The Causes and Representative Consequences of Invalid Voting in Latin America

By

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Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in

Political Science
December, 2016
Nashville, Tennessee

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For Mom and Dad, with love.

Y para mi querido Kenyi, que me hace reír cuando lloro y llorar por reír.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without generous financial support from Vanderbilt University's College of Arts and Sciences, the Political Science Department's Research on Individuals, Politics, and Society lab, and the Latin American Public Opinion Project. Much of the fieldwork involved in the dissertation was also funded by the National Science Foundation's Dissertation Enhancement Grant. I am grateful to all of these institutions, and to the individuals within them who read my proposals and generously funded this work.

This project involved eleven months of fieldwork in Peru, none of which would have been possible without the patience and support of local Peruvian academics, public scholars, and institutions. I am especially indebted to David Sulmont and the *Instituto de Opinión Pública* at the *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú,* Patricia Zárate and Jorge Aragón and the *Instituto de Estudios Peruanos,* and José Incio and the team at INFOGob at the *Jurado Nacional de Elecciones* in Lima; the *Asociación Servicios Educativos Rurales* (SER) in Cajamarca; and Jorge Zegarra and *Gobierno y Desarrollo Humano* in Arequipa. Their assistance in navigating Peruvian institutions, their support of the project, and their generosity in providing data were invaluable. A special thanks goes to Mariana Ramirez Bustamante, my research assistant during the early days of fieldwork in Lima, and to the whole Ramirez Bustamante clan for their constant kindness, friendship, and generosity. Above all, I am grateful to the dozens of Peruvians – normal citizens, activists, former and sitting politicians, and candidates – who took time to share their opinions with me. Their willingness engage in extended, detailed conversations about their political opinions was humbling, and their opinions and knowledge are the foundation of this project. *Gracias a todos.*

This project also benefitted from the support and feedback of my friends and colleagues at the Political Science Department. I am especially indebted to Laura Sellers, Fred Batista Pereira, Eelco van der Maat, Beth Estes, Matt Layton, Mason Moseley, Mariana Rodriguez, Daniel Zizumbo Colunga, Oscar Castorena, Carrie Roush, and all the members of the LAPOP group. Their critical feedback and smart questions improved this project immensely, and their friendship made graduate school fun.

In addition to support from my friends, my work has benefitted from the guidance of my advisors and academic mentors. My Dissertation Committee has supported my growth as a scholar and as a person, for which I am grateful. Their willingness to read numerous drafts and provide critical feedback improved my writing, clarified my thinking, and shaped the way I approach research questions. In addition to making me smarter, they are generous people – I am thankful to each of them for their small kindnesses, from a congratulatory drink to a dinner invitation or a bag of coffee beans from home. I am especially grateful to Liz Zechmeister. Her support of my work and professional development has been constant and generous. I am honored to call her my advisor, fellow distance runner, nerdy pursuit enthusiast, and friend.

I never would have been in the position to write a dissertation about politics without my family. My grandparents Bernard, Ann, Alex, and Sally talked politics around the dinner table when I was small. I am immensely grateful for this abnormal socialization and the lessons it taught me about debating policy civilly, preferably over or immediately following a good meal. My siblings Carolyn, David, and Megan taught me a lot about negotiation and strategic decision making ("politics"); they are the best siblings anyone could ask for. My parents are my biggest fans. Their endless support and encouragement, and their pride in even my smallest accomplishments, has been a comfort in the hardest moments of this process. Finally, Kenyi has

the dubious honor of being the only family member I got to choose. I'm so grateful to have his terrible jokes and wonderful laugh in my life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Around the world, individuals regularly absorb the costs of voting—registering, identifying and then traveling to the correct polling place, and waiting in line—and then choose not to register a candidate preference. Instead, millions of voters choose to cancel their ballots by leaving them blank, defacing them, or voting for a candidate who is not legally recognized by the national electoral commission each year. These voters eschew their right to register a candidate preference through elections and cast "invalid" ballots. Average rates of invalid voting in Latin America's young democracies are the highest in the world. In first round presidential elections from 1980 to 2015, the proportion of invalid votes was larger than the margin of victory between first and second place candidates in 68.3 percent of contests. That is, invalid votes held the potential to change the final outcome in more than two-thirds of all Latin American presidential elections in the post-transition period.

In recent years, scholars of democracy in Latin America have lamented the hollowing out of democratic institutions and freedoms in the region (Puddington 2012, but see Levitsky and Way 2015). Democracy faces important challenges, ranging from economic crisis and its negative impacts on democratic public opinion (Bermeo 2003, Córdova and Seligson 2013) to unstable partisan competition across elections that leads to unpredictable behavior by elites and high levels of volatility in election outcomes (Lupu and Reidl 2013, Lupu 2014, Roberts 2014). Even in

countries where political parties are entrenched, scholars have noted that parties are becoming increasingly "unrooted" in the electorate, with highly stable political competition sometimes indicating elite detachment from voters rather than high quality representation (Siavelis 2009). Freedom House has reported depressed democracy scores in countries that have cracked down on citizen liberties, especially freedom of the press (See Freedom House 2015, Puddington 2012, Diamond 2015).

In light of these democratic declines, high rates of protest-motivated invalid voting may be cause for concern. Widespread blank and spoiled voting holds the potential to weaken electoral mandates, making governance difficult for elected leaders. Over time, these expressions of citizen discontent with democratic politics could serve to weaken Latin America's already troubled democracies. However, a pervasive protest vote does not automatically spell trouble for democracy. In fact, that citizens feel confident enough in the tools of democracy to use them to voice their discontent might suggest the relative *strength* of democratic institutions in such a scenario.

This dissertation assesses the attitudinal and contextual correlates of invalid voting, and finds more merit in the latter scenario. Most individuals who cast protest-motivated invalid ballots in Latin America do so to protest the slate of candidates running for office or specific government outputs, not democracy itself. In the aggregate, invalid voting responds predictably to features of competition that change over time, including political polarization and electoral volatility. And while elite response to the individuals who cast invalid ballots is not a given, I find evidence that, in the Peruvian context, some politicians respond proactively to these ballots by entering competition more frequently in districts where rates of invalid voting are higher.

Defining Invalid Votes

An invalid ballot is one that has been destroyed (e.g., ripped) or marked in such a way that election officials are unable to identify the voter's candidate preference. Because the voter's preference is indiscernible, invalid ballots are tallied and then discarded. Broadly, there are two "types" of invalid ballots: those that are left unmarked (called "blank" or "empty" ballots), and those that are mismarked (usually called "null," "spoiled," or "informal" votes).

In clean democratic elections, voters receive unmarked ballots from election officials when they enter the ballot box to vote on Election Day. If a voter decides not to mark that ballot, or to selectively leave some races unmarked (what political scientists call "roll-off" or "selective" voting), then that ballot is counted as blank for those unmarked contests. Identifying blank votes is therefore relatively straightforward across countries. Spoiled ballots, on the other hand, vary much more widely, as do the laws for identifying them. In some countries (Australia) ballots are marked as spoiled only if markings on the ballot paper prohibit election officials from identifying the voter's intent or identify the voter, while in others (Chile, Peru) any unsanctioned mark on a ballot paper (including marking with a check instead of an X, or marking with the correct symbol but exceeding the delimited area on a ballot) is sufficient grounds to invalidate that vote—regardless of the clarity of a voter's intent.[1] There are thus many ways to invalidate a ballot, and

[1] There is substantial cross-national variation in the relative strictness of rules for identifying invalid votes that might affect observed rates of invalid voting. Furthermore, systematic variation in poll workers' leniency towards minor

examples of null votes range from the relatively straightforward (an affirmative selection of all options, which indicates no clear preference) to the creative (such as drawings or social commentary).

Invalid votes have two key properties that make them unique and especially interesting for students of elections. First, although these ballots are counted, they are almost always excluded from the final vote tally and do not, therefore, count towards final election outcomes.[2] By shrinking the universe of votes from which election outcomes are decided, high rates of invalid voting effectively decrease the number of votes a candidate must win in order to win election (the "threshold for inclusion"). There are two major exceptions to this generalization. First, several countries, especially in Latin America, have legal provisions in place that automatically nullify an election if a certain threshold of all ballots are cast invalidly. In many cases (e.g., Colombia, Guatemala), this threshold is an absolute majority of votes, although in some cases (e.g., Peru), a supermajority of invalid ballots is required to cancel an election. While national elections are rarely cancelled, subnational and supranational contests have been cancelled via this mechanism.[3] Second, in some countries (India, Colombia) and U.S. states (Nevada), a "none of the above"

errors likely exists, with some tending to adhere more or less strictly to the rules as written based on their personality, their level of training, or the presence of party proxies during counting. I do not explore these possibilities in depth in this dissertation.

[2] A persistent myth in Latin America states that blank or spoiled ballots are "reassigned" to the first place winner, and that invalidating one's ballot is thereby a tacit signal of approval for the leading candidate. I have found no evidence that such a practice is legal in the countries studied here. There are at least two potential sources for this myth. First, validly cast ballots may be nullified by election officials as a means to fix election outcomes, especially in relatively undemocratic elections. Anecdotal accounts of such behavior by undemocratic incumbents are common. Blank ballots are straightforward for dishonest poll workers to mark, facilitating their "reassignment." A second possible source of this myth is the mathematical reality that a higher portion of invalid ballots cast shrinks the pool of valid ballots and, as a result, decreases the number of ballots the leading candidate must win to be elected. By shrinking the total number of valid ballots, the removal of blank votes can exaggerate relatively small margins of victory.

[3] For example, in Colombia's 2014 elections for the supranational Andean Parliament, 53% of votes were invalid, nullifying the entire electoral proceeding. Another strikingly high case of invalid voting comes from the 2011 judicial elections in Bolivia, in which invalid ballots accounted for nearly sixty percent of all votes cast. See Driscoll and Nelson (2012, 2014) for in depth discussion of the 2011 Bolivian judicial elections.

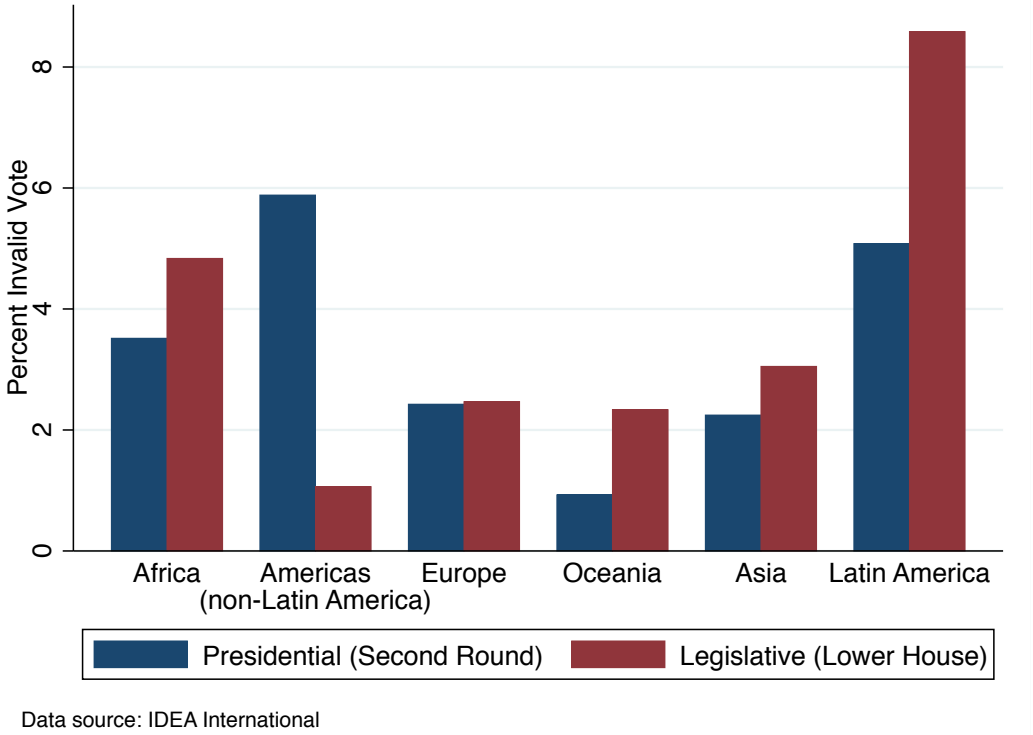
option exists that is factored into the valid vote total. Similarly, recent bills in Guatemala and Argentina have sought to "validate" invalid ballots by including them in the final vote tally, thereby increasing the threshold for inclusion (Hernández 2015, Pagni 2015, Piscetta 2015).

A second important feature of invalid votes is that they can be cast intentionally as a voter protest or by accident, for example as the result of voter's inability to use voting technology. Based on official election reports, there is no way to know what proportion of invalid votes are cast intentionally versus accidentally. In this dissertation, I deal primarily with intentionally cast invalid votes, which I demonstrate represent the majority of invalid votes cast in Latin American presidential elections.

Invalid Voting in Latin America

Rates of invalid voting around the world vary widely. In the United States, rates of blank and spoiled votes cast in presidential elections are so low that they are not usually reported. In Australia, where voting is mandated and compulsory vote laws are enforced, rates are somewhat higher (McAllister and Makkai 1993, Hirczy 1994). In Latin America, however, rates of invalid voting in presidential and legislative elections are the highest in the world: Since 1980, invalid ballots have accounted for more than 8 percent of all votes cast in lower house legislative elections across the region, and for 5.5 percent of all ballots cast in presidential elections (see Figure 1). Rates of invalid voting in Latin American elections are more than double those observed in the more stable democracies of Europe, and are substantially higher than those observed in other developing democracies in Africa and Asia.

Figure 1.1 Invalid Vote Rates by World Region (1980-2015)



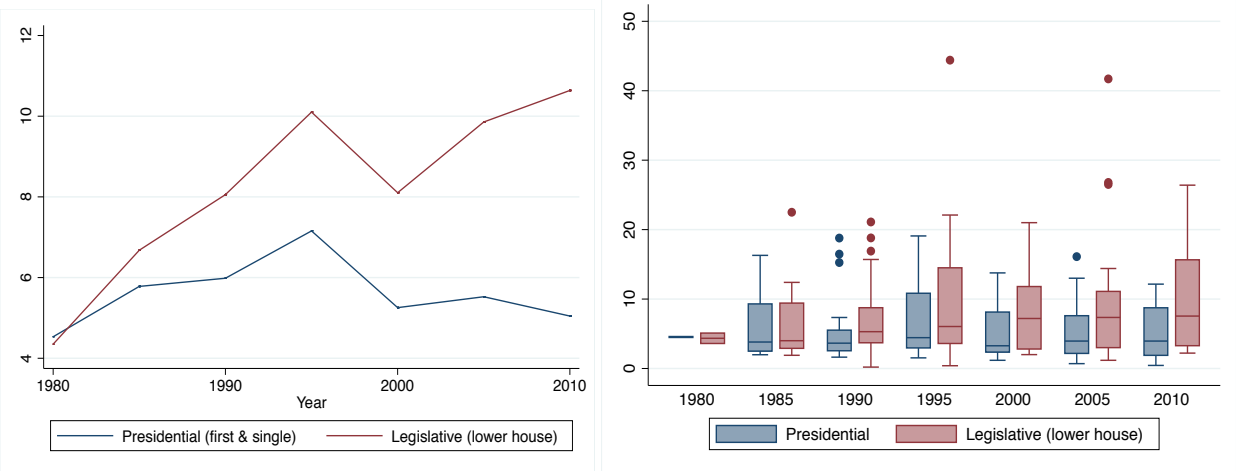
Data source: IDEA International

These figures mask substantial variation in invalid vote rates *within* Latin America. Figure 2 shows average rates of invalid voting in presidential and legislative elections from 1980-2015 in each of the seventeen Latin American countries in which this information is regularly reported.[4] Invalid vote rates are substantially higher in legislative elections than in presidential races, but these rates vary widely across countries and elections, and over time.

[4] Nicaragua does not consistently report rates of invalid voting and has therefore been excluded from many of the statistical analyses presented in this dissertation.

While invalid voting is, on average, high in those countries where voting is mandatory and enforced (Peru, Ecuador, Brazil), there are several notable exceptions to this generalization. Rates of invalid voting in Argentina, Chile (pre-2012), and Uruguay are relatively low, in spite of enforced mandatory vote laws. On the other hand, rates of invalid voting in Colombia and Guatemala, two countries where voting is voluntary, are among the highest in the region.

Figure 1.2 Percent Invalid Vote in Presidential and Legislative Elections over Time, Latin America

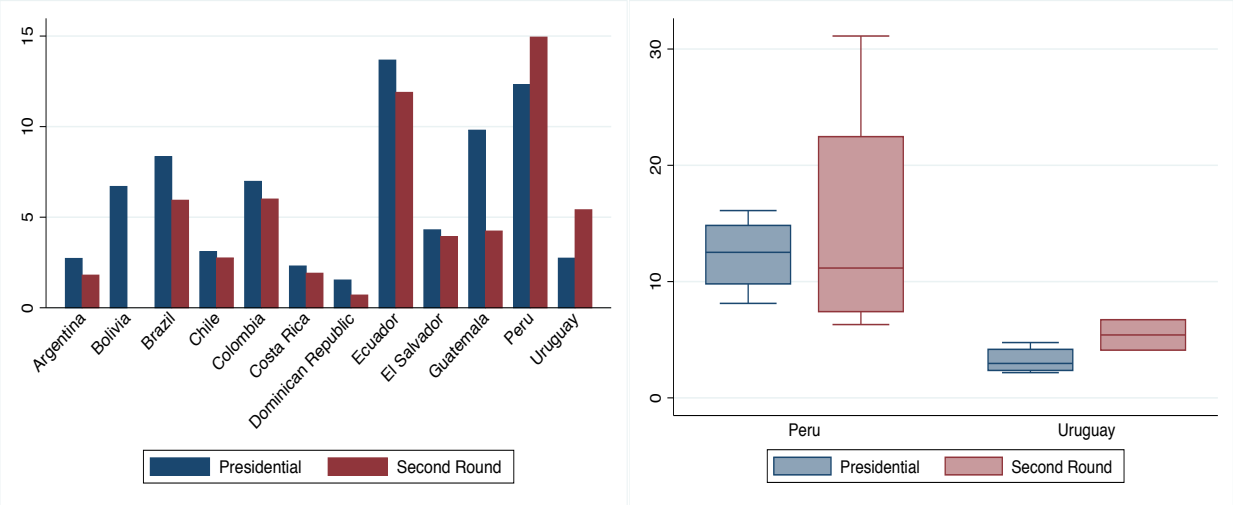


Average rates of invalid voting in both presidential and legislative elections increased substantially from 1980 to 1995 across the region (see Figure 2). While invalid voting in presidential elections has mostly levelled off in the years since 2000, invalid voting in legislative elections has continued to increase. Furthermore, the variation in rates of invalid voting in legislative elections has increased over time.

Additionally, rates of invalid voting in first round presidential elections tend to be higher than those in second or single round elections (See Figure 3). This is arguably because the stakes

of second round elections are higher than those of first round contests. In countries where second round elections are frequently held, the likelihood that any candidate (including a voter's least preferred option) will win the first round election outright is relatively low, which decreases the potential cost of casting an invalid vote for individuals who do not have a strong candidate preference. Second round elections, however, are held between two competing candidates, one of whom must win. This increases the costs of casting an invalid ballot to protest, as doing so could enable a voter's least preferred candidate to win. In sum, if a voter has even a weak preference for one candidate over the other in a second or single-round election, she has a strong incentive to cast a valid ballot.

Figure 1.3 Percent Invalid Vote in First vs. Second Round Presidential Elections, Latin America



Indeed, in ten of the twelve Latin American countries that have held runoff elections since 1980, average rates of invalid voting in the second round are lower than those in the first round. Peru and

Uruguay are the only exceptions. In Peru, this high average second round figure is due to the extremely high rates of invalid voting registered during ballotage in the 2000 and 2001 presidential elections, which inflate the mathematical average.[5] In Uruguay, in contrast, invalid vote rates in second round elections are tightly clustered around the average value, and rates are consistently higher in ballotage than in first round contests.

Explaining Invalid Voting

Scholarly perspectives on invalid voting are relatively few in number, and have focused on clarifying the causes of invalid voting. Most studies of the phenomenon have focused on single country or election case studies, and have tended to focus on legislative elections, in which rates of invalid voting tend to be higher (see, e.g., McAllister and Makkai 1993, Power and Roberts 1995, Zulfikarpasic 2001, Carlin 2006, Cisneros 2013). These individual country studies have sought to explain invalid voting in such diverse countries as Australia, Brazil, Chile, France, Italy, and Mexico, while cross-national studies of the phenomenon have focused almost exclusively on the Latin American region (Power and Garand 2007, but see Uggla 2007, Kouba and Lysek 2016). Building on foundational work by McAllister and Makkai (1993), scholars have argued for three non-rival explanations of invalid voting: political institutions, socio-demographic characteristics,

[5] Peru's 2000 election was widely denounced as fraudulent, with opposition parties claiming that the incumbent Fujimori regime invalidated ballots as a means to manipulate the final outcome (more than 30% of all ballots were invalidated in this election). In 2001, an invalid vote campaign based in the capital city of Lima arguably led to an increase in blank and spoiled votes, from 11 percent in the first round to just over 13 percent in the second round. In all other years, rates of invalid voting in the second round are substantially lower than in the first round, averaging to 6 percent of all ballots cast.

and citizen protest. More recent work has included features of political competition, such as the information environment, in explaining the phenomenon.

In seeking to explain levels of blank and null voting, scholars have found a consistent, positive relationship between mandatory vote laws and invalid votes.[6] In countries where mandatory vote laws are enforced, rates of invalid voting are higher on average than rates in countries without such laws (Hirczy 1994, Power and Garand 2007). Mandatory vote laws require individuals who would *prefer* to abstain (either because they are uninformed about, uninterested in, frustrated or angered by politics) to turn out on Election Day. Rather than face a punitive fine, such individuals may turn out but opt to cast invalid ballots, abstaining from the vote choice while complying with their legal obligation. The institutional argument thus identifies invalid voting as a form of abstention. Yet, sanctions for abstention cannot explain all observed variation in invalid voting. Indeed, rates of invalid voting in two countries where voting is voluntary (Colombia and Guatemala) are notably high in comparison to both global and regional averages.

