis. Significant relationships are highlighted in yellow.

My first hypothesis stated that the relationship between economic perceptions and government legitimacy would be positive (as the economy is perceived as improving, government legitimacy will go up). My second hypothesis argued that the relationships between perceptions on crime and government legitimacy would be negative (as crime is perceived as rising, government legitimacy will go down). Tables 4-6 clearly represent how the hypothesized relationships were not manifested in the data. The only significant relationships were found in Brazil and Colombia. Table 4 shows that in Brazil, between the years 1998-2016, there was a significant positive relationship between the respondents' evaluation of the current economic situation in their country and both indicators for government legitimacy. This finding corresponds with my hypothesis that as the economy is perceived as being bad, government legitimacy will go down. However, this same relationship was not exhibited in Colombia or Mexico. Also, the indicator for perceptions of the economy that asks what respondents think of their own socioeconomic level did not show this same positive relationship with measures for government legitimacy in Brazil.

The findings for shown in Table 6 Colombia indicate only one significant relationship between the respondents' evaluation of their personal socioeconomic situation and whether they were satisfied with democracy. Surprisingly, this relationship was negative. This means that as respondents report their own socioeconomic levels as being lower, their satisfaction with democracy rises. There is no clear or logical explanation for why this might be. This particular relationship was only exhibited in Colombia. It is possible that there was an error with the data or

that the small number of cases made it difficult for a correct association between variables to be found.

For all the other indicators in this study, there were no significant relationships between perceptions on crime and government legitimacy. I believe that this is due to the fact that five is too small of a sample to provide definitive results and to make relationships between the two concepts. As for the relationships found between perceptions on the economy and government legitimacy, I feel that there are many reasons why Brazil was the only country in this study to exhibit a significant relationship. Primarily, Brazil is a much larger country with far less economic trouble than Colombia and Mexico. It is possible that because Brazil has experienced less economic trouble overall that issues with the economy are more heavily weighted amongst citizens. Another reason why this relationship might have only been found in Brazil is that the methodology and sampling techniques used by Latinobarómetro in Brazil were much more consistent than in Colombia and Mexico (as shown by Tables 1-3 provided in the Methodology and Data section of this paper).

Brazil	Crime has increased by a lot or by a little * Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.758
		Significance	0.137
		N	5
	Crime has increased by a lot or by a little * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	-0.51
		Significance	0.38
		N	5
	Have been victimized * Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.131
		Significance	0.719
		N	10
	Have been victimized * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	-0.496
		Significance	0.145
		N	10
	Economy is very bad or bad* Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.918
		Significance	0.00
		N	10
	Economy is very bad or bad* No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	0.697
		Significance	0.025
		N	10
Socioeconomic level is very bad or bad* Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	-0.061	
	Significance	0.867	
	N	10	
Socioeconomic level is very bad or bad * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	-0.195	
	Significance	0.59	
	N	10	

Table 4

Mexico	Crime has increased by a lot or by a little * Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.77
		Significance	0.128
		N	5
	Crime has increased by a lot or by a little * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	0.876
		Significance	0.051
		N	5
	Have been victimized * Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.109
		Significance	0.765
		N	10
	Have been victimized * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	-0.103
		Significance	0.776
		N	10
	Economy is very bad or bad* Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.447
		Significance	0.195
		N	10
	Economy is very bad or bad* No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	-0.225
		Significance	0.532
		N	10
Socioeconomic level is very bad or bad* Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.003	
	Significance	0.994	
	N	10	
Socioeconomic level is very bad or bad * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	-0.132	
	Significance	0.717	
	N	10	

Table 5

Colombia	Crime has increased by a lot or by a little * Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.579
		Significance	0.306
		N	5
	Crime has increased by a lot or by a little * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	0.296
		Significance	0.629
		N	5
	Have been victimized * Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	-0.128
		Significance	0.725
		N	10
	Have been victimized * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	0.121
		Significance	0.74
		N	10
	Economy is very bad or bad* Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	0.35
		Significance	0.321
		N	10
Economy is very bad or bad* No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	0.253	
	Significance	0.481	
	N	10	
Socioeconomic level is very bad or bad* Not at all or not very satisfied with democracy	Pearson Correlation	-0.729	
	Significance	0.017	
	N	10	
Socioeconomic level is very bad or bad * No confidence or little confidence in political parties	Pearson Correlation	-0.206	
	Significance	0.569	
	N	10	