A second explanation links socio-demographic characteristics of the population to *accidental* invalid voting. McAllister and Makkai's (1993) foundational study in Australia found that rates of invalid voting were higher in regions with high immigration from non-English speaking countries (31-33). The authors attributed this relationship to the difficulties associated with understanding electoral procedures, and politics more generally, outside of one's native language. Power and Garand (2007) extend this argument to the Latin American context, suggesting that the integration of illiterate and indigenous voters, many of whom speak the national

[6]Scholars have also found a relationship between district magnitude, personal voting, electoral disproportionality and invalid voting (see Power and Garand 2007: 439). The authors suggest that greater electoral complexity makes the task of voting more difficult for individuals, depressing their feelings of efficacy and leading to higher rates of invalid voting, either due to frustration with these difficult procedures or increased error.

language as a second language, might similarly result in increased invalid voting as the result of mechanical difficulties with the ballot (434). These invalid votes might be cast by accident, as scholars have argued, due to low voter ability. Alternatively, individuals who face mechanical challenges in correctly marking a ballot might vote invalidly on purpose, due to feelings of frustration or low internal efficacy.[7]

These features of polities and publics account for an important portion of the variation in invalid voting. However, demographic trends and the laws governing political institutions change rarely, while rates of invalid voting vary substantially across election type and over time (see Chapter 3). To the extent that they are relatively stable over time, these factors cannot account for cross-time variation in invalid vote rates.

A third explanation of invalid voting has linked invalid voting to political attitudes that change, specifically, to political discontent. McAllister and Makkai (1993) argued that those most likely to participate in other forms of protest behavior, young and well-educated individuals, would be more likely to engage in protest-motivated invalid voting (27, 32). They found small, marginally significant effects for these proxies, and in turn argued that the protest hypothesis held little explanatory power for the Australian case. More recent scholarship has tested the protest argument using measures of corruption, electoral manipulation, and violent protest as proxies for a propensity to engage in protest behavior more generally in national or subnational settings. These studies have found that invalid voting occurs with increased frequency in regions where government corruption and electoral manipulation are high (see Power and Roberts 1995), where occurrences of revolutionary violence are more frequent, and levels of democracy, as measured by

[7] Internal efficacy is defined as the individual's belief that she is competent to understand politics as they function in her country.

the Freedom House index, are low or declining (Power and Garand 2007, 439). A single-country study of invalid voting in France (Zulfikarpasic 2001), where voting is voluntary, suggests that protest voting need not occur as a protest of democracy itself, or in response to serious governmental abuses. Rather, the author finds that, for urban individuals, invalid votes are cast as "a response to a political offering that is too restrictive" (267). Taken as a whole, these studies suggest that invalid voting can serve as one more, low-cost form of protest for dissatisfied citizens, particularly in underperforming democracies.

However, these studies do not clarify how prevalent protest-motivated invalid voting is, or the extent to which it indicates an anti-democratic (versus pro-democratic) behavior. Furthermore, studies linking invalid voting to protest motivations face important challenges to inference. First, most studies of invalid voting have used country- or district-level electoral data to make inferences about individual-level actions. While electoral data have the advantage of capturing real behavior rather than potentially biased self-reports, aggregate data provide no leverage over hypotheses that link individuals' voting behavior to their attitudes.[8] Second, conclusions reached using aggregate electoral returns are potentially prone to the ecological fallacy, by which the scholar incorrectly attributes mass trends to individuals where no such attribution ought to take place (see King, Keohane and Verba 1994: 30). In short, scholars have told us *where* most invalid votes are cast, but not *by whom* or *why*.

Recently, scholars have begun to focus on features of political competition that change meaningfully across elections and hold the potential to affect invalid vote rates through voter

[8] Related, aggregate election returns hold no information regarding the *intentionality* of invalid votes. Conversely, individual-level survey data *only* provide leverage over intentional invalid voting. Using public opinion data thus does not allow me to assess who accidentally casts invalid votes, or with what frequency.

attitudes. Limitations to the available menu of options, for example, have been associated with higher rates of invalid voting, with those who are unable to find a sufficiently representative candidate or who view the race as uncompetitive choosing to cast invalid ballots to protest this perceived lack of representativeness. Along these lines, Brown (2011) demonstrates that Nevada voters in the 1990s and early 2000s were more likely to select the "None of the Above" option in elections in which only one candidate from a major party competed. Similarly, Driscoll and Nelson (2014) find that the poor information environment and limited competitiveness of the 2011 Bolivian judicial election led to an increase in invalid voting in that contest.[9] In their cross-regional study of Latin America and Eastern Europe, Kouba and Lysek (2016) find that features of competition that limit an election's competitiveness (i.e., a higher margin of victory, the presence of ballotage, or an incumbent candidate) lead to inflated invalid vote rates. Finally, in studying Mexico's 2009 legislative elections, scholars have identified the presence of a null vote campaign, which organized those expressing "against all" sentiment into a voting bloc, as key to understanding the notable increase in invalid voting in that case (Alonso 2010, Cisneros 2013).

The Dissertation: A Roadmap

This dissertation builds on existing scholarly work to provide a general understanding of the individual- and contextual-level factors that motivate invalid voting in Latin America, and to

[9] The congressional super-majority held by the ruling MAS party limited the opposition's power in the candidate vetting process and assured that candidates favored by MAS would be selected to run (see Driscoll and Nelson 2014, pp. 3-5). The authors also find that intentional invalid voting was highest among political sophisticates (those with more education) and non-MAS party members, consistent with protest motivations of invalid voting.

what political effect. The project contributes to scholarly understanding of the individual and environmental factors that cause invalid voting and, as well, begins to answer questions about the circumstances under which political elites respond to invalid voters.

Chapter 2 assesses *whether* invalid voting in Latin American elections signifies a protest and *what* voters protest using these ballots. I build a theory of protest-motivated invalid voting that accounts for three distinct protest motivations: anti-system protest, protest of government performance, and voter alienation. Using data at the correct level of aggregation, the individual level, I assess the explanatory power of these protest motivations of invalid voting in Latin America. I provide strong evidence indicating that most invalid votes in presidential elections across the region are cast intentionally, and not as the result of voter error. I show that the behavior reflects voters' discontent with particular political options and outputs or their feelings of political alienation, but that invalid voting does *not* reflect anti-system attitudes, on average. Finally, I show that these motivations for intentionally invalidating ballots do not shift substantially across political institutions.

In Chapter 3, I expand upon the finding that some voters cast invalid ballots as a rejection of the slate of candidate options by arguing that levels of protest voting should respond to change in features of political competition that shift voters' perceptions of the representativeness of the candidate options. I argue and show that elite polarization, the number of candidates competing, and volatility in the partisanship of candidate offerings affect invalid vote rates. As political competition becomes increasingly polarized, differences among parties are clarified, which results in lower rates of null voting. Conversely, centripetal trends in polarization lead to more muddled political contexts and increased invalid voting. When the number of candidates competing is high, invalid voting increases, as many candidates lead to voter confusion or frustration. However,

change in the number of candidates has the opposite effect: as the number of candidates increases across elections, voters are better able to find representative options and are therefore less likely to cast invalid ballots. A decrease in the number of available candidate options, in contrast, is associated with increased invalid vote rates. Finally, I find that flux in the partisanship of candidate options leads to more invalid voting, as volatility decreases voters' ability to accurately assign blame and assess new candidate options.

Although invalid ballots are cast by individuals, political entrepreneurs can mobilize supporters to cast invalid ballots using "against all" messaging, with potentially lasting negative effects on public opinion surrounding the legitimacy of electoral mandates and key democratic institutions. In Chapter 4, I turn to a discussion of null vote campaigns in Latin American presidential elections. This chapter details leaders' expressed motivations for organizing such movements and describes movements' success or failure in increasing invalid vote rates compared to past contests. I find that widespread perceptions that all available candidate options are corrupt, that the process has been systematically undemocratic, or that all available candidates are not committed democrats are associated with the emergence of invalid vote campaigns. Finally, this chapter lays out a research agenda for the study of null vote campaigns.

Having demonstrated the importance of individual and contextual features for explaining invalid voting, Chapter 5 seeks to clarify one set of *consequences* associated with high levels of invalid voting. I argue that different party types respond differentially to metrics of political opportunity when uncertainty surrounding election outcomes is high. While established parties with national reputations are responsive to metrics identified with new party entry in established democracies (i.e., historical rates of wasted voting and relatively low barriers to entry), smaller ideological parties and radical parties tend to respond to alternative metrics of political

opportunity, including historical rates of invalid voting. I use electoral data from Peruvian legislative elections from 1980 to 2011 to show that strategic incentives to enter vary by party type and, as well, by levels of political uncertainty.

This dissertation's sanguine view of invalid voting does not preclude the phenomenon's potential to harm democratic public opinion or legitimacy. Persistent deficiencies in the quality of representation in Latin America could cause a shift in the attitudes associated with intentional ballot invalidation as countries continue to live under democratic rule. In fieldwork I conducted over ten months in Peru, for example, I found little evidence that elected political elites consider the preferences of invalid voters or seek to implement policies that incorporate alienated voters into political life once elected. This lack of attention to the grievances expressed by those who invalidate their ballots could lead to increased levels of invalid voting in future elections, and to growing detachment from democratic institutions, more generally.

Yet as a whole, this dissertation takes a positive view of the causes and consequences of invalid voting. I show that invalid voting in Latin American presidential elections is in large part an intentional phenomenon used by engaged members of the citizenry as a means to express discontent with specific features of democratic competition on Election Day. While high or increasing rates of invalid votes could suggest lagging representation, I find no evidence that a pervasive protest vote indicates trouble for democracy itself. In sum, invalid votes in Latin American presidential elections should be understood as a meaningful signal of voter discontent that seeks to promote pro-democratic outcomes.

CHAPTER II

PROTESTING VIA THE NULL BALLOT: A THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE DECISION TO CAST AN INVALID VOTE IN LATIN AMERICA

Introduction

In recent years, scholars of democracy in Latin America have lamented the hollowing out of democratic institutions and freedoms in the region (Puddington 2012, but see Levitsky and Way 2015). Democratic consolidation faces important challenges, ranging from economic crisis and its negative impacts on democratic public opinion (Bermeo 2003, Córdova and Seligson 2013) to unstable partisan competition across elections, leading to unpredictable behavior by elites and high levels of volatility in election outcomes (Lupu and Reidl 2013, Lupu 2014, Roberts 2014). Even in countries where political competition is stable, scholars have noted that parties are becoming increasingly "unrooted" in the electorate, with highly stable political competition sometimes indicating elite detachment from voters rather than stable, high quality representation (Siavelis 2009). Freedom House has reported depressed democracy scores in countries that have cracked down on citizen liberties, especially freedom of the press (See Freedom House 2015*,* Puddington 2012, Diamond 2015). Concurrent to this democratic backsliding, scholars have documented an increase in various forms of protest in Latin America (Moseley 2014). In light of these declines in democratic quality, one might expect these protests to be associated with anti-system sentiment. Yet, to the contrary, recent scholarship suggests that at least one type of protest, street protest, is

largely a "normalized," pro-democratic behavior in Latin America that enables engaged citizens to effectively air specific grievances rather than express revolutionary or otherwise anti-system tendencies (Dalton and van Sickle 2005, Moseley and Moreno 2010, Moseley 2015). This paper assesses the extent to which this understanding of protest extends to another common behavior in the region, invalid voting.

In contrast to other forms of protest, invalid voting is a particularly blunt instrument because invalid votes cast in voter error can add substantial noise to any protest signal. Yet, in Latin America, rates of invalid voting are notably high: the proportion of blank and spoiled ballots was larger than the winning candidate's margin of victory in 69.6 percent[10] of first or single round presidential elections in the region between 2000 and 2014.[11] As with other forms of protest, such high rates of invalid voting may be cause for concern to the extent that invalid votes signify anti-regime tendencies among the voting public (see, for example, Power and Garand 2007). Yet, if intentional invalid voting mirrors other protest behaviors, individuals who turn out and cast blank or spoiled ballots may, in fact, be using non-conventional behavior (purposely cancelling their ballots) as a means to protest conventional political problems. Thus, to the extent that intentional invalid voting in Latin America constitutes a protest behavior, two important questions follow: what are invalid voters protesting, and does intentional invalid voting across the region signify an anti-system behavior?

[10] The proportion of invalid votes was larger than the margin of victory between first and second place candidates in 39 of 56 first or single round elections.

[11] Particularly striking examples of high rates of invalid voting exist at the subnational and supranational levels. For example, in the 2011 judicial elections in Bolivia, invalid ballots accounted for nearly sixty percent of all votes cast, and in Colombia's 2014 elections for the supranational Andean Parliament, 53% of votes were invalid, nullifying the entire electoral proceeding. See Driscoll and Nelson (2012, 2014) for in depth discussion of the 2011 Bolivian judicial elections.

I answer these questions with a theoretical framework and empirical tests. First, I develop a theoretical framework that accommodates various potential attitudinal profiles of protest-motivated invalid voters. In creating this framework, I draw on previous studies of invalid voting as well as more general theories of contentious political action and voting behavior. Second, I test the framework's expectations using cross-national, individual-level survey data from 14 Latin American countries, where invalid vote rates are among the highest in the world. Third, I assess the extent to which four contextual features that scholars have differentially linked to anti-system protest—mandatory vote laws, multi-round elections, the effective number of candidates, and democratic quality—change individuals' motivations for casting invalid ballots. This study's contribution to our understanding of invalid voting is twofold: first, by identifying and testing observable implications of various protest motivations, I provide a comprehensive test of the protest motivation for invalid voting. Second, as the first cross-national examination of intentional invalid voting that uses data collected at the correct level of analysis, the individual level, to understand the attitudinal correlates of the phenomenon, this paper provides a decisive answer to the debate surrounding the individual causes of invalid voting.

I find that individuals who intentionally cast invalid votes report greater dissatisfaction with government performance and feel more alienated from politics than other individuals. However, these intentional invalid voters do not, on average, express less support for democracy as an ideal, or for fundamental democratic institutions, than those who vote for legally recognized candidates or abstain. Further, and contrary to expectations drawn from existing scholarly perspectives, these findings about individuals' motivations for casting protest votes hold with striking regularity across different political contexts. Voters' motivations for casting invalid votes are stable across varying political and institutional incentives, including mandatory vote laws, the

presence of second round elections, the effective number of candidates, and Freedom House democracy scores. In sum, while intentional invalid voting in Latin America signals protest, and specifically discontent with policy outputs and a rejection of sitting political actors, it does not, on average, represent a rejection of the democratic ideal.

Motivations for Protest via the Invalid Vote

In any given election, two kinds of votes are cast: valid votes, which are included in the final vote count, and invalid votes, which are recorded but excluded from the final tally.[12] To cast an invalid vote, citizens turn out the polls and opt out of the basic democratic right to register their vote choice, choosing instead to leave the ballot blank, mark it incorrectly, or write in the name of an unauthorized candidate. While rates of invalid voting in national contests in the United States are so low that they are not usually reported, these blank or null ballots frequently outnumber votes cast for candidates from small or niche parties across election types in Latin America. Yet, despite the relative frequency and important political ramifications of this phenomenon, political scientists have focused little attention on invalid votes and the individuals who cast them. As a result, scholars have reached few stable conclusions about who casts blank or spoiled votes and why.

Some conventional and scholarly wisdom suggests that most invalid votes are cast unintentionally, with those voters who are illiterate, innumerate, or uninformed about politics

[12]In some cases, an election can be nullified and a new election called if invalid votes comprise a majority or super-majority of all ballots. Such laws exist in several Latin American countries (e.g., Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru).

casting invalid ballots accidentally, due to mechanical difficulties marking the ballot (Power and Garand 2007, Nicolau 2015).[13] To the extent that invalid votes *are* cast intentionally, scholars link the behavior to voter discontent. Existing studies argue that discontented voters might cast blank or spoiled ballots in response to at least three political ills. First, voters who are opposed to democracy itself might cast invalid ballots to signal their rejection of the political system (McAllister and Makkai 1993, Power and Garand 2007). Second, individuals might vote invalidly to signal their discontent with the government's performance in specific policy areas, such as the economy, or crime and corruption (Carlin 2006). Third, voters might cast invalid votes to express political alienation, here defined as the perceived inability to influence political outcomes (Stiefbold 1965, Power and Garand 2007).

Yet, the strength of the evidence supporting the protest argument generally, and particular motivational arguments specifically, varies widely: while some find limited support for the protest argument (e.g., Zulfikarpasic 2001, Power and Garand 2007), others find no support at all (e.g., McAllister and Makkai 1993). There are several potential reasons for this variability. First, most studies of invalid voting focus on a single country or election;[14] however, the strength of the protest motivation likely varies across countries and election years as the electoral context changes, which could account for differences across case studies. Second, existing scholarship has relied almost exclusively on aggregate data to measure invalid voting and the motivation to protest.[15] Yet, invalid votes are cast by *individuals*, driven by individually held characteristics and attitudes. Studies that rely on electoral returns are prone to the problem of ecological fallacy, missing

[13] It is also possible that validly cast ballots are sometimes manipulated by election officials during the vote tally as a means to change election outcomes. I do not explore this possibility in depth here.
[14] Three exceptions are Power and Garand (2007), Uggla (2008), and Kouba and Lysek (2016). These papers observe invalid voting in a cross-national, multi-election context but use aggregate electoral data to test their claims.
[15] Three exceptions are Stiefbold (1965), Carlin (2006), and Driscoll and Nelson (2014). These papers use individual level data, but are each limited to a single country case and election period.

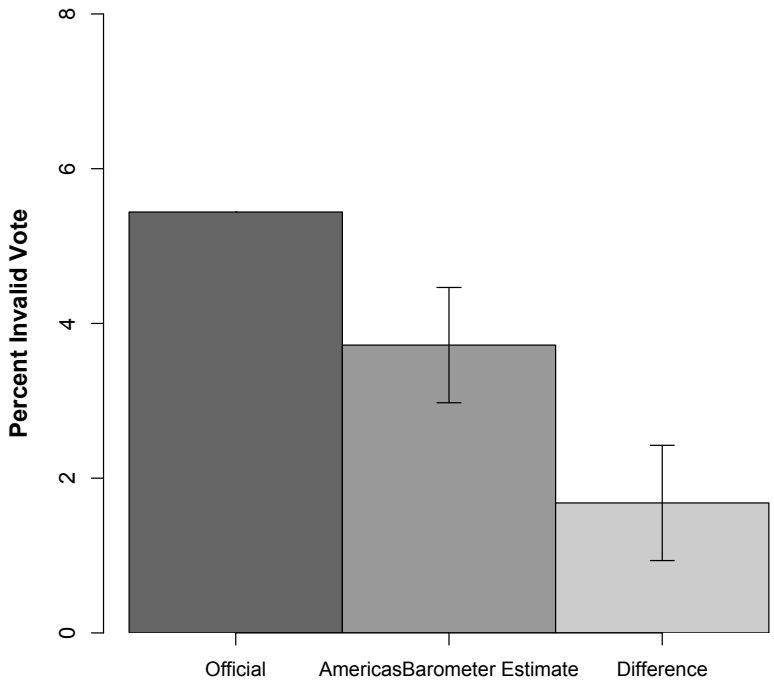
individual-level relationships where they exist due to aggregation or incorrectly inferring that patterns at the aggregate level account for individual differences (see, e.g., Przeworski and Teune 1970, King, Keohane and Verba 1994). Furthermore, reliance on aggregate data has rendered scholars unable to separate intentionally cast invalid ballots from those cast by accident, making it impossible to test hypotheses about voter discontent as a motivator among the relevant population. Third, lacking direct measures of various protest motivations, scholars have resorted to rough proxies that range from demographic features like gender and age (McAllister and Makkai 1993) to region-level features like levels of electoral manipulation or rates of violent or anti-system protest (Power and Garand 2007, Uggla 2008) with relatively little theoretical justification for these variable choices. As a result, most analyses of protest via the invalid vote are not comparable across studies and, thus, it may not be surprising that scholars have reached different conclusions about whether and how protest intentions drive blank and spoiled voting.

Given this confusion in existing scholarship, it is worth identifying that a meaningful portion of invalid voting in Latin American presidential elections is in fact intentional. To that end, I present evidence from the region-wide, nationally representative AmericasBarometer[16] surveys indicating that this is, indeed, the case. Across waves of the AmericasBarometer survey, respondents who reported having turned out to vote in the most recent presidential election were asked to indicate for whom they had voted in the first election round.[17] The question is open-ended, and individuals who reported having cast blank or spoiled ballots were coded in a separate response category. Rates of invalid voting reported by survey respondents from countries where a presidential election was held in the 12 months prior to survey fieldwork comport well with official

[16] Source: The AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org.
[17] The filter question used to identify voters, and detailed information about all variables used in analyses, is available in Table A in the Appendix.

figures (see Figure 1 below): on average, the difference between official and reported invalid vote rates is 1.6 percent, although in many countries, this difference is much smaller. This constitutes strong evidence that a substantial portion of invalid votes in presidential elections is cast intentionally (see Appendix Tables B1 and B2 for details).

Figure 2.1 Official vs. Reported Invalid Vote Rates in 14 Latin American Countries



Confidence intervals for the AmericasBarometer mean estimate and difference were calculated in Stata using survey weights to account for the complex sample design.

Given that most observed invalid voting in Latin American presidential elections is intentional, I turn to a discussion of voters' motivations for casting invalid ballots. There are at

least three attitudes that might drive protest-motivated invalid voting. First, the protesting voter might blame the democratic system, rather than specific political actors, for poor national-level policy or economic outcomes, and cast an invalid vote in rejection of that system. Alternatively, like the street protestors described by the "grievance theory" of contentious political action, some invalid voters might blame democracy for specific personal ills (i.e., political disenfranchisement) they believe the political system has visited upon them (Gurr 1970, Dalton and van Sickle 2005). Because such individuals blame the political system for negative outcomes, a first expectation is that those who intentionally invalidate their votes should hold anti-system political attitudes. This *Anti-System Motivation* is the foundation of proxies of the protest motivation used in existing studies of the phenomenon (i.e., rates of revolutionary violence). For example, radicalized individuals who seek to overthrow the system of government through revolutionary violence might be particularly likely to cast invalid votes as a rejection of the democratic status quo, as suggested by Power and Garand (2007). Alternatively, some of these anti-system invalid voters might be resigned to the fact of democratic governance, but express opposition to or suspicion of some of its fundamental institutions (e.g., elections). Consistent with this second argument, individual-level analyses have found that voters who are disillusioned with the way democracy works in their country, perceiving that political institutions are inefficient and corrupt or the process is rigged, are more likely to cast invalid votes than others (Denemark and Bowler 2002, 61; Carlin 2006, 644).

A second reason that some individuals might cast invalid votes is to signal their discontent with specific policy outputs (*Policy Discontent Motivation*). Scholars of political behavior have long noted that voters from developed and developing nations, alike, tend to punish incumbents when they perceive that the economy is doing poorly, opting to "throw the bums out" with the

expectation that the opposition will perform better once in office (see Anderson 2007, Duch and Stevenson 2008, Murillo et al. 2010, Lewis-Beck and Ratto 2013). Similarly, some voters choose a candidate based on issue preferences, punishing the party in power for its performance in a particular policy area in the past election cycle (Ferejohn 1986). Evidence from Latin America suggests that voters have long memories, and use their votes to sanction current incumbents for recent negative outcomes as well as former incumbents who were responsible for negative economic outcomes in the past (Benton 2005). The same logic might apply to blank or spoiled votes: when a voter attributes responsibility for poor performance (economic or otherwise) to all viable candidate or party options, she might opt to sanction all responsible parties by invalidating her vote, rather than choosing a culpable and therefore "bad" candidate (Tillman 2008). Alternatively, individuals who perceive poor performance on relevant policy dimensions might cast invalid ballots as a blanket rejection of the options, without considering candidates' legislative records with respect to those policies (Maggiatto and Piereson 1977, Rose and Mishler 1998).

Finally, intentional invalid voting might be driven by an *Alienation Motivation*, or a voter's perception that political actors are not responsive to her preferences and demands (see Olsen 1968, Finifter 1970, Clarke and Acock 1989).[18] Individuals who feel alienated from politics might believe that their votes "do not matter" or "will not make a difference" either to the electoral outcome or in determining politicians' actions. Such a voter might feel that none of the candidate options are good because political actors in general are unresponsive. Alternatively, an alienated voter might hold a candidate preference but believe that the likelihood of his preferred candidate

[18] I use the psychological conceptualization of alienation in this paper. Finifter (1970) identifies four dimensions of political alienation: feelings of powerlessness in politics, the perceived meaninglessness of the political process, a lack of norms in the political system, and a sense of the individual's isolation in these feelings (391). I follow extant scholarship in focusing on the "powerlessness" dimension, or low external efficacy (Kabashima et al. 2000).

winning is miniscule. Rather than cast a preference vote for a candidate who will not win or a strategic vote for the least-bad viable option, an alienated individual might withdraw from the decision-making process by casting an invalid ballot, accepting the majority's decision as a *fait accompli* and opting not to voice her preference. Scholars have posited the *Alienation Motivation* as a third protest motivation in existing work (Stiefbold 1965, Power and Garand 2007); however, it has not been tested in a cross-national context because no reliable aggregate level measure of voter alienation exists.

Analysis: What Are Invalid Voters Protesting?

To assess the extent to which intentional invalid voting is motivated by anti-democratic sentiment versus more programmatic concerns, I use individual-level survey data from the AmericasBarometer, collected from 14 countries across the Latin American region between 2008 and 2014. Using data from the AmericasBarometer to test expectations about elections has some limitations, as data collection is not timed to coincide with elections, and some respondents are thus asked to recall their electoral behavior from years before the interview. As a result, respondents may not remember for whom they voted, or might lie about their vote choice to reflect a vote for the winner. Furthermore, while demographic features such as income and education are relatively stable, attitudes towards political actors and government performance change more rapidly, making the prediction of past actions with present attitudes problematic. To mitigate these concerns, I follow the example of Carlin and Love (2015) and use only those AmericasBarometer surveys for which data collection closely followed a national election (I set the cutoff point

conservatively at 12 months; in most cases, the time lapse between the election and data collection is less than six months. See Appendix Table B1 for details).[19]

Invalid voting in presidential elections is a somewhat rare phenomenon, and self-reported invalid vote rates are therefore low: across all countries in the dataset, only 3.4 percent of respondents (4.19 percent of self-identified voters) report casting an invalid vote in their country's most recent first round presidential election. The dependent variable used in the following analyses is a three-category nominal variable that distinguishes among abstainers, those who intentionally invalidate their votes, and those who cast a vote for a legally recognized candidate. I generated the dependent variable using two survey items tapping self-reported voter behavior. The first, *Turned out in Last Election*, asks respondents whether they voted in the country's last presidential elections; self-reported non-voters form the first category in the dependent variable. The second survey item, *Vote Choice*, asks respondents for whom they voted in the first round of the last presidential election (answer options are not provided to the respondent). The second category of the dependent variable includes those who responded that they cast blank or spoiled ballots, and is used as the base category in all analyses presented here.[20] The third category, valid vote, captures those who report having cast a positive vote for the incumbent, opposition, or any other legally recognized party.[21]

[19] Countries included in statistical analyses are: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

[20] Blank and spoiled votes are not distinguishable in the AmericasBarometer data prior to 2014. Some scholars have suggested that blank votes indicate a clearer protest signal than spoiled ballots as the former is necessarily intentional, while the latter may be caused by voter error (see Zulfikarpasic 2001, Uggla 2008, but see Driscoll and Nelson 2014). As might be expected, abstention is underreported in most countries.

[21] Following Uggla's (2008) insight that invalid voting is similar to voting for minor parties, I coded respondents who voted for a minor opposition candidate (received less than 5% of all votes) as a separate category in robustness checks. Voters for outsider candidates more closely resembled other valid voters than invalid voters.

I address the empirical expectations associated with each of the attitudinal explanations laid out in the previous section in turn. First, if protest-motivated invalid voting is rooted in distaste for democracy as a form of government as suggested by the *Anti-System Motivation*, then low reported levels of support for democracy should predict protest voting. I include two independent variables that capture an individual's support for democratic politics: A Churchillian question of respondents' expressed *Support for Democracy* as the best political system in spite of its problems, and an indicator variable measuring respondents' expressed strict *Preference for Democracy*, versus their willingness to sometimes support non-democratic regimes. These measures capture support for or opposition to democracy as an *ideal* and perceptions that the system is fulfilling its role per the democratic bargain. However, it is possible that individuals who cast invalid votes do so in protest of specific democratic actors or institutions that they believe have abused citizens' trust within the democratic system rather than rejecting democracy's overarching principles (Carlin 2006).[22] If this is the case, then low trust of electorally relevant institutions should predict intentional invalid voting behavior; to test this possibility, I use a variable that captures *Trust in Elections* themselves.

Second, the *Policy Discontent Motivation* posits that individuals' discontent with government performance in specific policy areas motivates them to cast invalid votes in protest. If this is the case, then invalid voting should be associated with poor assessments of government performance across salient policy areas. To tap this tendency, I use a measure of perceived

[22] In robustness checks, I included measures of respondents' perceptions of and experiences with corruption as additional measure of the *Anti-System Motivation*, with the expectation that those who experienced or perceived higher rates of corruption (arguably a negative consequence of low quality democratic governance) would be more likely to cast invalid votes. Findings for the corruption variables were insignificant in all model specifications. As the corruption questions were not included in all countries and years, I do not show those results here.

Government Performance.[23] The government performance measure is an additive index comprised of four questions that ask citizens to rate the government's performance in terms of: fighting poverty, protecting democratic principles, combating corruption, and improving citizen safety.[24] A second observable implication of the *Policy Discontent Motivation* is that invalid voters should respond to specific policy outcomes, for example, poor economic policy, rather than poor overall performance. Although aggregate analyses have found little support for this argument (see, e.g., Power and Garand 2007), it is certainly plausible that negative economic outcomes, or even ideological disagreement over economic policy, could motivate citizens to cast an invalid vote in protest. I test this argument using two measures of perceived *Economic Performance*, at the national and individual levels, which have been included in the AmericasBarometer survey across time.[25]

Third, the *Alienation Motivation* suggests that an individual's belief that she is unable to influence politics (i.e., low feelings of external efficacy) should be associated with intentional invalid voting. I test this argument straightforwardly, using a measure of external political efficacy that has been included in the AmericasBarometer since 2008. Higher values of the *Alienation* variable indicate poorer perceptions of system responsiveness, so the variable should be negatively associated with valid voting and abstention. Political alienation identifies individuals' feelings of powerlessness in the political realm. Scholars have also found that alienated individuals tend to be less cognitively and behaviorally engaged in politics (Verba et al. 1995), so I include a measure of

[23] Confirmatory factor analysis supported the creation of the index: the lowest factor loading was 0.81 (eigenvalue=2.73), and Cronbach's alpha is 0.899.

[24] Another observable implication of the *Policy Discontent Motivation* would link invalid voting to discontent with those political actors who are responsible for creating policy—politicians and political parties. In alternative model specifications, I find that this is, in fact, the case: invalid voters trust political parties significantly less than valid voters and abstainers.

[25] Indicator variables identify those who say that the economy is doing worse versus those who say that the economy is better or the same. Readers might be concerned about the correlation between personal and national economic perceptions (rho=0.437); however, all results are robust to sequentially removing these measures.

Political Interest as a second indicator of voter alienation. I expect that those who express less interest in politics will be more likely to report having cast invalid votes. To provide the strictest test of self-reported interest in politics as a measure of alienation, I control for *Political Knowledge,* which scholars often link to feelings of efficacy and interest in politics (see, for example, Craig et al. 1990), using an additive index measure of responses to political information questions that have been included in the AmericasBarometer surveys across time.

I also control for demographic features that might be associated with invalid voting, particularly age, gender, education, and urban residence, although these results are not presented here to preserve space. I include indicator variables for each country to account for systematic national-level variation. Because I introduce additional response categories to the dependent variable by including invalid voting as a third option to the binomial *Turnout* variable, I performed a series of diagnostic tests to evaluate the potential that these analyses violate the Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives (IIA) assumption (Alvarez and Nagler 1998, but see Dow and Endersby 2004).[26] Although the categories included in the dependent variable are empirically distinct, I use the conservative multinomial probit estimation strategy, and incorporate STATA's "svy" prefix to account for the complex sample design of the AmericasBarometer data when possible. Table 2 presents the results from a pooled model, which estimates results using data from all countries in the dataset independent of contextual features. For all variables, higher values indicate more of the variable, e.g., higher *Performance* values indicate better perceptions of government performance. Those who report invalidating their ballots are the excluded category—all coefficients, then,

[26] All statistical analyses were performed using STATA 13. Neither a Wald test nor a Small-Hsiao test supported combining response categories. For the pooled model, the Wald test returns significant values (valid-invalid: $p<0.000$; abstain-invalid: $p<0.000$; abstain-valid: $p<0.000$), indicating that these categories should not be combined; Small-Hsiao similarly does not return statistically significant values (abstain-invalid: $p=.129$ and valid-invalid: $p=.438$).

should be interpreted as the values of abstainers or valid voters compared to those who report casting invalid votes.

Table 2.1 Multinomial Probit: Protest Motivations of Invalid Voting

	All Countries	
	Abstain vs. Invalid	Valid Vote vs. Invalid
Anti-System Motivation		
Support Democracy	-0.012	0.020
	(0.019)	(0.019)
Prefer Democracy	0.066	0.087
	(0.076)	(0.068)
Trust Elections	-0.005	0.030*
	(0.019)	(0.018)
Policy Discontent Motivation		
Performance	0.048**	0.104***
	(0.025)	(0.024)
Own Econ Worse	0.027	-0.025
	(0.078)	(0.072)
Nat'l Econ Worse	-0.003	0.005
	(0.067)	(0.064)
Alienation Motivation		
Alienation	-0.029*	-0.027
	(0.018)	(0.017)
Political Interest	0.041	0.353***
	(0.039)	(0.037)
Knowledge	-0.333***	-0.124*
	(0.082)	(0.076)
Control Variables		
Constant	3.819***	0.515*
	(0.301)	(0.282)
Observations	19,125	

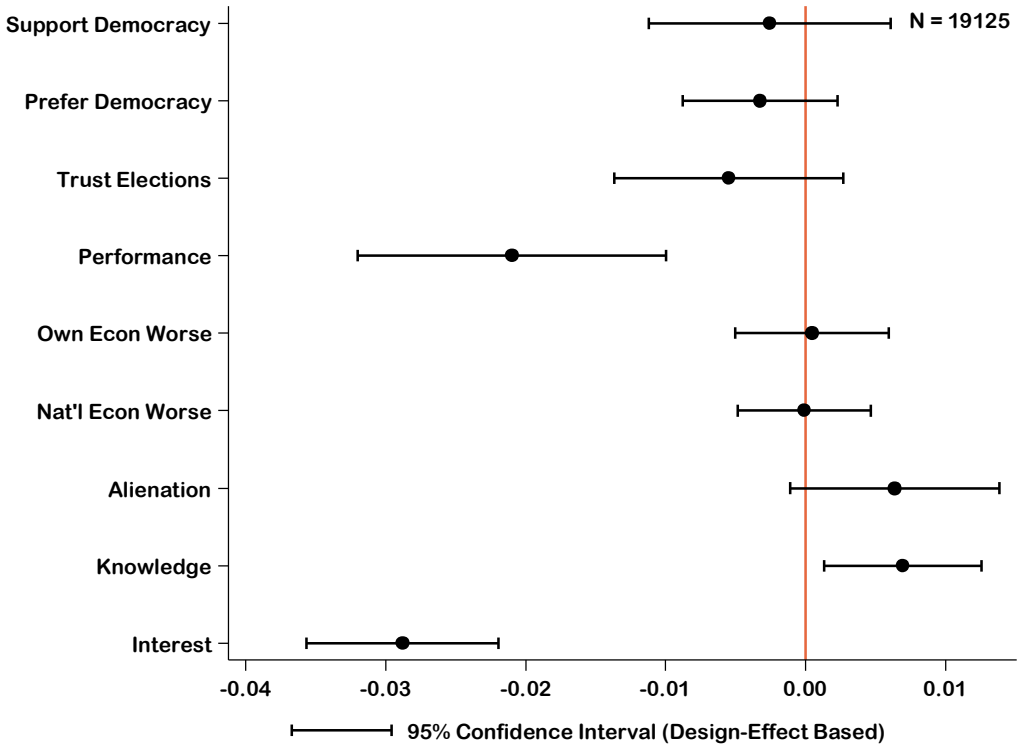
Additional socio-demographic control variables (education, gender, age, wealth quintiles, urban/ rural residence) and country controls included but not shown to conserve space. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

I find limited statistical support for the *Anti-System Motivation*. In terms of the hypothesis' most direct observable implication, support for democracy does not distinguish abstainers or valid voters from those who cast invalid votes in any of the models presented here.[27] Similarly, an individual's expressed preference for democracy and trust in elections have little statistical impact on invalid voting.[28] Because probit coefficients are not immediately interpretable, I ran a series of simulations to calculate the predicted probability of casting an invalid vote associated with changes in the independent variables linked to each argument. Figure 2 displays the change in the predicted probability of casting an invalid vote associated with a maximal change in each independent variable in the model. Overall, the *Anti-System Motivation* is associated with statistically insignificant as well as substantively small changes in the probability that an individual will cast an invalid vote suggesting that, on average, this explanation does not account for a substantial portion of the variation in invalid voting across the region.

[27] When I estimate the model for individual countries in the sample, this trend generally holds. Even in countries where democracy is sometimes considered "weak" or of "poor quality" (e.g., Guatemala, Ecuador, Venezuela), those who cast invalid votes are not distinguishable from others in terms of their support for democracy. There are some exceptions to this trend: In Honduras, invalid voting is associated with less support for democracy than valid voting, but is not distinguishable from abstention. In Uruguay, those who cast invalid votes are less supportive of democracy than all others. In Bolivia and Panama, I find the opposite effect: invalid voting in these countries is supported with *greater* support for democracy than valid voting.

[28] Results are robust to sequentially removing each of the democracy variables. *Support for Democracy* and *Preference for Democracy* are correlated at 0.2024.

Figure 2.2 Change in Likelihood of Casting a Null Vote: Maximal Increase



Maximal effects sizes for casting an invalid vote versus all other actions. Each independent variable was varied from its minimum to its maximum, with other variables in the model held constant at their means.

Moving on to the *Policy Discontent Motivation,* I find moderate support for this argument. First, government performance evaluations positively and significantly predict both abstention (performance=0.048) and valid voting (performance=0.104). In other words, those who cast invalid votes rate government performance more negatively than those who abstain and those who cast valid ballots. Substantively, the size of the effect for the performance measure is important: a maximum increase in assessments of government performance results in a 2.3 percentage point

decrease (from 3.82 to 1.45) in the likelihood of casting an invalid vote. With respect to sociotropic and egotropic economic evaluations, and in line with existing scholarship, I find no support for the relationship between these variables and invalid voting behavior. This non-finding is robust to sequentially removing the economic perception variables from the model suggesting that, in Latin America, policy-motivated invalid voting is not driven, *on average*, by poor perceived economic outcomes, but rather by the perception that government performance has been poor across a variety of policy areas.[29]

Finally, I find moderate support for the *Alienation Motivation*. While the *Alienation* variable is negatively signed (indicating that those who cast invalid votes are *more* alienated than abstainers and valid voters), it does not reach standard thresholds for statistical significance. Expressed *Interest* in politics, on the other hand, differentiates those who cast invalid and valid votes, with those who cast valid votes expressing more interest in politics, on average, than those who report invalidating their ballots (interest=0.353). The probability that an individual will report casting a blank or spoiled ballot decreases by more than three percentage points as interest increases (4.16 to 0.90). Finally, *Knowledge* is negatively and significantly associated with valid voting and abstention, although the substantive effect is moderate: a maximal increase in political knowledge is associated with a 0.76 percentage point increase in the likelihood of casting an invalid vote (from 2.03 to 2.79).

These analyses provide empirical support for two of three posited explanations of invalid voting. I find no evidence to suggest that invalid voting implies anti-democratic attitudes on average across the Americas; rather, it is indicative of voters' alienation from and dissatisfaction

[29] This average tendency does not hold in all countries. In Uruguay, the perception that one's personal economic situation has declined was positively associated with abstention and valid voting, while in Ecuador, both abstainers and valid voters viewed their personal economic situation as better, on average, than those who cast invalid votes.

with politics in general and with specific government outputs. But these effects are somewhat modest, and readers might reasonably ask, how much does accounting for political protest improve our ability to explain variation in the dependent variable? To answer this question, I use Akaike's Inclusion Criterion (AIC) to measure model fit. The AIC penalizes models for the number of parameters estimated and, in general, a lower AIC suggests better model fit. To calculate measures of model fit, I use STATA's "fitstat" command, following the estimation of multinomial probit regression models without survey weights. The AIC for the baseline model (which includes demographic characteristics but does not include the protest variables) is 1.128, while the model incorporating these protest variables has a slightly lower AIC of 1.066. As a robustness check, I recalculated the AIC for a more parsimonious saturated model specification that only includes those protest variables that reached statistical significance in previous models. Again, the AIC declines from 1.128 to 1.086.

Measures of model fit thus suggest a relevant statistical impact of including protest variables in the null voting model. But the independent effect of any given variable on the probability that an individual will report casting an invalid vote is admittedly small; the effects associated with most significant variables in the model are less than two percent. Given the low baseline expectations for invalid voting behavior (3.40), these numerically small effects are substantively meaningful. However, it is also possible that one or more of the attitudes associated with protest-motivated invalid voting could occur simultaneously within a single individual. To account for this possibility, I estimated the probability that a hypothetical individual would report casting an invalid vote if she held all of the statistically significant attitudes (with $p<0.1$) in the pooled model presented above. I varied significant protest variables from their minimum to their maximum for these simulations, and held all other independent variables constant at their means.

The probability of reporting having cast an invalid vote increases from 0.38 percent to 7.51 percent, more than twice the baseline expectation. Accounting for various protest explanations of invalid voting behavior thus results not only in an important statistical impact, but also in meaningful substantive effects.