Table 6

Data Analysis Part 2

As part of the analysis of the relationships between perceptions on crime, perceptions on the economy, and government legitimacy, I sought out to determine whether high and low levels of government legitimacy correspond to significant political or historical events in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. I have compiled data for each country using survey questions on satisfaction with democracy and confidence in political parties to determine whether each country experienced increases or decreases in government legitimacy for each year in this study (from 1998-2016). All years are accounted for in the data provided by Latinobarómetro except for 2012 and 2014. Since no data was available for these two years, I analyzed the next closest year with available data (2011 and 2015). Below I have included Tables 7-9 (one for each country) that show increases and decreases in both satisfaction with democracy and confidence in political parties along with the significant political or historical events (and dates) that correspond with that year. The measures for these two indicators in 1998 are marked as either

“high” or “low” based on which responses (positive or negative responses) hold the majority percentage (whichever responses make up more than 50% of the sample). An “X” signifies that no significant political or historical event took place around the year of data collection. The percentages indicate how many respondents said they were satisfied with democracy and confident in political parties.

Much of the results displayed below were expected. For example, none of the three countries in this study experienced an increase in one indicator (satisfaction with democracy or confidence in political parties) and a decrease in the other indicator. As shown in Table 7, Brazil experienced drops in one or both indicators for government legitimacy in years with incidents of corruption, poor public services, impeachment, and when the country’s currency hit an all-time low. Brazil shows increases in one or both indicators for government legitimacy in the years of the re-election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the election of the first female president in Brazil, Dilma Rousseff.

Table 8 shows that in Mexico, years with low levels of government legitimacy (in one or both indicators) corresponded with increases in drug violence, a drop in Mexican oil production, and when files were released exhibiting how the government tortured and killed political activists in the 1960s and 1970s. Increases in one or both indicators for government legitimacy occurred during Vicente Fox’s election, the building-up of Mexico’s security policy with regards to violence against women and drug-related crime, the refusal to pay for Donald Trump’s proposed “wall” between the US and Mexico, and the acceptance of same-sex marriage.

Table 9 shows that in Colombia, one or both indicators for government legitimacy decreased in years with FARC and rebel attacks, the election of Álvaro Uribe and the election of Juan Manuel Santos. These indicators also decreased during the implementation of the free trade

agreement and the signing of the ceasefire and disarmament agreement between the Colombian government and FARC. Although it is possible that the citizens of Colombia were upset with their government for settling with FARC, the decrease in government legitimacy that occurred at the same time as the implementation of the free trade agreement raises some questions. When the agreement was first made, Uribe was re-elected as President. His first term took place during the FARC and rebel attacks in 2002. Uribe was extremely right-winged and had been accused of both corruption and support of right-wing paramilitary groups (Silva 2017). Santos on the other hand was a very left-winged president who won more votes than any president in Colombian history and attempted to establish peace between FARC and the Colombian government (BBC 2016). It is possible that Santos' diligence towards resolving issues between the government and FARC was what caused a decrease in legitimacy, however this is simply a speculation. One of the indicators for government legitimacy increased in Colombia in the same year that Colombia extradited 14 paramilitary warlords to the US. Even though a curfew was in place as a result of violent protesting at the time when these warlords were extradited, this had less influence on the measures for government legitimacy.

The second part of my hypothesis for this study was that increases and decreases in government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia would correspond with significant political and historical events. The results provided below in Tables 7-9 confirm my hypothesis. While some historical and political events are harder to determine as positive or negative, it is clear that there is a relationship between these events and respondents' satisfaction with democracy and confidence in political parties. Although the hypothesized relationships between perceptions on crime, perceptions on the economy, and government legitimacy were not exhibited in this study, this data exhibits how increasing and decreasing levels of government

legitimacy match up with significant historical and political dates in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia.

Country	Satisfaction with democracy	Confidence in political parties	Year	Significant political/historical event	Year of event
Brazil	Low (23%)	Low (18%)	1998	Constitution altered to allow president to run for re-election, President Cardoso re-elected	1997
	Same (27%)	Same (20%)	2000	Protests by indigenous population due to racial genocide and forced labor	2000
	Lower (21%)	Same (20%)	2002	Currency hits an all-time low and President Lula is elected	2002
	Higher (28%)	Same (23%)	2004	X	X
	Higher (37%)	Same (22%)	2006	Lula is re-elected	2006
	Same (38%)	Same (20%)	2008	Lula suspends intelligence chiefs due to allegations that they spied on officials, politicians, and judges	2008
	Higher (48%)	Same (24%)	2010	First female president Dilma Rousseff	2010
	Lower (36%)	Lower (15%)	2012 (2011)	President Rousseff's chief of staff resigns due to corruption allegations	2011
	Lower (21%)	Lower (10%)	2014 (2015)	Protests across country over poor public services, 2014-Rousseff re-elected	2013
	Lower (10%)	Same (6%)	2016	Rousseff impeached due to illegal use of funds during election campaign	2016