Political Context and Invalid Voting

Above, I provide evidence demonstrating that invalid voting in Latin American presidential elections does not imply anti-democratic attitudes, on average, but is instead indicative of voters' alienation from and dissatisfaction with politics. Yet, existing perspectives on the phenomenon suggest that features of the political context shape voter attitudes in ways that might, in turn, affect their motivations for casting invalid ballots. Scholars have argued that a wide range of second-level features could condition voters' motivations for invalidating ballots, from institutional features such as mandatory vote laws (Hirczy 1994) and the presence of second round elections (Kouba and Lysek 2016) to political factors including democratic quality (Power and Garand 2007), the winning candidate's margin of victory (Uggla 2008), the information environment (Driscoll and Nelson 2014), the effective number of candidates (Mcallister and Makkai 1993, Kouba and Lysek 2016), and the presence of an organized invalid vote movement (Cisneros 2013). Indeed, these studies have shown that second-level features affect aggregate levels of invalid voting, and scholars hint that they may influence voters' motivations for casting blank or spoiled ballots, as well. In the following section, I assess these proposed links between four of these contextual features—mandatory vote laws, the presence of second round elections, the effective

number of presidential candidates, and democratic quality as measured by Freedom House democracy scores—and voters' motivations for intentionally casting invalid ballots.[30]

Mandatory vote laws shape the relative costs of casting an invalid vote in ways that might make invalid voting motivated by discontent with policy outputs and alienation more or less likely. Because abstention is a high cost activity in mandatory vote countries, those who seek to protest may be more inclined to cast invalid votes than they would be if punitive sanctions for abstention did not exist (Hirczy 1994). Thus, the presence of protest motivations for invalid voting could be entirely attributable to mandatory electoral laws, with invalid voters in mandatory contexts holding attitudes similar to those held by abstainers in voluntary vote countries, and nearly all invalid voters in voluntary vote countries casting spoiled ballots in error (Gray and Caul 2000). If this is the case, invalid voting in mandatory vote countries (and abstention in countries with voluntary vote laws) should be associated with relatively mundane political grievances. That is, the policy discontent motivation, which links invalid voting to discontent with specific policy outputs and political actors rather than broader systemic failings, and the alienation motivation, which links feelings of disconnection from politics to invalid voting, should be more common in mandatory vote countries than in voluntary vote countries. On the other hand, this perspective suggests that alienation and policy discontent should be associated with valid voting or abstention in voluntary vote countries, while intentional invalid voting in these contexts will be limited, and driven almost exclusively by anti-system attitudes.

[30] Due to data constraints, I am unable to assess the extent to which all of these contextual features affect voters' motivations for casting invalid votes. Null vote campaigns and incumbent candidates were only present in two of the elections included in these analyses. Similarly, change in democracy scores in these countries and time periods is limited, with only two countries experiencing changes in their democracy scores in the years studied here.

Second, features of competition that affect voters' perceptions of an election's stakes, specifically the presence of runoff elections, may affect voters' propensity to cast invalid ballots to protest policy outputs in the first round. In many Latin American countries, the two presidential candidates who win the greatest vote share compete in a second-round election if neither reaches a particular vote threshold (in most cases, an absolute majority, see Shugart and Carey 1992). In a country where second-round elections exist legally and occur frequently, casting an invalid vote to signal protest in the first round is a relatively low cost behavior, as the likelihood that an individual's vote will decide the winner—or, alternatively, enable his least preferred candidate to win in the first round—is low (Kouba and Lysek 2016). Because the behavior is less costly, voters seeking to protest relatively minor grievances (i.e., protest in response to poor performance) should be more likely to do so when an election's stakes are low, that is, in a first round contest when a runoff election is likely. When no second round election is held, on the other hand, casting a protest-motivated invalid vote becomes more costly: in the extreme case, intentionally invalidating one's ballot in a single round election could allow a voter's least preferred candidate to win. Thus, while relatively minor grievances may be associated with invalid voting in first round contests in countries where runoff elections are held, intentional invalid voting in single round contests (or those with a narrow margin of victory) should be limited and driven by high-salience protest demands that override candidate preference, that is, the anti-system motivation.

A third contextual feature that holds the potential to influence voters' motivations for casting invalid ballots as a means to protest is the number of relevant candidate options, although the direction of this variable's effect on invalid voting is unclear. As the number of viable options increases, discontented voters should be better able to find candidates that reflect their interests and preferences (Norris 1997, Lijphart 1999). To the extent that the availability of many candidates

enables alienated voters to find a legally recognized candidate that represents their preferences, alienation-motivated invalid should decline as the number of relevant candidate options increases. On the other hand, some scholars have found that increasing fragmentation can *depress* turnout. The presence of many options makes it less likely that a voter's preferred candidate will win and therefore, scholars posit, decreases voter efficacy and participation (Jackman 1987, Kostadinova 2003). As the number of viable presidential candidates increases, the value of any given vote decreases, which can aggravate political alienation, thereby fueling alienation-motivated invalid voting (Kouba and Lysek 2016). The perspectives outlined here identify opposite directional effects, but coincide in their expectation that the effective number of candidates will affect voters' motivations to cast an invalid vote motivated by alienation (i.e., external political efficacy).

Finally, scholars have indicated that the quality of democracy can affect voters' propensity to cast invalid votes as a means to express anti-system protest (see Power and Garand 2007, Uggla 2008). Democracies are usually categorized as "lower quality" because they limit citizens' ability to access one of the two major dimensions of democracy: contestation and inclusiveness (Dahl 1971). Limitations to these rights include flawed electoral procedures (i.e., fraudulent elections, electoral violence), limitations on press freedoms, and a lack of alternation in power. Using measures of democratic quality collected by Freedom House, scholars have found that voters living in lower quality democracies are more likely to cast invalid ballots (Power and Garand 2007, Kouba and Lysek 2016), and have linked this increase in invalid voting to anti-system protest by voters who believe that democratic institutions have not guaranteed the rights and liberties implied by the democratic bargain. In terms of contextual effects, then, intentional invalid voting should be differentially associated with variables linked to anti-system protest in countries where the quality of democracy is low or in decline.

To assess the extent to which context influences individuals' motivations for casting invalid ballots, I estimate a series of hierarchical logistic regression models in which I interact measures of contextual features with the protest variables detailed above. A significant cross-level interaction between a given contextual feature and an individual-level protest variable indicates that that the average estimated effect of that protest variable on invalid voting varies significantly over values of the contextual variable. I present the results of logistic regression models for two dependent variables for each contextual variable.[31] The first dependent variable compares abstainers to self-identified invalid voters, and the second compares those who reported casting valid ballots to self-identified invalid voters. These dependent variables were created using the same measures identified above. In each model, the outcome is self-reported invalid voting, and the base category is either abstention or casting a valid vote. I assess the effects of contextual variables sequentially rather than simultaneously, as the limited number of country cases renders models including several second-level parameters in addition to cross-level interactions inestimable. I do include a second-level control variable for mandatory vote laws in all contextual models to account for the robust relationship between compulsory voting and invalid voting documented in scholarship to date.

To measure mandatory vote laws, I collapse Fornos et al.'s (2004) four-category classification of vote systems into two categories such that countries where legal sanctions for abstention exist are coded as having *Mandatory Vote Laws*, regardless of levels of enforcement. I rely on information from Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) to identify multi-round elections, and only those countries where a *Second Election Round* was held rather than where second round

[31] Stata 13 does not support the estimation of multinomial models in a hierarchical context.

elections are legally possible are coded as "1" in the resulting indicator variable.[32] I calculate the *Effective Number of Presidential Candidates* by applying Laakso and Taagapera's (1979) formula[33] to official vote returns collected from EMBs in the 14 countries under study here. Finally, in keeping with past studies of invalid voting, I measure *Democratic Quality* using Freedom House democracy scores, which I have aggregated and recoded so that higher values indicate higher democratic quality (see Appendix Table A for more details about all variables).

Table 2 summarizes the results of the cross-level interaction variables estimated in these models (see Appendix Table C for complete results). Each cell contains a + or -, indicating the direction of the interaction's estimated effect. Cross-level interactions that did not reach standard thresholds for statistical significance ($p<0.1$) are colored white, while the cells representing significant interactions are shaded in gray.[34] A significant cross-level interaction term indicates that the estimated effect of a given individual-level factor varies significantly across observed values of the contextual variable. When cross-level interaction variables fail to reach statistical significance, the estimated effect of the attitudinal variable does not differ significantly across observed values of a given contextual variable.[35]

[32] This constitutes the strictest test of the second round "stakes" argument. In some countries where second round elections are legal, they were unlikely to occur in the years studied here given the candidates' standing in the polls prior to the election. The stakes argument requires that protesting voters calculate both the likelihood that their vote will be decisive and the probability that the election will result in a second round; this variable reflects the latter half of this equation.

[33] $1/\sum(\text{voteshare}_i^2)$. The effective number of candidates ranges from 1.99 to 5.15, with a mean of 3.04.

[34] Due to the limited number of country cases, I estimated the effects of all interactions using a substantially more generous threshold for significance ($p<0.2$). However, in practice, the estimated effects of cross-level interactions were either significant at $p<0.1$ or did not yield significant effects.

[35] Because the estimated statistical significance of interaction terms can be misleading, I plotted the effects of all cross-level interactions. Interactions that yielded significant coefficients but did not yield significantly different values when the effects were estimated over observed values are shaded.

Table 2.2 Summary Table, Contextual Effects on Protest Motivations for Invalid Voting

	Compulsory		Second Round		EFNC		Democratic Quality	
	Abstain	Valid	Abstain	Valid	Abstain	Valid	Abstain	Valid
Contextual Variable	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+
Context *Support Democracy	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
Context*Prefer Democracy	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-
Context*Trust Elections	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
Context* Performance	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-
Context*Own Econ Worse	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
Context*Nat'l Econ Worse	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-
Context*Alienation	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
Context*Interest	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-
Context* Knowledge	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	+
Observations	4,069	15,696	4,069	15,696	4,069	15,696	4,069	15,696
Number of Groups	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Chibar2 Prob>=Chibar2	371.75 (0.00)	107.8 (0.00)	372.29 (0.00)	108.40 (0.00)	362.56 (0.00)	103.2 (0.00)	372.98 (0.00)	104.30 (0.00)

Shaded cells indicate interactions that yield significant differences across the observed values in the data set.

With respect to the expectations outlined above, I find no evidence that mandatory vote laws moderate the effect of performance variables on invalid voting. The effects of variables linked with the policy discontent motivation (*Performance*, *Idiotropic* and *Sociotropic Economic Evaluations*) do not change when the *Mandatory Vote Law* variable is included, and cross-level interaction terms between the performance variables and compulsory vote laws do not reach statistical significance. The effect of political performance does not vary across mandatory versus

voluntary vote laws, suggesting that the effect of performance assessments on intentional invalid voting is not an artifact of the electoral regime. I do find evidence to suggest that the alienation motivation is stronger in mandatory vote contexts. Specifically, *Alienation* and political *Interest* are differentially associated with invalid voting under mandatory versus voluntary vote laws (see Figure 3). The most alienated individuals are about two percent more likely to invalidate their votes than to cast a valid ballot in mandatory vote countries versus voluntary vote countries (4.92 percent, versus 1.81 percent likely). Additionally, individuals who report the least interest in politics are more likely to invalidate their ballots than to abstain (24 percent likely, versus 8 percent likely) when voting is mandatory versus when voting is voluntary. Neither interest nor alienation is significantly associated with invalid voting in voluntary vote systems.

Figure 2.3 The Effect of Mandatory Vote Laws on the Alienation Motivation

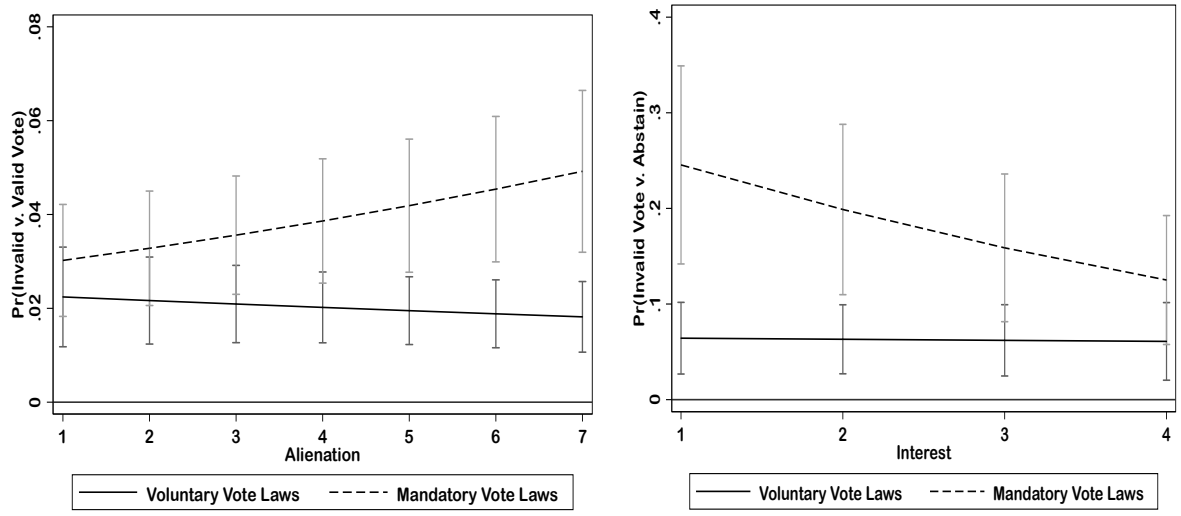


Figure shows estimates with 90% confidence intervals. Each variable only significantly distinguishes self-identified ballot invalidators from one other group of respondents – valid voters (alienation) or abstainers (interest)

Beyond the significant interaction between the alienation motivation and mandatory vote laws, however, these models yield limited evidence linking context differentially to various protest motivations. With respect to the second set of expectations linking multi-round elections to the policy discontent motivation, I find no empirical support linking second round contests to an increase in policy-motivated invalid voting. Indeed, while the same individual-level features (perceptions of government performance, interest in politics, and political information) achieve statistical significance in these models, cross-level interactions with the *Second Round* variable never reach statistical significance.[36] Similarly, the third set of contextual expectations links the *Effective Number of Presidential Candidates* to invalid voting through voters' feelings of efficacy, although the directional nature of this relationship was unclear. When estimated across the range of candidates observed in the data, these differences do not reach standard thresholds of statistical significance;[37] that is, I find no evidence to suggest a differential effect of the alienation motivation for invalid voting (or other protest motivations) in multi-candidate contexts. Finally, a fourth set of expectations links the *Quality of Democracy* to anti-system motivations for invalid voting. The cross-level interactions between support for democracy, preference for democracy, trust in elections and democracy scores do not reach statistical significance over the range of observed values. In sum, I find no support for the argument that low democratic quality makes invalid voting as an expression of anti-system sentiment more common.

Perhaps the most notable result of these multilevel models is how little contextual features affect the attitudinal correlates of invalid voting in the sample of countries studied here. With the

[36] In additional analyses, I included the margin of victory rather than the presence of a second round election as a measure of election stakes. Results were similar to those estimated for second round election contexts.

[37] The interaction between the effective number of candidates and alienation was positive, hinting that alienation may be negatively associated with intentional invalid voting as the number of candidates increases, consistent with arguments linking a broader choice set to positive participatory outcomes. However, the interaction did not reach even marginal significance ($p<0.2$) for models estimated here.

exception of the political alienation variables, which substantially affect invalid voting in mandatory vote systems, the models yield statistically insignificant results. Even the alienation variables, however, hold limited differential explanatory power: *Interest* in politics only differentiates invalid voters from abstainers when mandatory vote laws are accounted for, and expressed *Alienation* only distinguishes those who intentionally invalidate their ballots from other voters when mandatory vote laws are accounted for. Overall, as in the initial behavioral model, measures of anti-system attitudes do not explain invalid voting behavior, and their explanatory power does not vary significantly across political systems. Rather, independent of contextual factors, the average individual who intentionally invalidates her ballot tends to know more political facts and reports lower assessments of government performance. In sum, I find that across political contexts, casting an invalid vote serves as an expression of voter discontent with more mundane realities of democratic political governance, not as an expression of anti-democratic sentiment.

Conclusion

Scholars, political practitioners, journalists, and national electoral commissions often treat invalid ballots as "residual" votes, to be tallied and discarded rather than explained. This paper demonstrates that, at least in Latin America, this strategy is misguided: a meaningful subset of individuals cast blank and spoiled ballots intentionally, as an expression of their discontent with various facets of democratic politics and governance in their country. By using individual-level data, I confirm existing theoretical perspectives implicating protest as a motivator of intentional

invalid voting behavior. I provide convincing evidence to show that, in presidential elections across the region, invalid voting is often intentional and, in large part, represents a protest signal.

Invalid voting is particularly common among those who report that government performance is poor. As well, invalid voters express substantially higher levels of political alienation than valid voters and abstainers, and these findings hold across electoral institutions. Together, these findings suggest that invalid voters are not only disappointed with policy, but that they feel helpless to change political realities. Notably, those who intentionally invalidate their ballots tend to be more knowledgeable about politics than other voters and abstainers: these perceptions of poor performance and low external efficacy could be based on an informed assessment of the political climate. The prevalence of these attitudes, particularly in conjunction with recessions in democratic quality across the region in recent years, could indicate a trend towards invalid voting as an expression of opposition the democratic system more broadly (See Freedom House 2015, Puddington 2012, Diamond 2015). I do not find evidence to support this conclusion: in all model specifications presented in this paper, and contrary to existing arguments about protest motivated invalid voting, support for democracy as an ideal and trust in elections have little or no statistical impact on invalid voting behavior. Thus, while high or increasing rates of invalid votes might suggest lagging representation and the need for higher quality interaction between politicians and their constituents, a pervasive protest vote does not necessarily indicate trouble for democracy.

In fact, that citizens feel confident enough in the tools of democracy to use them to signal their discontent might suggest the relative *strength* of democratic institutions and processes in the region. Elsewhere, students of non-conventional politics have found that, in some Latin American countries, unconventional political behaviors like street protest have become "normalized"—

rather than serving as an indication of anti-system values, protest behavior sometimes serves as one more tool in a citizen's repertoire of participative political action (Dalton and van Sickle 2005, Norris et al. 2005, Moseley and Moreno 2010, Moseley 2015). This study suggests that invalid voting serves a similar function for a distinct group of citizens, constituting a pro-democratic behavior, but used by citizens lacking other avenues to participate in the political process.

Furthermore, these findings are consistent across a number of theoretically relevant political institutions. Scholars have shown that mandatory vote laws, second round election contests, the effective number of candidates, and measures of democratic quality affect *levels* of invalid voting (Mcallister and Makkai 1993, Power and Roberts 1995, Power and Garand 2007, Kouba and Lysek 2016). However, with the exception of alienation and disinterest (which disproportionately fuel invalid voting in mandatory vote contexts) I find that the *motivations* associated with invalid voting are largely stable across these contextual features. These results provide additional evidence demonstrating that intentional invalid voting is not merely an artifact of institutional incentives or a proxy for abstention. Rather, in Latin American democracies, intentional invalid voting in presidential contests is an attitudinally distinct phenomenon indicative of specific types of discontent.

CHAPTER III

A DYNAMIC MODEL OF THE INVALID VOTE: HOW SHIFTING FEATURES OF POLITICAL COMPETITION SHAPE NULL VOTING BEHAVIOR

Introduction

Around the world, and especially in Latin America, individuals regularly absorb the time and travel costs associated with voting and then choose to spoil their ballots or leave them unmarked—that is, they cast "invalid" votes. Although these invalid ballots are tallied, final electoral results are usually determined using only *valid* ballots.[38] In other words, invalid votes do not count towards final election outcomes and the protests of individuals who participate in this way go largely unheard. High rates of "against all" voting signal citizen discontent and can undermine electoral mandates, particularly in close elections.[39] As a result, understanding which features of political competition lead individuals to cast blank and spoiled ballots is an important step to clarifying support for policies, governments, and democracy in Latin America's young democracies.

In this paper I highlight the role of the party system – specifically, features of political competition – in determining null vote rates. Features of political competition have been identified

[38] In some countries, invalid votes are included in calculating the electoral threshold for legislative election, and therefore influence the number of votes a candidate must win to gain representation. In the Latin American presidential elections studied here, invalid votes are not included in the final vote tally.

[39] While invalid voting in Latin American democracies signifies protest, the mass behavior is not associated with anti-democratic attitudes, but rather with voters' discontent with the specific choice set present at election time (Cisneros 2013, Driscoll and Nelson 2014, Cohen n.d.).

as having important influences on voting behavior around the world. Scholars have demonstrated that party fractionalization and the closeness of elections affect voter turnout (see Jackman 1987, Blais and Dobrzynska 1998, Blais 2006); that polarization increases partisan affiliation and issue voting (Dalton 2008, 2011); and that the tone of campaign ads and media coverage can be (de)mobilizing (Kahn and Kenney 1999). Yet, existing studies of invalid voting have largely overlooked features of political competition in favor of institutional features of polities in explaining invalid vote rates. In particular, scholars have focused attention on mandatory vote laws, electoral disproportionality, district magnitude,[40] bicameralism, and personalized voting systems in seeking to explain invalid vote rates. Institutions shape the relative costs of (not) voting (e.g., mandatory vote laws make abstention costly), and may affect voters' perceptions of an election's stakes (Kouba and Lysek 2016) or their feelings of efficacy (McAllister and Makkai 1993, Power and Roberts 1995, Power and Garand 2007). However, demographic trends and the laws governing political institutions change rarely, while rates of invalid voting vary substantially across election type and over time (see Figure 1 below). Thus, to the extent that they are relatively stable over time, these factors cannot account for change in rates of invalid voting. In contrast, features of political competition, such as the polarization of the political space, change across election cycles and thus have the potential to provide important theoretical and empirical leverage for understanding why rates of invalid voting change over time.

This paper advances the argument that three features of political competition – party polarization, the number of candidates competing, and volatility in the menu of party options –

[40]Scholars have used the number of parties competing or holding office in the legislature as a proxy for the effect of electoral disproportionality (McAllister and Makkai 1993, 25) and district magnitude (Power and Roberts 1995, Power and Garand 2007) on invalid voting. Institutional features, especially district magnitude, can affect the number of candidates who run for a particular office (see Jackman 1987) and as a result, scholars have linked the number of parties competing or present in the legislature to institutional explanations. Yet, the extent to which the number of candidates contesting an election is a good proxy for these political institutions in presidential elections is unclear.

affect the prevalence of blank and spoiled ballots in Latin American presidential elections by affecting the prevalence of protest attitudes in the public. Specifically, change in the structure of political competition affects the clarity of the choice set and, as well, voters' perceptions that the available choices represent their preferences. When politics becomes clearer and the choice set expands to become more inclusive, invalid voting tends to decrease as voters feel they have more and better options. When the choice set becomes muddled or limited, in contrast, voters cast invalid votes as a means to protest these limitations with greater frequency.

I test these propositions using aggregate electoral data from presidential elections in 17 Latin American countries.[41] I find that while high levels of polarization are positively associated with invalid voting, positive *change* in polarization (that is, clearer differentiation of parties in the political space) is associated with lower levels of invalid voting, on average. Similarly, while the number of candidate options has a non-linear, positive association with invalid vote rates, positive *change* in the number of candidates results in lower rates of invalid voting, as voters view the broader choice set as more representative. Finally, substantial flux in the partisanship of available options (electoral volatility caused by new party entry and old party exit, which I call "Party Replacement Volatility") increases voters' feelings of alienation, and is independently associated with higher rates of invalid voting across Latin America. As a whole, the theoretical perspective and statistical analyses advanced in this chapter demonstrate the importance of incorporating features of political systems—that is, features that *change*—in order to better understand invalid voting.

[41] Because Nicaragua does not provide invalid vote totals for all the years studied, it was excluded from analysis.

Polarization, the Number of Candidates, and Invalid Voting

Across Latin America, voters regularly go to the polls and invalidate their votes by leaving their ballots blank, mismarking the ballot paper, or writing in the names of candidates that are not legally recognized. Rates of invalid voting in Latin America are among the highest in the world: since 1980, more than 5.5 percent of all ballots cast in presidential elections—and more than 8.5 percent of those cast in legislative contests—were left blank or spoiled across the region. These average figures conceal important national and cross time variation. Figure 1 presents rates of invalid voting in presidential contests across Latin American countries from 1980 to 2013. The white dot signifies the estimated mean value of invalid voting for a given country, and the dark shaded area represents the 25^{th} to 75^{th} percentile of observations. The shaded gray area represents the distribution of invalid vote rates around that mean. Longer, narrower shaded areas indicate greater variation in invalid vote rates, while shorter, rounder shaded areas indicate that invalid vote rates are more tightly clustered around the mean value. Rates of invalid voting vary substantially over time within some countries (in Brazil, for example, rates of invalid voting in this time period have fluctuated from a low of 4.8 to a high of 19 percent) and are much more tightly clustered in others (for example, invalid vote rates in Costa Rica fluctuate between just two and three percent during this time period).

Figure 3.1 Percent Invalid Votes in Latin American Presidential Elections, 1993-2013

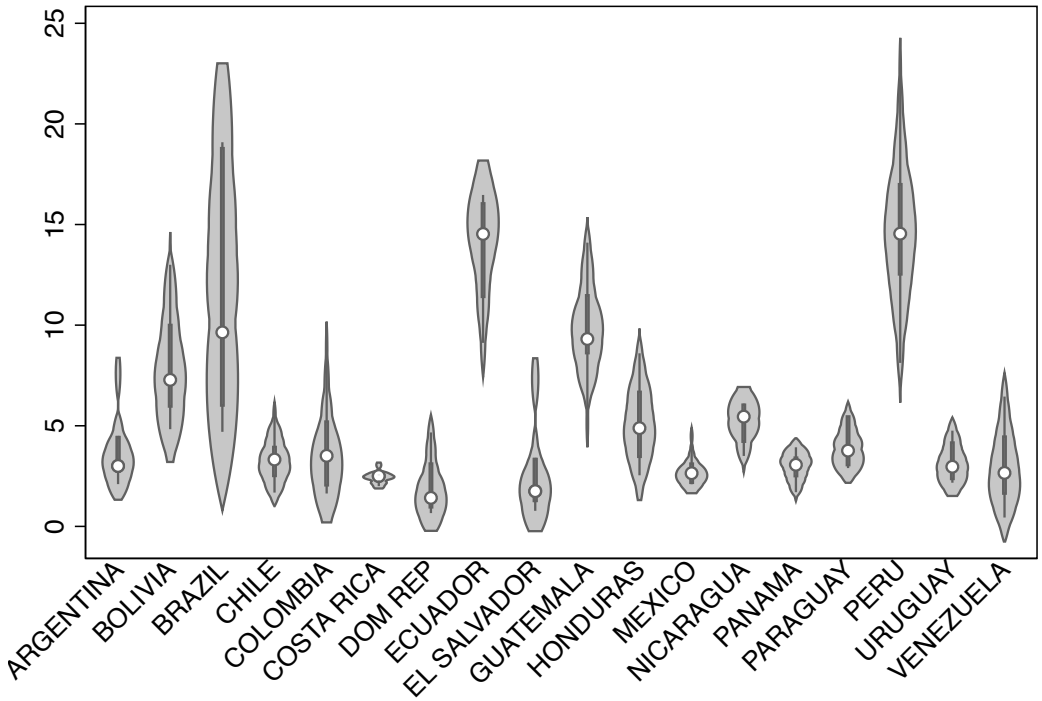


Figure shows invalid vote rates from first or single round elections.

Because invalid ballots are tallied and then excluded from the final vote count,[42] scholars and political practitioners often treat the phenomenon as politically irrelevant. However, the proportion of invalid votes was larger than the margin of victory between first and second place presidential candidates in 53.4% of the presidential elections analyzed in this paper. In countries that held second round contests, invalid voting in the first round was greater than the margin between second and third place candidates even more frequently. In other words, invalid votes

[42] In many Latin American countries, elections are automatically nullified if the proportion of invalid ballots crosses a certain threshold—usually an absolute or super-majority of all ballots cast. While elections have been cancelled in this way (Colombia's 2014 elections for the Andean Parliament, for example), such occurrences are rare.

have held the potential to alter electoral outcomes in more than half of all Latin American presidential elections from 1993 to 2013.

In seeking to explain invalid voting, researchers have favored aggregate tests of three alternative explanations: low voter ability (i.e., illiteracy or innumeracy), anti-system protest, and factors associated with political institutions. Most scholarly treatments of the phenomenon have found support for the ability and institutional hypotheses using aggregate electoral data, but only mixed support for the protest hypothesis (see, for example, McAllister and Makkai 1993, Power and Roberts 1995, Power and Garand 2007, Uggla 2008, Kouba and Lysek 2016, but see Zulfikarpasic 2001, Carlin 2006, Chapter 2 of this dissertation). With few exceptions (see Carlin 2006, Kouba and Lysek 2016), existing studies have focused their attention on explaining invalid voting in legislative contests. However, in Latin America, politics are arguably dominated by powerful presidents, who are able to propose legislation and face frequently weak checks on their power (Cox and Morgenstern 2001). This paper thus departs from most existing scholarship of invalid voting by focusing on blank and spoiled voting in some of the region's most consequential elections, those for president.

This chapter contends that, in order to understand how invalid voting behavior changes over time, features of politics that change must be incorporated into models of the phenomenon. Specifically, I argue that when features of competition change in ways that make politics more difficult to understand, limit the competitiveness of elections, or diminish the representativeness of the political space, this fosters feelings of discontent and among voters, resulting in increased invalid voting in the aggregate. Conversely, when competition changes in ways that make politics easier to understand, more competitive, or more representative, this fosters feelings of inclusion and urgency among the voting public, resulting in lower rates of invalid voting. Consistent with

this argument, scholars have shown that limitations to the available menu of options can lead to higher rates of invalid voting, as voters who are unable to find a sufficiently representative candidate or who view the race as uncompetitive are more likely to choose to cast invalid ballots in protest. Brown (2011) demonstrates that Nevada voters in the 1990s and early 2000s were more likely to select the "None of the Above" option in elections in which only one candidate from a major party competed. Similarly, Driscoll and Nelson (2014) find that the poor information environment and limited competitiveness of the 2011 Bolivian judicial election led to an increase in invalid voting.[43] Recent evidence also suggests that features of competition that affect voters' perceptions of an election's stakes condition their decisions to cast invalid votes. In their cross-regional study of Latin America and Eastern Europe, Kouba and Lysek (2016) argue that when an election is less (more) competitive, the stakes of the election are lower (higher) and the costs associated with casting a protest-motivated invalid vote therefore decrease (increase), leading to more (less) invalid voting in the aggregate. Finally, in studying Mexico's 2009 legislative elections, scholars have identified the presence of an organized null vote campaign, which organized those expressing "against all" sentiment into a voting bloc, as key to understanding the notable increase in invalid voting in that case (Alonso 2010, Cisneros 2013).

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that most invalid votes in Latin American presidential contests are cast as a rejection of specific candidate options and recent government performance. This understanding of protest-motivated invalid voting suggests the need to assess the impact of political factors that affect voters' propensity to express frustration or anger with specific

[43] The congressional super-majority held by the ruling MAS party limited the opposition's power in the candidate vetting process and assured that candidates favored by MAS would be selected to run (see Driscoll and Nelson 2014, pp. 3-5). The authors also find that intentional invalid voting was highest among political sophisticates (those with more education) and non-MAS party members, consistent with protest motivations of invalid voting.

candidates, parties, and policies to better understand how political context augments or diminishes the frequency of blank and null voting. This chapter identifies three features of political competition that change substantially over time—polarization, the number of candidates competing, and volatility in those choices—and assesses the extent to which they are linked to invalid voting in Latin American presidential elections.

Polarization

Polarized political contexts are those in which political parties promote substantively different policy positions and, as such, are easier for citizens to distinguish from one another. Existing scholarship suggests that party system polarization has, by and large, a positive impact on voter engagement and participation around the world. In the United States, scholars have found that exposure to polarized messages stimulates citizen interest in politics and can promote democratic participation among partisans (Abramowitz and Saunders 2011, Levendusky 2013). Evidence from Latin America links clear ideological differentiation among candidates to increased participation by the electorate at large: controlling for mandatory vote laws, Carlin and Love (2015) find that greater party system polarization is associated with higher turnout among non-partisans. Better defined options also increase programmatic competition. Lupu (2015) shows that political polarization is associated with increased rates of positive partisan identification in Latin America, while others have demonstrated that voters' self-placements on an ideological scale align more closely with their vote choices, and voters make more ideologically consistent choices across elections, in polarized contexts (Dalton 2008, Lachat 2008, Levendusky 2010, Zechmeister and

Corral 2013, Zechmeister 2015, Singer forthcoming). Baker and Greene (2015) find that Latin American voters are better able to choose candidates who support their economic preferences under polarization. In sum, by clarifying the signals sent by political parties and candidates, polarization makes it easier for voters to distinguish candidate or party options from one another and facilitates consistent decision-making in the voting booth.

This literature suggests two non-rival reasons that polarization should depress levels of invalid voting. First, because elite polarization makes it easier for voters to distinguish parties from one another, the costs associated with political information gathering are lower in polarized contexts. These relatively low information costs should lead to less accidental invalid voting, as it is easier for voters to gather information during the campaign and to enter the ballot box having made a decision and prepared to cast a valid vote. Second, political polarization has the potential to decrease protest-motivated invalid voting by mobilizing both positive and negative partisanship (see Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960, Rose and Mishler 1998, Medeiros and Noel 2013). Polarization enables voters to straightforwardly identify candidates whose interests align with and oppose theirs, and to vote based on this positive or negative affect (Abramowitz and Webster 2016). Voters who feel *positive* affect towards a particular party option tend to affirm their preference by casting a valid vote for that party rather than a protest vote; positive partisan identifiers should therefore be less likely to cast invalid ballots under polarization. Increased *aversion* to particular party alternatives under polarization can also depress invalid voting, as voters perceive elections' stakes as higher when they hold strong negative partisan preferences (Kouba and Lysek 2016). As a voter's negative feelings towards a given party increase, the costs he associates with that party winning also increase. This in turn increases the perceived cost of casting an invalid vote, as many blank or spoiled ballots may enable the voter's least preferred

candidate to win office. As a result, a voter who feels strong negative affect for one or more party should prefer to cast a strategic vote for his most-preferred party rather invalidating his vote, even if this preference is weak.[44] This discussion suggests the following hypothesis,

H1A: *As elite polarization increases, invalid voting in presidential elections will decrease.*

While much comparative politics scholarship links party system polarization to positive political outcomes, others have found that increased polarization, particularly in combination with the presence of many political parties, can result in diminishing returns for participation and political stability. Sartori (1976) warned that party systems characterized by "polarized pluralism"—systems in which more than 5 "relevant" parties coexist under substantial ideological polarization—could lead to party system instability or breakdown. Indeed, scholars have connected high levels of polarization, especially in conjunction with multipartism, to political system failure in Chile in the 1970's, as well as the Weimar Republic and Austria in the 1930's (see, e.g., Sartori 1976, Powell 1982, McAdam et al. 2001, Dalton 2008). I have argued that polarization should enable voters to more easily navigate the political space; yet, very high levels of polarization could make decision-making difficult for voters. As leaders take increasingly polarized positions, some voters—especially those with moderate preferences—will start to view them as unnecessarily extreme or uncompromising (Hetherington 2001). This can cause citizens to hold negative feelings about politics in general, potentially leading them to believe that the political system is unrepresentative of and unresponsive to people like them. Even with a plethora of options, such individuals may find themselves unable to find a "good" candidate option under

[44] Aversion to one political party does not necessarily imply affect for its opponents, so an increase in valid votes associated with negative partisanship might not be associated with a change in reported rates of positive partisanship at the national level. These individual-level mechanisms are non-rival, and I do not assess their relative strength here.

polarized circumstances. Thus, very high levels of polarization could *increase* rates of invalid voting as voters react negatively to candidates that are perceived as stubborn, overly entrenched, or unrepresentative of voters' preferences. This discussion suggests the following non-rival hypotheses,

> **H1B:** *As elite polarization increases, invalid voting in presidential elections will increase.*
>
> **H1 (Conditional)**: *As elite polarization increases from 0, invalid voting in presidential elections will decrease; however, as polarization becomes very high, invalid voting will increase.*

In discussing the relationship between elite polarization and voting behavior, it is important to note the dynamic nature of these relationships. Levels of elite polarization change over time in reaction to political, social, and institutional incentives, and these changes follow one of two trajectories. When a party system displays "centripetal" tendencies, parties converge on the ideological center over time, competing for the median voter (Downs 1957). When a party system is "centrifugal," on the other hand, parties will tend to flee the center and compete for voters located toward the ideological poles over time (Sartori 1976, Crepaz 1990, Dalton 2008). Levels of polarization indicate ideological differentiation at the point in time they are measured, but are not informative about trends in the party system, which might have an independent impact on voter behavior (Singer, forthcoming).

Consider, for example, the hypothetical example of two countries with identical levels of elite polarization at time *t* that are following substantially different trajectories with respect to political polarization. In the first, polarization is on a centrifugal trajectory, with parties moving steadily towards the poles over time. In this hypothetical case, competition at time *t* is more

polarized than it was at time *t-1* and potentially more polarized than it has been in recent memory. This movement of parties towards increasingly distinct positions—rather than their static presence at these more polarized positions—clarifies political competition for voters, who are more easily able to differentiate candidates and platforms than in past elections, which could lead to decreased invalid voting. In the second hypothetical case, in contrast, levels of polarization are identical at time *t* but elite polarization is on a centripetal trajectory, that is, the relevant political space is contracting and parties are moving to the center. In this case, polarization at time *t* is lower than it was at time *t-1*, and may be lower than it has been in recent memory. The centripetal nature of partisan competition over time in this case, rather than the level of polarization at time *t*, per se, makes the task of distinguishing parties more challenging for voters. This narrowing of the relevant political space can lead to voter confusion and breed discontent, as voters come to feel that their options have become less representative or otherwise limited over time. Both of these attitudinal changes—increased confusion and discontent—have the potential to lead to higher levels of invalid voting. In sum, *change* in elite polarization should be associated with shifts in voter behavior independent of *levels* of polarization, with contractions in the relevant political space leading to higher levels of invalid voting and expansions in the competitive space associated with decreased invalid voting as voters are provided with a more varied menu of political options. That is,

> **H1 (Change):** *Increased polarization at time* t *compared to the previous electoral period will be negatively associated with invalid voting in presidential elections, while a decrease in polarization at time* t *will be positively associated with invalid voting.*

Number of Candidate Options

In addition to the distinctiveness of candidates in the political space, there is reason to expect the number and stability of the candidate options competing for office to affect invalid voting. As the number of candidates increases, the costs associated with information gathering also increase. Whereas a voter can gather information about two or three candidates with relative ease, the costs of learning about ten, fifteen, or twenty candidates (the maximum number of presidential candidates in the dataset analyzed here) are undoubtedly higher, which can lead to substantial confusion among voters (see Blais and Dobrzynska 1998, Kostadinova 2003). Voters can mitigate the costs of gathering information in contexts with many candidates by using heuristics, or cognitive shortcuts, to organize the political space.[45] Yet, even when voters collect information about only those candidates that are competitive, seeking information becomes more difficult as the number of competitive candidates increases.

In the (unlikely) case that a voter has complete information, the mechanical task of finding and selecting her preferred candidate on the ballot also becomes more challenging as the number of options increases, as voters must distinguish among an increasing number of party names and symbols. Cognitive shortcuts are of limited use at the ballot box, where voters are faced with the complete set of candidate options rather than the limited, more competitive subset discussed in the media or at home. Thus, as the number of candidates increases, the increasingly difficult task of finding and voting for one's preferred candidate can lead to greater invalid voting caused by error,

[45]Increasing the number of candidate options changes the heuristics that voters use, with relatively unsophisticated voters relying on less reliable cues (i.e., ethnicity or gender), while high sophisticates use more reliable heuristics (for example, ideological or issue cues; see Tversky and Kahneman 1974, Lau and Redlawsk 2001, Cunow 2014).

frustration, or confusion. Consistent with the argument that complex or confusing choice sets lead to increased ballot invalidation, studies from the United States have shown an increase in voter roll off[46] in elections with more candidate choices and more complex ballot items (see Bowler et al. 1992, Wattenberg 2000, Cunow 2014; but see Knack and Kropf 2003).

However, studies of blank and spoiled voting in high saliency contests reach mixed conclusions about the relationship between the number of candidates and invalid voting (McAllister and Makkai 1993, Kouba and Lysek 2016).[47] In fact, political scientists have not reached a consensus about the relationship between the number of candidate options and voter participation. While many have suggested that too many options lead to negative participatory outcomes, some scholars find that more relevant parties in the political space leads to greater participation, as voters are better able to find candidates or parties that reflect their interests and preferences when more options are present (Cox 1997, Norris 1997, Lijphart 1999). At the same time, studies from marketing and social psychology find that, while providing individuals with some choice results in positive attitudinal outcomes, providing too many options (more than six) [48] increases the stress associated with decision making, which can lead consumers to defer or refuse to make decisions (Iyengar and Lepper 2000, but see Chernev 2010). In the context of elections, having more than two relevant candidate options might result in declining rates of invalid voting, as voters are better able to identify a candidate whose proposed policies mirror their own; yet,

[46] Voter roll off is a special type of invalid voting that occurs when individuals cast valid votes for high saliency races (i.e., presidential or legislative contests) but opt not to select candidates in down-ballot races (i.e., water commissioner).

[47] McAllister and Makkai (1993) use the number of parties as a proxy for electoral disproportionality, while Kouba and Lysek (2016) use the effective number of parties to proxy an election's relative stakes. Neither article directly theorizes about the independent effect candidate options have on invalid voting.

[48] Marketing and social psychology studies (i.e., Dhar 1997, Iyengar and Lepper 2000) suggest that such saturation occurs when the number of options passes six, while one political science study (Knack and Kropf 2003) finds that saturation happens at eight candidate options in the United States.

when the choice set becomes too broad (i.e., more than about six candidates), the stress associated with voting may become higher, leading voters to decline to select a candidate. In sum, existing scholarship suggests the following hypotheses,

> **H2**: *A greater number of candidates contesting a presidential election will be associated with higher levels of invalid voting.*
>
> **H2 (Conditional):** *As the number of candidates increases from 0, invalid voting in presidential elections will decrease; however, invalid voting will increase as the number of candidate options becomes very high.*

The above hypotheses refer to the absolute number of presidential candidates. However, like levels of polarization, the number of candidates competing for office is not stable over time. In the elections studied here, the number of candidates competing for the presidency changes substantially in some contexts. Just as the number of candidates may have a direct effect on invalid voting, changes in the number of candidates running likely affect invalid voting in a similar way, by clarifying or complicating the political context. If relatively more candidates in the party system enables voters to find more representative options, then an increase in the number of candidates at time *t* versus time *t-1* should indicate a more representative choice in for voters, on average, and be associated with a decrease in invalid voting. If, on the other hand, the presence of many candidates leads to increased voter confusion, as hypothesized above, then relatively more candidates competing at time *t* versus time *t-1* should lead to increased voter confusion and, as a result, higher levels of invalid voting.

H2 (Change): *Independent of the number of candidates,* change *in the number of candidates will further confuse the political space, resulting in higher levels of invalid voting.*

The Stability of Candidate Options

A third feature of political competition that might affect rates of invalid voting is the relative stability of available party options. Studies linking the number of candidate options to positive participatory outcomes rely on data from the established democracies of Western Europe, a region in which the number of party options available to voters has been largely stable over time (Mainwaring 1998). In Western Europe, electoral volatility is mostly attributable to shifts in vote shares across established parties, as voters opt to stay home on Election Day or swing their vote to a different established party option in response to political events and outcomes (Powell and Tucker 2014). Because the menu of party options is largely stable, it is straightforward for voters in such contexts to identify viable candidate alternatives when seeking political change. Latin America, in contrast, is a region where electoral offerings tend to be more volatile than predictable, with some notable exceptions.[49] Vote shares for established political parties vary widely over time, and new candidates and parties enter and exit competition regularly across contest type and year (Roberts and Wibbels 1999, Roberts 2014, Cohen et al. 2016). While some amount of change in vote shares across time implies that voters are punishing or rewarding different parties for their performance, in line with the representative ideal, constant change in the available party options,

[49] While scholars often label Latin America as a volatile region, there are several Latin American countries (for example, Chile, Honduras, Mexico, and Uruguay) where the parties or coalitions vying for election have been relatively stable across time.

however, can foment voter frustration and discontent, leading to increased invalid voting independent of the number of available options.[50]

When party options are numerous but stable, a voter faces high initial information costs in distinguishing among candidates and parties. Across repeated interactions, however, the voter is able to assess past performance (a high quality signal of a party's competence and preferences) in making vote decisions. Using retrospective evaluations, the voter can straightforwardly update his perceptions of and preferences over competing options, which facilitates decision-making in the ballot box (Kramer 1971, Lewis-Beck 1986, Benton 2005, Healy and Malhotra 2013). When partisan options are unstable across elections, in contrast, a voter must learn about new parties' stances and assess their potential to govern effectively in each successive election. This results in a substantially larger cognitive load for the voter, as she must learn about new options in each election, rather than simply update information about parties or candidates that have previously competed. With no performance record to lean on, the voter must filter through unreliable signals that new parties send during the campaign, discounting candidates' statements to account for the possibility of "cheap talk" and using alternative measures to identify a party's governing potential (Budge 1994, Tavits 2008, Crisp et al. 2012). The increased cognitive load associated with learning about new options may lead the voter to become confused or frustrated (Mainwaring 1998, Tavits 2008) and potentially result in her decision to reject all options. Thus, flux[51] in the party system

[50] Indeed, the portion of electoral volatility attributable to party replacement ("Type A" volatility) is strongly associated with a number of attitudes indicating citizen discontent. In the Appendix, I show that individuals living in countries where party replacement volatility was higher in a recent election tend to give poorer assessments of government performance and know relatively fewer political facts than those living in more stable contexts.