Table 7

Country	Satisfaction with democracy	Confidence in political parties	Year	Significant political/historical event	Year of event
Mexico	Low (21%)	Low (34%)	1998	Popular Revolutionary Army attacks government troops	1996
	Higher (36%)	Same (34%)	2000	Vincente Fox wins presidential election	2000
	Lower (17%)	Lower (12%)	2002	Millions of security files released describing torture and killing by security forces of hundreds of political activists in the 60s and 70s	2002
	Same (19%)	Same (15%)	2004	X	X
	Higher (41%)	Higher (30%)	2006	Federal post of special prosecutors is created to handle violent crimes against women, fencing build on Mexican border with the US, new federal police force created to deal with drug cartels	2006
	Lower (23%)	Lower (17%)	2008	Protests against drug violence, drug related killings climb, drop in Mexican oil production	2008
	Same (27%)	Same (18%)	2010	Arturo Beltran Layva is killed (one of Mexico's most wanted drug lords), but drug violence climbs	2009
	Same (23%)	Same (18%)	2012 (2011)	Enrique Pena Nieto wins presidential election	2012
	Same (19%)	Same (16%)	2014 (2015)	Arrest warrants issued for 45 suspects (including a former mayor) in the case of 43 missing students kidnapped and possibly killed in Guerrero	2015
	Higher (27%)	Higher (21%)	2016	Mexico says it will not pay for Trump's wall, President Nieto announces proposals to allow same sex marriage	2016

Table 8

Country	Satisfaction with democracy	Confidence in political parties	Year	Significant political/historical event	Year of event
Colombia	Low (24%)	Low (17%)	1998	Andres Pastrana Arango elected as president, grants FARC a safe haven that is off limits to the army	1998
	Same (28%)	Same (17%)	2000	"Plan Colombia" wins 1 billion in military aid from US to fight drug trafficking and rebels	2000
	Lower (12%)	Lower (10%)	2002	Pastrana orders rebels out of demilitarized zone due to a hijacking of aircraft, war zone set up after rebel attacks, Alvaro Uribe elected and FARC attacks Bogota, Uribe declares state of emergency	2002
	Higher (30%)	Higher (21%)	2004	X	X
	Same (32%)	Same (18%)	2006	US and Colombia agree on free trade deal and Uribe wins a second term	2006
	Higher (42%)	Same (20%)	2008	Government releases many jailed FARC guerrillas, protests in Bogota against kidnappings, Colombia extradites 14 paramilitary warlords to the US, curfew put in place due to violent protests	2007-2008
	Same (39%)	Same (22%)	2010	Hugo Chavez accuses Colombia of carrying out military excursion and Hugo Chavez prepared his armed forces for war	2009
	Lower (27%)	Lower (17%)	2012 (2011)	Juan Manuel Santos becomes president and US congress passes free trade agreement with Colombia	2011-2012
	Same (27%)	Same (13%)	2014 (2015)	Santos is re-elected, FARC and the government sign a deal on paying reparations and ensuring justice to victims of conflict	2014-2015
Lower (20%)	Same (17%)	2016	Ceasefire and disarmament agreement signed	2016	

Table 9

Conclusion

This study was designed to determine whether negative perceptions on crime and negative perceptions on the economy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia were accompanied by decreases in government legitimacy between the years 1998-2016. The results of this research study show that although no definitive relationships between perceptions on crime, the economy, and government legitimacy were found in all three countries, there was a significant relationship between economic perceptions and government legitimacy in Brazil between 1998-2016. As discussed previously, there are many possible reasons for why this relationship was only found in Brazil. It is possible that economic downturns are weighted more heavily in Brazil because the economic state of the country has historically been better than Colombia and Mexico. It is also possible that the methodology and sampling techniques used by Latinobarómetro were more reliable in Brazil than in the other two countries. Either way, more research must be done in

order to determine whether there is a significant relationship between economic perceptions and government legitimacy than is broadly represented in Latin American countries. Crime perceptions did not seem to have any significant association to government legitimacy in any of the three countries in this study. As mentioned in the Data Analysis, this is likely due to the small sample number that was the product of missing data.

This research study also sought out to conclude whether increases and decreases in government legitimacy correspond to significant political or historical events in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia between the years 1998-2016. The results of this second portion of the data analysis found that increases and decreases in government legitimacy correspond with significant political and historical events in all three countries. Incidents that were accompanied by decreases in government legitimacy in all three countries include (but are not limited to) corruption scandals, issues with public services, impeachments, drug violence, rebel attacks, and certain unfavorable election outcomes. Incidents that were accompanied by increases in government legitimacy in all three countries include (but are not limited to) favorable election outcomes, satisfactory changes in legislation, and triumphs over drug-related and violent crime through legislation and government action.