[51] I conceptualize flux in the political offering as change in the partisan makeup of candidates running, and measure flux using a measure of the sum of votes that shifted from one party to another in a presidential election at time *t* compared to the election at time *t-1*—that is, the portion of total electoral volatility that is due to party replacement.

may drive voter frustration, resulting in higher levels of invalid voting independent of the number of options available.

While I argue that flux in the partisanship of candidate offerings leads to shifts in voter behavior, voter sentiment and new candidate entry are likely endogenous. New candidates consider voters' historical behavior when choosing to compete, and tend to enter competition when they believe they have an opportunity to win (Cox 1997, Hug 2000, see also Chapter 5). Measures of electoral volatility capture shifts in the electoral offering and also capture voters' decisions to vote for these newly entering parties—volatility thus measures both an input (new party entry) and its outcome (shifts in vote shares). Societies where a greater proportion of voters hold attitudes that promote invalid voting may also tend to have more volatile presidential contests, as dissatisfied voters are more likely to select outsider options (Seligson 2002, Benton 2005). In other words, invalid voting and high rates of party replacement volatility may be correlated, with both variables caused by generalized discontent with government performance or political institutions. Regardless of the causal direction, the observable implication of the above discussion remains the same: party replacement volatility and invalid voting should be positively correlated. That is,

> **H3:** *As volatility in the party affiliation of candidate options increases, invalid voting will increase.*

Cross National Aggregate Data Analysis

I have argued that political polarization, the number of candidate options, and volatility in candidates' partisanship affect rates of invalid voting in Latin America. I test these propositions using multivariate regression analysis of cross-national presidential electoral data from 17 Latin

American countries from 1993 to 2013.[52] The dependent variable in these analyses, *Percent Invalid Votes,* captures the percentage of all votes left blank or spoiled in each first or single-round presidential contest, and ranges from 0.44 percent (Venezuela in 2013) to 19.09 percent (Brazil in 1998). I collected invalid vote data from each country's Electoral Management Body (EMB) when possible, and supplemented these data with information from Nohlen (2005) when original source material was not available.

To measure polarization in the party system, I use Singer's (forthcoming) measure of elite polarization. Following Alvarez and Nagler (2004) and Dalton (2008, 2011), this measure calculates the dispersion of left-right preferences among sitting legislators using data from elite surveys and the following equation:

$$\sqrt{\sum \mathrm{si}(\mathrm{LR}_i - \mathrm{LR}_{country})2}\ ,$$

where s_i denotes the party's seat share in the legislature, LR_i denotes the mean ideological position assigned the party by its members, and $LR_{country}$ denotes the average ideology of the chamber.[53] If all parties are located at the chamber mean, polarization will be calculated as 0, and if a smaller party moves away from the chamber mean, polarization will increase to a lesser degree than if a larger party moves away from the chamber mean. In theory, the measure ranges from 0 to 4.5; in the dataset used for this paper, polarization ranges from 0.14 (in the Dominican Republic, 2008)

[52] Because the data used to create the polarization measure is not available before 1993, all elections prior to 1993 are excluded from analysis.

[53] The polarization measure is generated using responses to the Parliamentary Elites of Latin America surveys, which ask sitting legislators to rank legislative parties on a left-right scale (see http://americo.usal.es/oir/elites/). Surveys are conducted at the beginning of each legislative term; as a result, using survey responses from the term preceding an election are outdated by 2-6 years. On the other hand, legislative polarization is measured after the new legislature is seated, substantially closer in time to the election. While the polarization measure accurately captures legislators' positions closely following the election, predicting past behavior with future outcomes is somewhat problematic. In robustness checks, I replicated statistical tests using a lagged polarization measure as well as a yearly measure of polarization from the Varieties of Democracy project (v2psplats); results are substantively similar to those shown here.

to 3.28 (in El Salvador, 2009). What do these values mean in terms of the organization of the political space? To answer this question, I walk through several stylized examples below.

Consider a hypothetical case with three equally strong parties (each obtaining 33.33% of the seats in the legislature) whose members assign the party identical positions on a 1 to 10-point ideological scale: a leftist party located at 2.5, a second party located at the chamber mean, 5.5, and the third, rightist party at 8.5. In this case, calculated polarization in the system will amount to 2.45, indicating substantial variation in the political space that is relatively balanced on both sides of the chamber mean. The polarization measure is independent of the chamber mean. Suppose, for example, that an exogenous shock occurs in the country that leads all equally-sized parties in the legislature to shift rightward to reflect the public mood. If all parties move to the right by the same amount, i.e., if the leftist party shifts its position to 4, the center party to 7, and the rightist party to 10, the legislature will be skewed rightward; however, because the distribution of elite responses around the mean remains the same (there is a three-unit difference between the right, left, and centrist parties), calculated polarization will remain at 2.45.

If, on the other hand, these left and right parties were to behave in a centrifugal fashion over time, fleeing the center and taking the polar positions of 1 and 10 with the center party staying in place at 5.5 and with all three parties maintaining their vote shares, calculated legislative polarization would increase substantially, to 3.67. In this case, the presence of a strong centrist party moderates the polarization measure. If the center party were to grow smaller while the two equally strong parties remained at the polar ends of the spectrum—1 and 10—the polarization estimate would eventually reach its theoretical maximum (4.5), with a hollowed out center and both legislative parties located at dichotomous ends of the left-right scale. Calculated polarization in multiparty contexts can also exceed the value of 4, although this still requires a hollowing out

of the political center. In a hypothetical three-party system, for example, if two leftist parties positioned themselves at 1 and 2 on the 10-point scale and each won 25 percent of legislative seats, while the third party moved rightward to position itself at 10 and won all remaining seats, the polarization calculation would yield a value of 4.27. In this example, one of the leftist parties is slightly more moderate than the other. It is possible to imagine a real-world context in which parties (for example, a nationalist and a conservative party) compete for distinct groups of voters while taking identical legislative positions on the left-right dimension. In such a case, polarization on these other issues (i.e., immigration, security) would not translate to differentiation between parties of the right and left within the legislature. In the extreme case, a multiparty legislature could come to resemble a two-party system in terms of legislators' self-placement at the poles of the left-right continuum.

These stylized cases point to some weaknesses of the polarization measure. While the measure straightforwardly captures dispersion around the chamber mean within the political system, it is uninformative with respect to shifts in legislative ideology and skew within the legislative space. A party system can, in theory, shift leftwards or rightwards as a whole without dispersion around the chamber mean changing substantially. While this is a weakness of the measure, it is not reflected in the data: ideological shifts in Latin American legislatures that accompanied the "pink tide" in the early 2000's are accompanied by an increase in polarization, reflecting expansion of the political space as leftist parties entered legislatures rather than a wholesale leftward shift of politics. A second challenge to the measures concerns one party dominant systems, which will have relatively low levels of polarization even if the opposition party is located at the opposing pole to the dominant party. In the time period studied here, legislatures have sufficiently varied partisan compositions that this is not a significant challenge to the analysis.

Although legislative polarization is not an ideal proxy for ideological polarization among presidential candidates,[54] partisan differentiation in the legislature should be associated with polarization among presidential candidates. To test the possibility of a non-linear relationship between legislative polarization and invalid voting, I include a squared term (H1A). Finally, to test the possibility that change in polarization from the past electoral period affects invalid voting, I include a measure of the difference in polarization from time *t-1* (immediately following the previous presidential election) to time *t* (immediately following the election under study).

The *Number of Candidates* (H2) variable captures the number of candidates competing in the presidential election. To generate this variable, I collected information about the number of candidates and their vote shares from official electoral returns from national electoral commissions when possible. When the "other candidates" category appeared in election archives, I searched alternative sources for information identifying how many candidates were included in this category. If this information was unavailable, I counted "others" as one party. Thus, for some cases from the 1990's, the measure is likely biased downwards, making the candidate count conservative for those cases, and potentially biasing results away from statistical significance. *Number of Candidates* ranges from 2 (El Salvador in 2009) to 20 (Peru in 2006), with an average value of 8.16 candidates over the period studied here.[55] To capture the possibility that the number of

[54] This measure provides a complete portrait of legislative polarization but may underestimate polarization in the national political space, as parties that did not win seats are excluded. Furthermore, not all presidential candidates run in conjunction with a legislative party in Latin American countries. This measure of polarization does not account for independent candidates, even those who won a substantial portion of the total vote. If anything, this will make it harder to find effects for countries in which presidential candidates' copartisans do not hold legislative seats, making estimates conservative.

[55] In robustness checks, I used the effective number of candidates (calculated using Laakso and Tagapera's 1979 formula) rather than the absolute number. The two measures are correlated at .4488, and results were substantively similar to those reported here.

candidates contesting an election has a non-linear effect on invalid vote rates (H2A), I include a square term for this measure.

Flux in political systems is often captured using the Pedersen Index of electoral volatility (Pedersen 1979). The standard measure captures shifts in party vote shares attributable to two sources: the replacement of existing options by newly entering parties, and shifts in vote shares across stably competing parties in the political system. Recently, some have argued that the Pedersen Index is uninformative to scholars interested in identifying the sources of volatility and understanding their differential effects because it lumps all volatility together. To remedy this issue, scholars have calculated volatility attributable to a variety of causes: Gervasoni and España-Nájera (2010) break volatility into flux caused by within-system versus extra-systemic parties, while Su (2014) focuses on volatility *within* parties over time. Carreras, Morgenstern, and Su (2015) analyze volatility caused by new party entry and old party exit, but focus their analysis on the transfer of vote shares among the two largest parties in the system rather than shifts across the whole system. In this paper, I follow Powell and Tucker (2014), who break volatility into its two major components—volatility caused by shifts in votes across newly entering versus exiting parties ("Type A" volatility), and volatility caused by shifts in vote shares across stably competing party options ("Type B" volatility). Using official electoral data collected from EMBs across the region, I calculate Party Replacement Volatility for all presidential candidates using the equation:

$$|\Sigma p_{exit(t-1)} + \Sigma p_{enter(t)}|/2,$$

where $p_{exit(t-1)}$ denotes the total vote share won by parties at time *t-1* that exited competition that year, and $p_{enter(t)}$ denotes the total vote share won by candidates from newly entering parties at time *t*.[56]

Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics, Political Features and Invalid Voting

	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Percent Invalid Vote	82	5.681	4.480	0.66	19.088
Polarization	73	1.195	0.651	0.14	3.28
ΔPolarization	53	0.117	0.417	-1.13	1.04
Number of Candidates	77	7.974	3.660	2	20
ΔNumber of Candidates	70	-0.443	3.955	-10	12
Party Replacement Volatility	80	0.220	0.213	0	0.975
Null Vote Campaign	82	0.134	0.343	0	1
Margin of Victory	73	0.138	0.103	0.002	0.428
Incumbent	73	0.233	0.426	0	1
Second Round	73	0.370	0.486	0	1
Freedom House Democracy	82	6.598	1.804	2	10
ΔFreedom House Democracy	82	0.0976	1.014	-3	6
Ln (GDP per capita)	74	9.091	0.635	6.767	9.041
Urbanization	82	68.045	15.034	38.48	94.2
Literacy	82	87.900	8.485	62.8	98.554
Compulsory	82	1.659	0.959	0	3

In addition to these main independent variables, I follow existing studies of invalid voting and control for features of countries and elections that have the potential to influence blank and null voting, including the percent urban population,[57] adult literacy rates, logged GDP per capita,

[56] I define "new" parties conservatively: any time a party substantially changed its name, this counted as a new party. In some cases, this strategy may mask continuity, as parties can maintain the same organizational structure while changing labels (as with the *Fujimorista* parties in Peru).

[57] Details about all independent variables are available in the Appendix.

Freedom House democracy scores, and mandatory vote laws. Democracy scores have been recoded so that higher values mean higher democratic quality. I also include a dummy measure that captures the presence of an organized campaign promoting blank or spoiled voting during a given presidential campaign, following the insight that such campaigns may influence invalid vote rates (Alonso 2010, Cisneros 2013, Kouba and Lysek 2016; for more information about this measure, see the Appendix and Conclusion). Additionally, I control for three features of competition that other studies (Uggla 2008, Kouba and Lysek 2016) have argued affect the stakes associated with casting an invalid ballot: the presence of a second round electoral contest, the margin of victory between the first and second place candidates,[58] and the presence of an incumbent candidate.

The data are structured as a panel, with observations nested in countries across time. Due to the limited number of country-year cases, I estimate the models using robust standard errors clustered by country and include country and year controls (although the models shown here are consistent with time-series corrected estimations, see Appendix Table A2). Because the number of observations is small (n=63 in fully specified models), the likelihood of committing Type II error and failing to reject the null hypothesis when it is false is inflated in the analyses presented here, so I interpret the precision of the estimates generously.[59]

[58] The *Margin of Victory* variable should have a positive effect on invalid voting: as the difference in vote share between the leading candidates increases, the likelihood that a single vote will mark the difference in a presidential contest decreases, lowering the election's stakes and making protest voting less costly. Second round elections should also be positively associated with invalid vote rates, as the stakes of first round election results are relatively lower when the likelihood of a second round contest is high.

[59] Erring against committing type II error necessarily inflates the possibility of committing type I error and erroneously rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 3.2 OLS Regression Analyses: Invalid Voting and Political Competition

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Polarization			1.655^ (1.006)	0.792* (0.405)	2.352** (0.940)	4.835*** (1.376)
Polarization Squared					-0.590* (0.300)	-1.396*** (0.375)
ΔPolarization						-0.999† (0.755)
Number of Candidates			0. 548*** (0.122)	0.404*** (0.091)	0.035 (0.300)	-0.268† (0.191)
Number of Candidates Squared					0.018 (0.013)	0.041*** (0.011)
ΔNumber of Candidates						-0.187* (0.096)
Party Replacement Volatility			6.706** (2.892)	5.337** (1.969)	5.223** (2.056)	3.604** (1.612)
Null Vote Campaign				0.453 (0.958)	0.144 (1.011)	1.106* (0.592)
Margin of Victory		4.534 (3.974)		7.712** (3.440)	6.246^ (3.955)	2.717 (3.154)
Incumbent		1.471* (0.859)		1.791 ** (0.747)	1.801** (0.761)	-0.650 (0.551)
Second Round		3.571*** (0.724)		0.946 (0.761)	0.782 (0.810)	-0.589 (0.686)
Freedom House Democracy		-0.902*** (0.284)		-0.106 (0.276)	-0210 (0.273)	-0.199 (0.210)
ΔFreedom House Democracy						0.611* (0.356)
Ln (GDP per capita)	-0.442 (1.025)			0.588 (0.882)	0.482 (0.907)	-0.276 (0.508)
Urbanization	0.033 (0.051)			-0.054^ (0.032)	-0.055^ (0.035)	-0.051^ (0.032)
Literacy	-0.226** (0.082)			-0.133* (0.065)	-0.117* (0.066)	-0.123** (0.055)
Compulsory	1.825** (0.869)	1.855*** (0.570)		1.817*** (0.345)	1.834*** (0.431)	1.636*** (0.374)
Constant	-127.147 (112.056)	105.339 (89.451)	228.611* (125.829)	104.143 (107.015)	54.017 (116.991)	-331.072** (138.393)
N	70	69	73	63	63	47
R-Squared	0.3026	0.5706	0.4340	0.7475	0.7543	0.9192

Country and year controls are included but not shown. Robust standard errors clustered by country. †p<0.20, ^p<0.15, *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 (two-tailed).

Model 1 presents results for an "empty" model that includes only institutional and population covariates. Consistent with existing scholarship, I find a negative relationship between literacy and invalid voting, while mandatory vote laws are positively associated with invalid voting. Logged GDP per capita and urbanization do not reach statistical significance in Model 1, which accounts for about 30 percent of the variance in invalid voting. Model 2 is a second "empty" model, that includes those political variables that previous scholarship has linked to invalid voting and accounts for about 57 percent of the variation in invalid voting. Again, consistent with existing scholarship, I find a positive relationship between the margin of victory, the presence of an incumbent candidate, second round election contests, and invalid vote rates. Levels of democracy are negatively associated with invalid voting, and the relationship between mandatory vote laws and invalid voting is still robust in this specification. Model 3 estimates a third "empty" model including only those political variables—polarization, the number of candidates, and party replacement electoral volatility—discussed in this paper. Alone, these variables account for 43.4 percent of the variance in invalid vote rates, substantially more than the empty institutional model. Polarization has a positive relationship with invalid voting, which provides initial support for hypothesis H1B. The number of candidates and electoral volatility are positively associated with invalid voting, as expected.

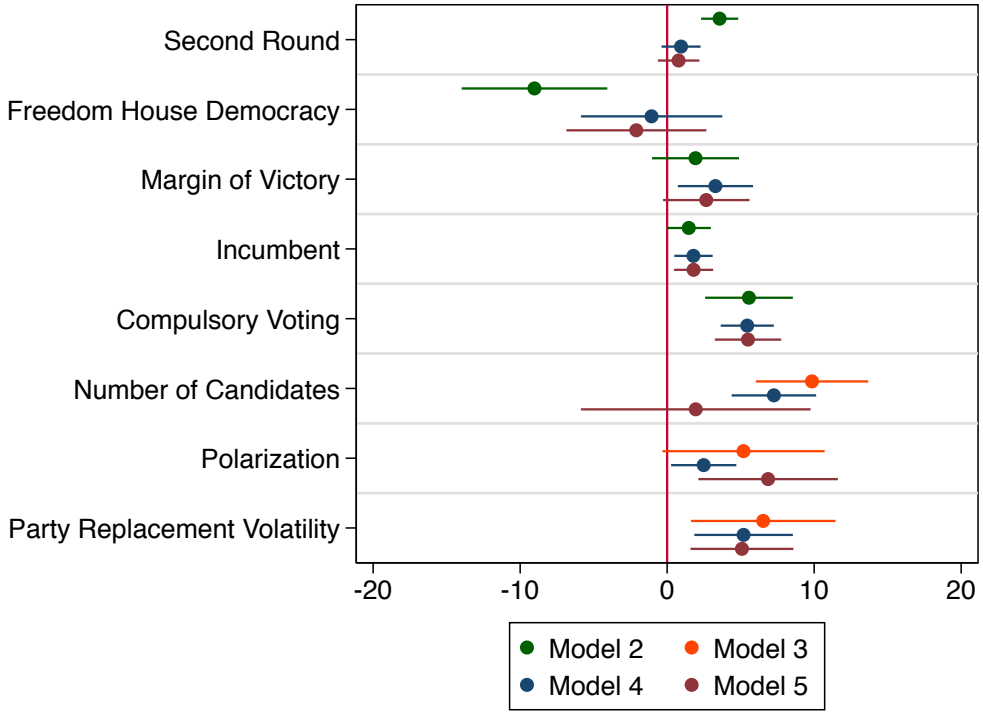
Model 4 is the first of three fully specified models, and includes all political, institutional, and demographic variables, but does not account for any non-linear effects. While the direction of polarization does not change from Model 3, its statistical significance is substantially attenuated in this specification, as are the second round election and Freedom House democracy score variables (see Figure 2 below). The effects of the margin of victory and party replacement volatility

both remain statistically significant when these additional controls are included in the model, although the estimated size of these coefficients decreases. The presence of a null vote campaign is positive, but does not reach statistical significance in this model. In spite of the attenuation in effects, including the political variables substantially improves the model fit; Model 4 accounts for over 74 percent of the variation in invalid voting.[60]

Model 5 accounts for the curvilinear relationships for polarization and the number of candidates detailed in the conditional Hypotheses associated with H1 and H2. The interaction term for the number of candidates is not statistically significant. When plotted, the estimates reveal the expected relationship: marginal increases in the number of candidates at the lower end of the candidate range (from two to about eight) do not result in substantial changes in invalid vote rates. When the number of candidates passes eight, however, the average estimated percentage of invalid votes increases substantially. Evidence supporting the hypothesized curvilinear relationship for polarization, however, is substantially weaker in this model. The interaction term does not reach statistical significance, and the plotted coefficients do not indicate the presence of a significant curvilinear relationship for this model specification. The presence of an incumbent candidate has a positive and significant impact on invalid voting, although the effect of the margin of victory is somewhat attenuated in this model. The presence of a null vote campaign is positively associated with invalid voting, although the size of the effect is small and does not reach standard thresholds of statistical significance.

[60] When the model is estimated using only the institutional and stakes variables, it explains 61 percent of the variation in invalid voting. Similarly, a model estimated using the political variables (without squared effects) and institutional features accounts for 62 percent of the variation in invalid voting.

Figure 3.2 Estimated Maximal Effects of Stakes vs. Political Variables (Models 2-5)



90% confidence intervals around point estimates shown.