In analyzing these results, it becomes clear that there are many intersections between government legitimacy, crime, and the economy. Several of the historical and political events that were found to correspond with increases and decreases in government legitimacy are related to crime and the economy. It is important to try and understand not only how changes in the economy and crime impact a citizen's thoughts on their country's government; it is also important to understand how legislative changes that have an effect on the economy and have an effect on crime can impact the way a citizen views the government system within their country.

This study has shown how these types of legislative changes and actions taken by the government directly impact the way in which citizens perceive the governing power of their countries. I believe that it is vital to focus on the power that legislation has over the growth of the economy and the management of crime in order to understand government legitimacy. It is much more difficult to change the economy or the level of crime in a country without doing so through legislative action. Through legislative action, I believe that a government has the power to improve the state of the economy and the level of crime within a nation and that this will, in turn, improve their own legitimacy. Understanding the level of influence that the government has on the economic state and the level of crime within a nation is key to benefiting that nation and the citizens within it. Through this understanding, a government has the ability to ensure their own legitimacy amongst their nation's population.

To generate more conclusive evidence for the relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions on crime and the relationship between government legitimacy and perceptions on the economy, more in-depth research must be conducted. A study could yield better data if it took into consideration a much larger aggregate. It would also be beneficial to extend the study for a longer period of time than ten years. Another improvement that could be made is the inclusion of more than two indicators for each variable. For example, perceptions on crime, perceptions on the economy, and government legitimacy could each be measured through several different survey questions. A future study could also provide more interesting results if it determined whether certain legislative actions and government actions (like those in the second part of the data analysis in this study) were able to achieve their desired goals and if their success (or lack of success) impacted government legitimacy. The most important change that would have to be made in future research to produce more conclusive results would be to ensure that

there are little to no gaps in the data being sampled from. If all of these changes were to be made in future research, it is likely that it would be easier to draw decisive relationships between crime, the economy, and government legitimacy.

Although there were several confounding factors that impeded the finding of conclusive results in this study, the results provide some insight into what influences the government's legitimacy within a country. This study determined that the most substantial factor in determining government legitimacy in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia between the years 1998-2016 was government action and legislative changes. Both government action and legislative changes that aimed towards improving the economy and improving the management of crime in all three countries, also had a positive impact on government legitimacy. As a result of this finding, I believe that it is important for a government to focus on how its actions and its legislation both have the power to benefit the nation economically and provide better security for citizens. Through these improvements, a government has the power to change its own legitimacy.

Work Cited

British Broadcasting Corporation 2016. “Colombia leader Juan Manuel Santos: From hawk to dove.” London, UK: British Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved April 17, 2018

(<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37445224>)

British Broadcasting Corporation 2018. “Colombia profile- Timeline.” London, UK: British Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19390164>)

British Broadcasting Corporation 2018. “Mexico profile- Timeline.” London, UK: British Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19828041>)

British Broadcasting Corporation 2018. “Brazil profile- Timeline.” London, UK: British Broadcasting Corporation. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19359111>)

Buvinic, Mayra, Andrew Morrison and María Beatriz Orlando. 2005. “Violencia, crimen, y desarrollo social en América Latina y el Caribe.” *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo/Banco Mundial* 11(43). Retrieved April 17, 2018:

(http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1405-74252005000100008)

Canache, Damarys and Michael E. Allison. 2005. “Perceptions of Political Corruption in Latin American Democracies.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 47(3): 104. Retrieved April 17, 2018

(http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4490419.pdf?casa_token=omEzOdUFBgsAAAAA:Oylt)

FIAU9bKTgK-

YuUZ60HLE8jzO2mRbZGQTWXq0mpZk3qjLPjFQ1_I4FSvN5bMMLXiaDYm95pN5

dsfuK2FglaN3COkdA0NXtpywUUExKbLxZ-xcc_oZ&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

Carreras, Miguel. 2013. "The Impact of Criminal Violence on Regime Legitimacy in Latin America." *Latin American Research Review* 48(3):100-101. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (https://muse.jhu.edu/article/533762?casa_token=l3Wpq8UYFmwAAAAA:OgLfXbDO M5miuPniKa0BmGpGSySw-T7-Zbu0tp7CwHK4bxdOEhYH9iRXS-fKLguNyzv5hdIGaA)

Cohen, Luc. 2013. "Mexico's Poverty Rate: Half Of Country Population Lives In Poverty." *The World Post*. New York City, New York: Huffington Post. Retrieved October 22, 2017 (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/29/mexico-poverty_n_3673568.html)