Model 6 is the third and final fully specified model, and includes measures of change in polarization, the number of candidates competing, and Freedom House democracy scores.[61] Because the polarization measure is not available prior to 1993, introducing this change variable decreases the number of cases to 47, which may limit the model's generalizability. However, several findings from the final specification are notable. First, the curvilinear relationship between

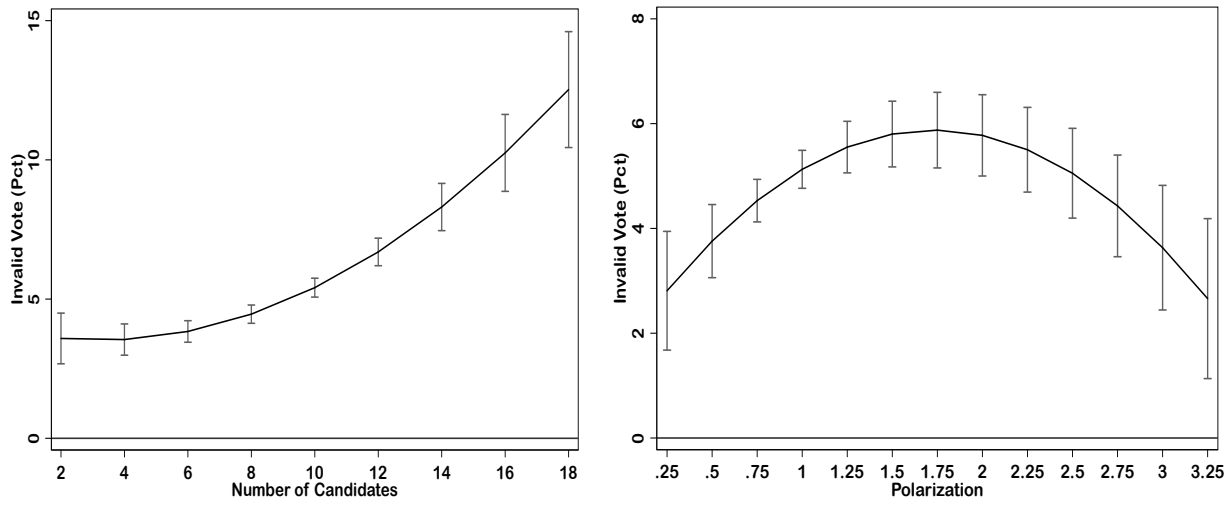
[61] In robustness checks, I included measures denoting the change in the margin of victory. The variable never reaches statistical significance. In the interest of parsimony, I do not show these results here. I do not include a measure of change in Party Replacement Volatility because the variable inherently captures changes in vote shares within the party system over time. Including a lagged volatility variable did not change results in robustness checks.

polarization and invalid voting is large and statistically significant in this specification: the model indicates that, controlling for change in levels of polarization, voters cast on average four percent fewer invalid ballots when polarization is high versus when it is more moderate (H1, see Figure 3, panel 2). Contrary to expectations, though, invalid voting *increases* as polarization increases from 0. *Change* in polarization only reaches marginal statistical significance (p=.2), and the direction of the coefficient is negative as expected. When change in polarization is negative, that is when the competitive political space shrinks, invalid voting increases by 1 percentage point, on average, while invalid voting is lower by a percentage point, on average, in countries where polarization has increased from the previous election.

The curvilinear relationship between the number of candidates and invalid voting is more pronounced in this model: the greatest number of candidates is associated with average rates of invalid voting that are about ten percent higher than in countries where only two candidates compete. *Change* in the number of candidates, on the other hand, is negatively associated with invalid voting. That is, a relative increase in the selection of candidates (independent of volatility in their partisanship) tends to *decrease* invalid voting, as voters are better able to find a candidate that represents their interests. Controlling for the absolute number of parties competing, a maximal increase in the number of candidates competing (12) is associated with a 2.24 percentage point decline in invalid voting, on average, whereas a maximal decrease in the number of candidates competing (-10) is associated with an estimated increase of 1.87 percent in invalid votes. Electoral volatility caused by new party entry and established party exit has a positive effect on invalid voting; the maximal estimated effect of party replacement volatility is a 3.5 percentage point increase in invalid voting. Invalid vote movements are also significantly associated with average

invalid voting in this model; the presence of an organized null vote campaign leads to a 1.1 percent increase in invalid voting, on average.

Figure 3.3 Number of Candidates and Polarization, Squared (Model 6)



Estimates shown with 90% confidence intervals

While the political variables are statistically and substantively significant in this final model specification, the stakes variables are not. Variables capturing an election's margin of victory, the presence of an incumbent candidate, a second round contest, and Freedom House democracy scores do not predict invalid voting in Model 6, nor does GDP per capita.[62] Contrary to Power and Garand (2007), I find that change in Freedom House democracy scores is *positively*

[62] These non-findings are robust to sequentially removing the stakes variables from the model. While the stakes variables are correlated, the correlation coefficients are small enough that multicollinearity is not a concern.

associated with invalid vote rates in presidential elections.[63] That is, on average, invalid vote rates are higher in increasingly democratic countries than in those that are experiencing democratic decline. As in previous models, population covariates are significant, with substantively large effects. Invalid voting is expected to be approximately 5 percent higher in the least literate societies than in the most literate societies. In line with established findings, and with all other model specifications estimated here, I find that mandatory vote laws are positively associated with invalid voting. A maximal increase in mandatory vote laws (from no compulsory voting to a strictly enforced obligation) results in an average increase of about 5 percent in invalid voting.

Including the political variables is important in terms of substantive results and statistical tests of model fit. The estimated effects sizes of the political variables in Models 4 through 6 are comparable to those associated with most institutional and demographic variables (see Figure 2 for a comparison of maximal effects sizes across models), including the margin of victory, which is associated with an increase of about 3 percent in invalid voting in Model 4 (the highest estimated coefficient for this variable in a fully specified model), and the maximal effect of an *Incumbent* candidate, which is 1.8 percentage points when other features of political competition are controlled for in Model 5. Furthermore, including the political and institutional variables leads to an important increase in the variance explained—the R-squared value increases substantially across model specifications, from 0.30 in the empty institutional model to 0.75 when political variables are included and curvilinear effects are estimated in Model 5, and as high as 0.91 in Model 6, when I include variables capturing change in relevant political features.[64] This increase

[63] This finding is robust the inclusion of an indicator variable identifying founding elections as well as a "democratic election count" variable, although the significance of the coefficient is slightly attenuated (p=0.11) when the latter variable is included.

[64] When I estimate Model 5 without the stakes variables included, it accounts for 64.42 percent of the variation in invalid voting. The stakes variables increase the model's precision, but do not overwhelm the importance of political variables in explaining aggregate levels of invalid voting.

in explanatory power is associated with minor attenuation in the coefficient sizes of the political variables across model specifications, indicating that these measures do not serve as mere proxies for political institutions, but rather contribute independently to explaining invalid voting across the region.

Discussion

This chapter argues that features of political competition affect rates of invalid voting by affecting the relative clarity of the political space. I demonstrate that when features of competition change in ways that make politics more difficult to understand (high party replacement volatility), limit the competitiveness of elections (declining numbers of candidates), or diminish the representativeness of the political space (decreased polarization), this leads to increased invalid voting in the aggregate. Conversely, when competition changes in ways that make politics easier to understand, more competitive (increased number of candidates), or more representative, this fosters feelings of inclusion and urgency among the voting public, resulting in lower rates of invalid voting.

Specifically, I show that more distinct political parties are associated with lower invalid vote rates, while more candidates for president are associated with higher rates of blank and spoiled voting. I also demonstrate that greater electoral volatility caused by party replacement is associated with higher rates of invalid voting, on average. Somewhat counterintuitively, improved democracy scores are associated with *higher* levels of invalid voting when other factors are controlled for. While the reason for this effect is unclear, I propose two rival explanations. First, as voters in increasingly democratic regimes gain experience with the constant compromise and inherently slow nature of progress inherent in democratic governance, they may grow frustrated with the

democratic process and express this frustration by casting invalid votes. Second, shifts in levels of democracy may have no discernable effect on voters' feelings of satisfaction or frustration; rather, as free elections become a stable part of the political culture, voters may feel confident enough in the process to use the franchise as a means to express their discontent with relatively minor grievances (see Cohen n.d.). While I propose a number of mechanisms through which this and other political variables might affect voters' behavior in the ballot box, I do not directly test these mechanisms here. Clarifying the relationship between clarity in the political space and invalid voting behavior and assessing these potential mechanisms could be a fruitful avenue for future research.

This project underscores the need for incorporating changes in the political context, and not merely levels of contextual variables, into models of political behavior. In discussing invalid voting in Latin American elections, I demonstrate the theoretical and analytical importance of accounting for change in models of the phenomenon. Doing so contextualizes the observed levels of explanatory variables, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how features of competition (levels of these factors, patterns in those factors, or a combination of the two) affect political phenomena. While this paper focuses on invalid vote rates as an outcome, this approach has the potential to be useful for studies of a much broader set of political phenomena.

This paper contributes to the nascent discussion of invalid voting in Latin America by bringing politics into the conversation. Invalid vote rates vary substantially over time, across and within countries, while demographics and political institutions do not. In seeking to explain this variation, then, we must account for features of political systems that change. How does political competition conditions voter attitudes in ways that increase (or decrease) their propensity to intentionally cast invalid ballots? The independent variables presented in this paper are not the

universe of political factors that might affect rates of invalid voting (or, rates of electoral participation more generally). Candidate quality, the presence of a protest candidate, and the amount, tone, and quality of media coverage of candidates are among many other factors that might influence rates of invalid voting around the world.

CHAPTER IV

CAMPAIGNING FOR NO-ONE: ELITE MOBILIZATION OF THE INVALID VOTE IN LATIN AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 present a relatively sanguine view of invalid voting and its effects on democratic politics in Latin America. Rather than indicate impending trouble for democracy, invalid voting appears to constitute one more participatory behavior for individuals who are knowledgeable about politics. In this view, high rates of invalid voting, while puzzling and perhaps troubling if persistent across time, are just one more form of citizen response to imperfections in the representative process (like protest or abstention, see for example Moseley and Moreno 2010).

Yet, while invalid voting can serve as an expressive means for alienated individuals to participate in political life, highly publicized, widespread invalid voting has the potential to harm electoral mandates and democratic legitimacy. When very high percentages of votes are cast invalidly, this can cast doubt on the winner's mandate to act on behalf of the people (Pitkin 1967, pp. 145-154). Weak mandates, in turn, can degrade the legitimacy of political actors. Thus, high rates of invalid voting, particularly when publicized and mobilized by individuals promoting broad, anti-political sentiment, hold the potential to decrease the legitimacy of political actors and, potentially, the democratic process. Such campaigns have occurred frequently in Latin American presidential elections. This chapter turns to a discussion of such mobilizational efforts.

Specifically, I discuss this role of political entrepreneurs in mobilizing the invalid vote, and provide descriptive information about invalid vote campaigns during presidential elections in Latin America between 1980 and 2015. Finally, I conclude with a short discussion of future directions and potential impacts of this research program.

Invalid Vote Campaigns in Latin America

Following the resignation of disgraced President Alberto Fujimori,[65] elections for a new President of Peru were held in 2001. Because no candidate obtained a majority in the first round, a second round contest was held between two centrist candidates: Alan García, a former president with a substantial record of political mismanagement to overcome,[66] and Alejandro Toledo, who faced important criminal allegations during the campaign.[67] These candidates were hard to distinguish on policy lines, and prominent journalists Jaime Bayly and Álvaro Vargas Llosa insisted that the candidates were indistinguishable on a more important, moral dimension. In April, 2001, they held a joint press conference where they argued that "[n]either of the candidates [had] the minimal moral credentials to be President." Instead, they proposed that voters opt for a third option, arguing that "the only clean candidate, the only transparent candidate… [was] a blank or null vote." (El

[65] Fujimori fled to his parents' native Japan following the 2001 release of videocassettes revealing that his administration had bribed members of Congress during Fujimori's tenure. In the midst of this scandal, Fujimori scheduled new elections and announced he would not run as a candidate.

[66] During García's tenure as President, the Peruvian economy plummeted, levels of poverty skyrocketed, inflation rose by more than 1,000 percent, and the Maoist Shining Path guerrillas began to commit increasingly frequent acts of violence within the country

[67] Specifically, Toledo was accused of corruption, having accepted an illegal 1 million dollar campaign donation from American entrepreneur George Soros; of recent cocaine abuse (and of bribing the press not to publish the story); and, of having fathered an illegitimate daughter.

Mundo 2001). These two men became the face of an organized invalid vote campaign, which provided voters faced with a difficult choice with a credible exit option. Invalid voting increased modestly from 11.6 percent in the first round to 13.8 percent in the second round contest—a figure more than double the 6 percent of all votes historically cast invalidly in second round presidential elections in Peru.

Invalid vote campaigns hold the potential to organize discontented citizens into a voting bloc, providing a participatory outlet (i.e., an opportunity for "voice" in Hirschman's (1978) framework) for individuals with disparate preferences who otherwise might opt to exit politics, by assigning a protest motivation to invalid votes. Thus, campaigns that mobilize individuals to cast invalid votes serve the important role of integrating alienated or discontented citizens into conventional politics (i.e., electoral participation) through the use of an unconventional behavior (invalid voting). In addition to this potential positive impact, organized null vote campaigns can have negative effects, fomenting citizen discontent, harming citizen perceptions of democratic politics and, as well, undermining electoral mandates. Understanding what factors lead organized null vote movements to arise and successfully mobilize supporters is thus potentially important to our understanding of shifts in patterns of political participation and integration, as well as our understanding of electoral legitimacy, across the region.

Why do movements promoting invalid voting arise in some contexts and not others? Existing perspectives of social mobilization find that large-scale protest movements are more likely to occur when the public has sufficient resources to channel strong grievances through protest (Jenkins 1983, Moreno and Moseley 2010, Boulding 2014), and when political institutions are sufficiently inclusive to allow for mobilization with limited risk of repression (Kitschelt 1986, Muller and Seligson 1987). But invalid vote campaigns also resemble traditional political campaigns in that

they work to convince voters to vote for a specific option—in this case, against all candidates. Studies of political campaigns find that new parties enter competition when they view political opportunity, for example, where existing candidate options do not represent the whole array of voter preferences (Cox 1999). These perspectives provide some insight into the emergence of invalid vote movements in Latin America, but do not explain the non-emergence of null vote campaigns in cases where competing candidates are ideologically similar. In what follows, I present suggestive evidence that organized null vote campaigns arise when the available candidate options are not differentiable on relevant, *non-policy* axes of competition. In particular, I find that widespread perceptions that all available candidate options are corrupt, that the process has been systematically undemocratic, or that all available candidates are not committed democrats are associated with the emergence of invalid vote campaigns.

Features of Invalid Vote Movements in Latin American Presidential Elections

From Guatemala in 1990 to Colombia in 2014, journalistic accounts of Latin American elections since the start of the Third Wave identify null vote campaigns as a key driver of voting behavior at various points in history (Benesch 1990, La República 2014). In Chapter 2, I showed that voters' dissatisfaction with politics and feelings of alienation are key to understanding their decisions to intentionally invalidate their ballots in presidential elections. While many voters are individually motivated to invalidate their ballots, in some cases, the decision to cast a blank or spoiled ballot can be encouraged by organized groups promoting the behavior (Alonso 2010, Cisneros 2013). Public calls for invalid voting vary substantially across contexts and over time. In some cases,

individual citizens or politicians write opinion pieces, hold press conferences or interviews to announce their decision to vote null and to insist that this is the best decision for the public, as well. In data collection for this chapter, I found more than 20 occurrences of such calls for ballot invalidation.

To better understand the circumstances in which invalid vote campaigns arise, I collected and examined qualitative data from online news archives identifying and describing invalid vote movements in elections across Latin America. In this section, I describe the data collection process and provide descriptive information about two different types of invalid vote mobilization efforts identified in data collection. Specifically, I identify where and when these campaigns emerged, and how often they were "successful," that is, associated with a national level increase in invalid voting.[68,69] In addition, I categorize campaigns by the organization of their leadership, mobilizational tactics, and stated grievances.

The variable of interest here, Null Vote Campaign, captures the presence of an organized movement promoting blank or spoiled voting during a given presidential election. To create the measure, Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking undergraduate research assistants searched the online archives of nationally circulated newspapers in 17 Latin American countries (Nicaragua was excluded from this data collection because invalid vote data are inconsistently recorded there). Research assistants searched for a number of terms including, "null vote," "blank vote," and

[68] While I have labeled increases in invalid voting in elections that coincide with an invalid vote campaign as "successes," I do not assess the causal power of these movements here, and the link between campaigns and trends in invalid vote rates should not be interpreted as causal. In fact, the emergence of these movements is likely endogenous to features of political competition and, as well, generally high levels of invalid voting.

[69] Generally speaking, rates of invalid voting are higher in first round elections than in second round contests. To avoid overestimating the relationship between changes in invalid voting across elections in these cases, I compare first round election results to the first round results from the previous contest in countries where ballotage is a common occurrence. Because second round mobilizations are aimed at changing results relative to a recent first round, on the other hand, I compare rates of invalid voting in second round elections to those from the associated first round.

"protest movement,"[70] and read resulting news stories. They were instructed to search for evidence of a campaign or movement that promoted blank or spoiled voting among its followers, and to record the text of news articles used to make these determinations. A single mention of a null vote campaign in a nationally circulated newspaper was considered sufficient to identify a positive case.[71] Following a thorough audit of student work, I conducted additional English, Spanish, and Portuguese language searches using Lexis Nexis Academic and Google News, applying the same search terms to identify additional stories about invalid vote movements and following the same single-mention rule.

The news stories gathered from these two rounds of web searches provide the data used to generate the dependent variable for analyses discussed in this chapter.[72] I find evidence of social movements promoting invalid voting in 17 Latin American presidential elections from 1980 to 2015. For the purposes of this chapter, I define null vote campaigns or movements as instances in which the tactics of mass mobilization (for example, media appeals, or distributing campaign posters and flyers) are used, usually by identifiable leadership, to encourage or exhort individuals to cast invalid ballots rather than vote for legally recognized candidates. I present descriptive

[70] The measure of invalid vote campaigns was generated using online newspaper archives to identify stories about null vote movements. Spanish-language (Portuguese in Brazil) searches were conducted in online news archives from each of the 18 Latin American countries using the terms: "voto nulo," "voto [en] blanco," "voto viciado," "voto [de] protesta," "movimento [de] protesta," "voto bronca". A single mention of a null vote movement in a nationally circulated newspaper was considered sufficient to code the observation as a "1".

[71] A single mention of an invalid vote campaign in a nationally circulated newspaper constitutes a low bar for the identification of invalid vote movements. However, the resulting measure probably *underestimates* the frequency of invalid voting campaigns across the region, as many such movements are subnational affairs that national media outlets are unlikely to cover.

[72] I do not include social media or radio broadcasts in the data analyzed here. However, to the extent that data collection is possible, future extensions of this chapter will include such data, as focus group interviews conducted in Lima, Peru and traditional news sources identified social media—especially Facebook and Twitter—as an important platform that promoters of null voting use to mobilize supporters. Unfortunately, due to the high cost of scraping historical data from these websites, I was unable to perform such analysis for this iteration of the project. Similarly, because most radio broadcasts are not recorded or transcribed, I do not use these records to identify invalid vote movements. Given that radio is one of the most popular media sources across the region, it is likely that some movements not mentioned in print journalism were mentioned in this medium. Similarly, calls for invalid voting by individuals may be more likely to occur via radio than in print journalism.

information about these movements in Table 1. Media sources indicated that these movements used a variety of strategies ranging from street signs and protests (Guatemala 2015), to social media blitzes (Mexico 2012, Colombia 2014), media appeals (Peru 2001), and in some cases (El Salvador 1982) voter intimidation. Of these movements, six occurred during transitional elections in countries' histories (El Salvador 1982, Guatemala 1990, Paraguay 1988, Peru 2000, 2001, and Ecuador 1984), while eleven occurred in post-transitional contests.

A second type of invalid vote campaign involved public statements from influential political leaders indicating their plans to invalidate their vote on Election Day, and sometimes calling on their supporters to invalidate their ballots in kind (five observations). Unlike the first category, I found little evidence linking these individual statements of support for invalid voting to larger social mobilizations. However, influential political leaders have limited motivation to make public statements supporting blank or spoiled voting aside from trying to influence their followers' vote decisions.

I also identified a third type of invalid voting promotion, involving isolated public calls for blank or spoiled voting by private citizens. News stories featuring these individual calls tend to take the form of human-interest stories centered on groups of invalid voters, or letters to the editor promoting invalid voting, sometimes accompanied by rebuttals from news staff or other letter writers arguing that such votes are socially irresponsible. Neither type of article refers directly to the presence of an organized movement, and unlike influential politicos, regular citizens do not have a large base of supporters they aim to mobilize through statements or letters to news outlets, so I do not analyze these stories in depth here. However, these human-interest stories and opinion articles are important in their own right and should be addressed in future studies for at least two reasons. First, letters to the editor, public interest stories, and opinion pieces hint at the presence

of organized invalid vote movements that have not received coverage in national press outlets.[73] Second, public discussion of invalid voting as a viable option by ordinary citizens might make the alternative more salient and acceptable for other voters.

In light of perspectives linking protest movements and votes for protest candidates to grievances (Seligson 2002, Benton 2005), I used available news stories to identify the major grievances each movement claimed as motivation for their campaign. This information is categorized in Table 1. Campaigns' stated grievances were overwhelmingly related to three issues: corruption in politics generally or on the part of specific candidates (ten cases), limitations to competition that supporters viewed as unfair or unrepresentative (five cases), and low quality candidates (four cases). Substantial variation exists within each of these categorizations, and especially in the types of limitations to competition present in different races. Complaints of corruption ranged from generalized anti-system complaints (for example, claims of endemic corruption across political parties in Guatemala, 2015) to accusations of specific acts of corruption allegedly committed by the candidates (for example, opposition claims of election rigging by the incumbent Fujimori regime in Peru, 2000).