Corbacho, Ana, Julia Philipp and Mauricio Ruiz-Vega. 2012. "Crime and Erosion of Trust: Evidence for Latin America." *Inter-American Development Bank*. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/4058/Crime%20and%20Erosion%20of%20Trust%20-%20Evidence%20for%20Latin%20America.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)

Council on Hemispheric Affairs 2011. "Democracy in Mexico: The Past, Present, and Future." Washington, D.C.: Council on Hemispheric Affairs. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<http://www.coha.org/democracy-in-mexico-the-past-present-and-future/>)

Denyer Willis, Graham 2015. *The Killing Consensus: Police, Organized Crime, and the Regulation of Life and Death in Urban Brazil*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Election Guide 2018. "Federative Republic of Brazil." Washington, D.C.: International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved April 17, 2018
(<http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/31/>)

Election Guide 2018. "Republic of Colombia." Washington, D.C.: International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved April 17, 2018
(<http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/48/>)

Election Guide 2018. "United Mexican States." Washington, D.C.: International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved April 17, 2018
(<http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/140/>)

Fajnzybler, P., Daniel Lederman, and Norman Loayza. 2002. "Inequality and Violent Crime." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 45 (1): 25. Retrieved April 17, 2018
(http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1086/338347.pdf?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

Gilley, Bruce. 2006. "The Determinants for State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries." *International Political Science Review* 27(1): 54. Retrieved April 17, 2018
(http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20445036.pdf?casa_token=CO7dA4MYwloAAAAA:OzEIcu7EwxMkGQvzQVkJktHaVTL7E5XApJRtcY9GXw5pfi2eB5DcAj7zMX4VeUh7Up0kUo23NJcx_zoWZVIQe-nUDkZ8Jg7FWBwqV1q752OZkqZZ-1r&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

- Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Colombia. 2018. "Colombia-Political System."
 Bratislava, Slovakia: Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Colombia. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<https://www.colombia.sk/en/content/colombia-political-system>)
- Latinobarómetro 2015. *Análisis de datos*. Providencia Santiago, Chile: Latinobarómetro.
 Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>)
- O'Neil, Patrick, Karl Fields and Don Share. 2013. *Cases in Comparative Politics*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Pérez-Liñán, Aníbal. 2007. *Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/45259756/Intro-Conclusions.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1524065245&Signature=RqAqStlOF0lb%2BINugnQSUy%2BcNCE%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DPresidential_Impeachment_and_the_New_pol.pdf)
- Romo, Rafael and Greg Botelho. 2014. "Mexican mayor, wife arrested in case of missing students." Atlanta, GA: Cable News Network (CNN). Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<https://www.cnn.com/2014/11/04/world/americas/mexico-missing-students/index.html>)
- Scholastic 2018. "Brazil: Government and History." New York City, NY: Scholastic. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/subarticle.jsp?id=944>)

- Silva, Maria Alejandra. 2017. "Alvaro Uribe: The Most Dangerous Man in Colombian Politics." *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (<http://www.coha.org/alvaro-uribe-the-most-dangerous-man-in-colombian-politics/>)
- Soares, Rodrigo and Joana Naritomi. 2010. "Understanding High Crime Rates in Latin America: The Role of Social and Policy Factors." *The Economics of Crime: Lessons for and from Latin America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joana_Naritomi/publication/252706887_Understanding_High_Crime_Rates_in_Latin_America_The_Role_of_Social_and_Policy_Factors/links/545d09590cf2c1a63bfa5dfe.pdf)
- Stampini, Marco, Marcos Robles, Mayra Sáñez, Pablo Ibararán and Nadin Medellín. 2015. "Poverty, Vulnerability, and the Middle Class in Latin America." *Inter-American Development Bank*. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank. Retrieved April 17, 2018 (https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/6878/Poverty_vulnerability_and_the_middle_class_in_Latin_America.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Filename: Needles Jeanine SENIOR THESIS FINAL DRAFT SGP.docx
Folder: /Users/Zamira/Desktop
Template: /Users/Zamira/Library/Group Containers/UBF8T346G9.Office/User
Content.localized/Templates.localized/Normal.dotm
Title:
Subject:
Author: Needles, Jeanine W
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 4/23/18 12:47:00 PM
Change Number: 2
Last Saved On: 4/23/18 12:47:00 PM
Last Saved By: Needles, Jeanine W
Total Editing Time: 0 Minutes
Last Printed On: 4/23/18 12:47:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 41
Number of Words: 10,160
Number of Characters: 60,576 (approx.)