Similarly, I found evidence of multiple sources of limited competition. Some party systems inadequately represent the whole array of voters' preferences, which can lead those parties that hold relatively extreme positions to call for invalid voting once they are mathematically eliminated from competition, especially following a first round election. In such cases, campaigns call for blank or spoiled voting in protest of the limited portion of the political space that is represented in

[73]News organizations may not consider invalid votes to be important, or movements promoting them to be consequential, and therefore might choose not to cover them. On the other hand, media outlets may view invalid voting as undemocratic and opt not to publish stories about the phenomenon to avoid promoting the behavior.

the final choice set. For example, in the second round Chilean election in 1999, candidates from the Humanist Party indicated that they were

> "…not in favor of tricks (*chantaje*). [The remaining candidates] want to distinguish themselves [from each other], but the truth is that Lagos and Lavín are the same. That is why we are calling on voters to opt for this third alternative, which is much more consequential" (El Mercurio 2000, translation mine).

Ideological similarity among available options as a limitation to competition is substantively different from rulings by electoral authorities that remove candidates from contention for legal reasons. In Guatemala's 1990 presidential election, for example, the country's former dictator General Rios Montt was prohibited from running for president in light of his anti-democratic past. He encouraged his followers to cast spoiled ballots in protest of this decision by the electoral court (and, as well, as a response to rampant corruption by government officials in the new democratic regime, Benesch 1990). Not all candidate removal implicates former military leaders. For example, in Honduras in 2009, ousted President Manuel Zelaya called on his supporters to abstain from participating in the election held to replace him, calling the process illegitimate due to the nature of his removal from office. While some of his supporters abstained, others turned out to vote and cast blank or spoiled ballots in protest of the elections (Malkin 2009).[74]

Complaints of low candidate quality are somewhat more similar to each other, and often overlap with broader claims of political corruption. Specifically, null vote campaigns and their supporters identify candidates as "unfit" or "unqualified" for the presidency on the basis of moral

[74] Similarly, not all candidate removal leads to the emergence of an against all movement. In Peru's 2016 election, for example, the candidate polling in second place was removed from contention for relatively minor campaign infractions less than two months before the first round contest. Yet, in this case, no organized invalid vote movement took hold.

failings or poor governance track records. In Brazil's second round election in 2006, for example, leaders from the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) and other political organizations called for null voting among their followers, citing the questionable ethical bona fides of both Geraldo Alckmin and the incumbent president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lopes Neves 2006). Similarly, in Peru's 2011 election, both second round candidates had questionable ethical bona fides: Ollanta Humala's brother had attempted to stage a military coup in the 1990s and Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of former authoritarian leader Alberto Fujimori, was frequently linked to his regime. The choice between these candidates was framed as "a choice between cancer and AIDS" – that is, a choice between two equally bad, antidemocratic ills – by Peruvian Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa, and by proponents of invalid voting (Manrique 2011, translation mine).

Table 4.1 Invalid Vote Mobilization in Latin American Presidential Elections (1980-2015)

Country, Year	Election Round	Leadership	Stated Grievances	Invalid Vote Increase
Argentina, 2003	First (single)	Multiple Groups	Corruption	NO
Brazil, 2006	Both	Multiple Groups	Corruption, candidate quality	NO
Chile, 1999	Second	Multiple Groups	Limited competition (ideological similarity)	NO
Chile 2005	Second	Individual Statement	Opposition to economic model	YES
Colombia 1998	Single	Individual Statement	Candidate quality	YES
Colombia, 2014	Single	Single Group	Corruption	YES
Ecuador, 1984	Second	Multiple Groups	Limited competition (unclear; ideological similarity)	NO
Ecuador, 2006	First	Multiple Groups	Constitutional Assembly	NO
El Salvador, 1982	Single	Single Group	Limited competition (no representation of the political left), threat of violence	N/A*

El Salvador	Single	Individual Statement	Corruption, candidate quality	YES
Guatemala, 1990	First	Individual	Corruption, limited competition (candidate removal)	N/A*
Guatemala, 2015	First	Unclear	Corruption, candidate quality	NO
Honduras, 2009**	Single	Individual	Limited Competition (candidate removal)	NO
Mexico, 2006	Single	Multiple Groups	Corruption	YES
Mexico, 2012	Single	Multiple Groups	Corruption	YES
Paraguay, 1988	First	Multiple Groups	Corruption, election fraud	NO
Paraguay 1998	Both	Individual Statement	Candidate quality	NO
Peru, 2000	Both	Individual	Corruption, election fraud	NO
Peru, 2001	Second	Individuals	Corruption, candidate quality	YES
Peru 2006	First	Individual Statement	Candidate quality	YES
Peru, 2011	Second	Multiple Groups	Candidate quality	NO

"Individual Statements" are public statements made by opinion leaders to reporters or supporters and reported on in nationally circulated news outlets.
*Data are not available for these elections either because they are transitional contests (following military rule), or because reliable invalid vote data were not reported in the prior election.
**Manuel Zelaya, the campaign's leader, called for a massive election boycott. While many of his followers opted not to turn out, news sources indicate that a substantial portion cast blank votes as protest.

It is worth noting that, especially in transitional elections, null vote campaigns often rallied behind claims of electoral fraud or election related violence. For example, leaders running pro-democratic campaigns under authoritarian leadership in Paraguay and Peru called on their supporters to cast invalid ballots to protest imperfect elections. These calls for invalid voting served two purposes: to delegitimize the election by undermining the authoritarian leader's mandate and, as well, to draw the attention of the international press to the movement's grievances.

In Paraguay in 1988, for example, General Alfredo Stroessner won his eighth presidential term in an election widely denounced by the foreign press as fraudulent. Leading into the election, disaffection among the citizenry appears to have increased in response to economic decline and continued human rights abuses by the Stroessner government. One news article explains,

> "…A recent economic slowdown, following completion in the early 1980s of the mammoth Itaipu dam on the border with Brazil, has sapped the government's strength. Street matches protesting low salaries and political oppression erupted in 1986 for the first time in years." (Graham 1988, A29).

In the wake of these events, opposition parties called for their followers to boycott the election, by either abstaining or invalidating their ballots. Amidst rampant Election Day violence, Stroessner won reelection, but both the fraudulent nature of the election and the widespread nullification of ballots were reported on by international media. Similarly, when Alberto Fujimori ran for a third term as president in Peru in 2000, he did not win outright in the first round. His second round opponent, Alejandro Toledo, called for his supporters to invalidate their ballots, and condemned the election as fraudulent (Krauss 2000). And, in El Salvador's 1982 election, leftist parties did not field candidates because they feared violent retribution from the government and guerrilla fighters, while leftist guerillas simultaneously threatened to harm voters for *not* invalidating their ballots in an attempt to delegitimize the election (Hoge 1982, A1).

In sum, of 21 invalid vote campaigns analyzed here, eleven cited persistent corruption by the candidates or in the political system as central motivations for the campaign. Five campaigns referred directly to limitations in political competition as primary motivators for the campaign, and eight cited low candidate quality. This analysis of news stories raises a number of questions

about the relationship between invalid vote campaigns, individual voting behavior, and democratic legitimacy. I conclude by discussing some of these questions.

Future Lines of Inquiry

The qualitative analysis above takes campaigns' stated grievances (and the reporting of these grievances through news outlets) at their word; campaigns are thus linked to corruption and antidemocratic processes. An important first question for future studies of invalid vote campaigns is, to what extent are measures of campaigns' stated grievances associated with their emergence? In the years prior to the emergence of a null vote campaign, do levels of corruption (or, alternatively, public discussion of corruption) increase? Do legal or extra-legal limitations to candidacies (or, again, public discussion of such limitations) change? In preliminary statistical analyses, I found that, while levels of corruption were associated with the emergence of invalid vote campaigns, *change* in levels of corruption had no statistical relationship to the presence of such campaigns (see Appendix). This null result raises the question: if levels of corruption do not increase prior to a null vote campaign's emergence, then what changes to make these grievances salient, or to cause the emergence of an invalid vote campaign?

Related, the stated grievances of null vote campaigns closely resemble those put forth by against all candidates. This raises the question, under what circumstances do against-all attitudes among the public (including low or declining trust in parties, or popular protest in response to political corruption) result in the emergence of outsider candidacies versus null vote campaigns? Legal and institutional features, especially laws governing the ease with which outsider parties can register with the national electoral commission and the legality of inciting invalid voting, probably

affect these outcomes. Yet, these institutional features likely provide an incomplete explanation for the emergence of outsider versus invalid vote campaigns. Even within countries across time (Paraguay, Peru), invalid vote campaigns and outsider candidacies have emerged with varying success. These lines of inquiry have implications for our understanding of how corruption affects voters' attitudes and behavior and, as well, under what circumstances the party system becomes vulnerable to different kinds of electoral threats from outside the system. More broadly, these questions are relevant for academic understanding of the legitimacy of the party system, of politicians, specifically, and (perhaps most importantly) of the electoral process itself.

Another line of inquiry assesses the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of invalid vote campaigns on election outcomes, voter attitudes, and on the probability that invalid vote campaigns will emerge in the future. Invalid vote campaigns work to normalize blank and spoiled voting; does the presence of such a campaign affect average rates of invalid voting within a country in the long term? That is, if an invalid vote campaign emerges at time *t,* does invalid voting return to historical rates at time *t+1,* or do voters remember the campaign's message and continue to cast invalid votes at relatively high rates? And, does the emergence of invalid vote movements make against all sentiment more common in the public? Invalid vote campaigns should emerge when there is a market for against-all messaging, that is, when these attitudes are already somewhat prevalent within a country. Do these campaigns increase levels of discontent (independent of levels prior to their emergence) or decrease citizens' beliefs that the political system is legitimate, and if so, how long does this effect last? Does the presence of an invalid vote campaigns change the relative prevalence of pro-democratic versus anti-system attitudes in the public?

To date, invalid vote campaigns have been treated on a case by case basis or treated as relatively rare events. However, this chapter suggests that national invalid vote campaigns in Latin

American presidential elections occur regularly. Understanding the causes and consequences of such campaigns promises to be a fruitful line for future scholarly inquiry.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGIC ENTRY UNDER UNCERTAINTY: THE PERUVIAN CASE

Introduction

Across democracies, there is substantial variation in the relative novelty of the political options available to voters on Election Day. In some countries, new parties rarely enter competition and partisan competition is usually confined to a limited set of established political options. In others, the slate of candidates competing for office shifts substantially over time and across election types. Such instability in the party system can lead to a variety of negative outcomes. When party systems are undeveloped or unstable, it is hard for voters to form lasting programmatic linkages with parties (Kitschelt and Kselman 2013) and elites have limited incentives to deepen their connections with voters. In contexts where the partisan offering is volatile (Roberts 2014) and party and policy switching occur regularly (Stokes 2001), it is difficult for voters to identify a party that supports their preferred policies, as the signals parties send are unreliable (Budge 1994, Tavits 2008) and voters must therefore discount much of the information they receive. In their attempts to overcome the difficulties that arise when political and economic conditions are unpredictable, elites in the developing world often act in ways that can seem irrational to outside observers (Lupu and Reidl 2013). This chapter assesses the extent to which such political uncertainty conditions the metrics parties use in deciding whether to enter competition in legislative contests in predictable ways. To

do so, I use constituency-level electoral data from Peru, where new candidate entry and electoral uncertainty have varied substantially in the years since the democratic transition.

Scholarly understanding of new party entry in developing democracies is largely informed by patterns of competition in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. Scholars have found that new party entry in these young democracies begins to resemble patterns present in the established democracies of Western Europe as systems stabilize in the years post-transition (Tavits 2008). Scholars of strategic party entry have found that newly entering parties respond rationally to historical trends within districts, entering competition where they are more likely to win and when the rules that govern new party entry are more permissive (Cox 1996, Hug 2000, Potter 2013). Using demographic information and historical election outcomes, parties estimate their likelihood of winning if they enter competition in a given district, and are more likely to take the calculated risk of competing when they believe this likelihood is higher. Studies indicate that, in stable or stabilizing societies, newly entering candidates respond predictably to the number of votes cast for non-winning parties (i.e., "wasted" ballots) in previous elections, selecting to enter competition in districts where this potential swing constituency is larger (see Tavits and Annus 2006). Finally, scholars have demonstrated that parties are more likely to enter competition in constituencies with greater district magnitude, as the number of votes needed to win election in these districts (i.e., the threshold for inclusion) is lower than in single-seat districts (Cox and Shugart 1996).

Yet, not all transitioning systems have tended toward stability. Indeed, in the years since the Third Wave democratic transitions, Latin America has experienced marked *instability* in terms of democratic quality (Puddington 2012, Freedom House 2015), economic development (Bermeo 2003, Rodrik 2001), and party competition (Remmer 1991, Roberts and Wibbels 1999, Roberts 2014). In volatile political contexts, candidates' ability to use these "standard" metrics as meaningful

signals about the public's future behavior may be compromised, leading them to behave in ways that are inconsistent with existing frameworks. While scholars have linked the relative novelty of democracy and new candidate entry to failures of voter coordination, and have argued that voters' inability to coordinate over a "least bad" option works to the electoral advantage of newly entering parties (see Crisp et al. 2012),[75] they have not assessed whether the volatility of recent political outcomes differentially affects strategic entry by different types of parties.

In this chapter, I argue and show that the effects of uncertainty vary across parties within unstable party systems. Uncertainty in the political system decreases the reliability of standard metrics of electoral opportunity used by parties in more stable systems to inform their entry strategies. Unlike established parties, whose behavior resembles that of parties in more stable contexts, outsider candidates entering competition in volatile political contexts respond to alternative metrics indicating that the electorate is responsive to their against-all message. These parties rationally opt to enter competition in districts where outcomes are less predictable, as these districts provide the greatest population of votes to be won. While these entry patterns are inconsistent with existing theoretical frameworks of strategic party entry, they are consistent with the motivation to win elections.

I assess this argument in the Peruvian case, where volatility due to new party entry and established party exit has increased substantially in the wake of party system breakdown in the 1990's. Even in this highly volatile context, there is notable unevenness in different parties' rootedness in society. The country's three remaining "traditional" parties have regularly competed

[75] Entering competition requires candidates working in volatile contexts to accept relatively high risks of losing when jumping into the political fray. While large parties may view this behavior as risky, small parties can actually benefit electorally from entering competition in volatile districts. Scholars have shown that the entry of new parties can exacerbate coordination failure among voters, making them less likely to converge on a "least bad" option and thereby increasing the likelihood that these small parties will win representation (Crisp et al. 2012).

for and won seats in the national legislature since the early 20th century. [76] Three of the country's most popular parties—the far-right Fujimoristas (now *Fuerza Popular*), the leftist *Partido Nacionalista Peruano,* and the non-ideological *Alianza Para el Progreso*—have competed consistently for multiple election cycles and at various levels of government, and behave in ways consistent with building up the party's national reputation, such as enforcing party discipline among members in Congress, with varied success. These parties have considerable experience running political campaigns and holding office and, as a result, have substantial institutional knowledge, well-developed party infrastructure, and broad name recognition. This works to their advantage in two ways. First, parties with more experience are better able to navigate the rules of the game, and may therefore be better able to capitalize on electoral opportunities as usually conceived. At the same time, the relative costs of entry under uncertainty should be lower for organizations with relatively deeper roots in society, as these parties are better able to bear the costs of campaigning, and the costs of familiarizing voters with the party label are substantially lower. Together, these advantages can enable candidates from established parties to respond to metrics of opportunity in a way that is consistent with the behavior of parties in more established democracies.

Indeed, I find that Peru's traditional and "new" establishment parties respond to political competition in much the same way as parties in more stable political contexts do. The likelihood that these parties will enter competition increases in response to historical trends in wasted votes, while they tend not to compete in districts where invalid voting was high in recent contests. Smaller ideological parties and more extreme radical parties, on the other hand, respond negatively to

[76]In 2011, the APRA won only 4 seats in the 130-member Congress, while *Acción Popular* (AP) won 5 seats and the *Partido Popular Cristiano* (PPC) won 4 seats. AP and PPC ran with other parties in "electoral alliances"; that is, while candidates from AP or the PPC were identifiable by name on the alliance's candidate list, their partisan affiliation was not shown on the ballot paper. Since the 2011 election, some of these representatives have changed partisan affiliation, so the numbers shown here are not consistent with current seat counts in the Congress.

standard metrics of electoral opportunity. Instead, candidates from these niche parties take advantage of alternative metrics, including historical trends indicating openness to "against all" campaigns, especially high rates of invalid voting. Finally, I find that radical parties are substantially more likely to enter competition in districts where the proportion of candidates to seats was high, that is, where competition in the previous election was saturated.[77] This strategy enables radical candidates to take advantage of splintered competition, winning a greater proportion of the total valid vote than they would in less fractured political spaces, and increasing their likelihood of winning election.

This chapter contributes to scholarly understanding of new party entry by demonstrating that even in contexts marked by substantial uncertainty, parties behave in predictable ways that are consistent with the motivation to win elections. However, different types of parties respond to different metrics of political opportunity under uncertainty. To assess the role of uncertainty in determining which metrics are associated with new party entry for different party types, I estimate models of new party entry separately for the time periods pre- and post- party system breakdown – that is, under relatively lower or higher electoral volatility in Peru – to show that trends in new party entry are correlated with uncertainty rather than an unidentified, country-specific factor. While statistical relationships in the pre-breakdown period are substantially weaker than those estimated in the post-breakdown period, they conform to expectations from established democracies, with all parties tending to enter competition in districts where wasted voting was high in the previous electoral period and avoid entering competition when competition was saturated in the previous contest. These findings suggest the importance of disaggregating across party type in volatile (and

[77] It is possible that the saturation of the political space in previous elections and new party entry are not causally related, but are both simultaneously caused by an additional underlying factor. For example, District X may have an alternative feature (for example, a high propensity to cast votes for minor parties) that encourages new candidate entry at all time periods, regardless of levels of candidate saturation. I do not test for this possibility here. Regardless of the causal nature of the relationship, these variables should still be correlated in statistical analyses.

perhaps stable) party systems to uncover strategic behavior by elites in the face of electoral uncertainty.

The Differential Effects of Political Uncertainty

In seeking to understand how political uncertainty[78] affects parties' strategic entry decisions, I start from the assumption that, regardless of their specific policy preferences, *politicians and political parties are motivated to win elections* (see, e.g., Riker 1962).[79] As a first step in this ultimate goal, parties and candidates must decide whether and where to enter competition. Extant scholarship suggests that parties enter races selectively, opting to field candidates when the institutional barriers to entry are low and the party or candidate is electorally viable (see Cox 1997, Hug 2000). Determining a candidate's electoral viability when competition is predictable is more or less straightforward: features of the electorate, especially patterns of past voting behavior, and performance metrics of incumbent candidates can indicate a district's ideological leanings and its willingness to replace seated representatives. In contexts where election results are less predictable, however, elites may find it challenging to synthesize information to guide their strategic entry decisions. Information about the electorate, especially its past voting behavior, may be an unreliable signal for parties in contexts where voters regularly invalidate their votes, where rates of wasted

[78] I define political uncertainty as the low predictability of the partisan distribution of election outcomes on the basis of historical trends within a country or district. Electoral volatility is thus one symptom of political uncertainty.

[79] Not all parties are election oriented. Protest parties, especially single-issue parties and radical parties, often compete to bring attention to their cause, not with the expectation of winning. This can lead them to enter competition in districts where they have no likelihood of winning, because this is not the party's immediate goal. If most radical and small ideological parties studied here are purely expressively motivated, this should bias any results downward, which suggests that the empirical tests presented later in this chapter are likely conservative.

votes are high, and where voters shift their partisan preferences across parties at high rates, that is, those where electoral volatility is high.

Fielding a campaign is always a calculated risk, and candidates must weigh the potential likelihood and benefits of winning against the costs of competing. When available information predicts election outcomes poorly, the relative costs associated with running a campaign increase, as candidates are unable to confidently assess their likelihood of winning. While parties with name recognition, ties to the electorate, and substantial coffers might be able to continue using these metrics in spite of their decreased reliability, small or radical parties may discount standard measures of electoral opportunity, opting not to enter competition even though these classic indicators of opportunity are high. Rather, these parties may prefer to use alternative metrics that map more closely onto their expected electoral coalition to inform their strategic calculations. In the following sections, I argue that three metrics—the proportion of "wasted" votes, invalid votes, and the relative crowding of the political space—differentially signal electoral opportunity for parties with substantial political experience versus less-established parties, and should therefore differentially predict new candidate entry across party types.

Wasted Votes

In explaining new party entry, political scientists have argued that patterns of past voting behavior can indicate a party's potential to win votes in a district. In this vein, Tavits and Annus (2006) and

Potter (2013) argue that the proportion of "hopeless" or "wasted"[80] votes—that is, ballots cast for non-winning candidates—cast in a constituency can signal future electoral opportunity (i.e., a large pool of votes available to be won) to political parties. Ballots cast for non-winning candidates provide three key pieces of information to elites considering entering competition in a district. First, voters who cast wasted votes are able to complete the mechanical task of correctly marking the ballot, which means that persuading them to vote for a newly entering candidate will not necessitate additional investment in voter education. Second, individuals who cast wasted votes for parties with identifiable policy positions at time *t-1* likely continue to hold preferences that align with those of the party they supported at time *t*. Thus, the distribution of wasted ballots across parties can provide information about a district's ideological profile. Third, individuals who cast wasted votes at time *t-1* will likely be open to persuasion at time *t* if the party they voted for in the previous election has exited competition, assuming that these voters turn out to vote at time *t*. That is, those who cast "wasted" votes are likely to become "swing" voters in the next election. Thus, the larger the pool of "wasted" votes at time *t-1,* the larger the likely pool of available swing voters at time *t*.

A swing voter is an individual whose partisan preferences are sufficiently fluid that, given particular incentives, he is willing to change his vote choice across party lines over time (Lindberg and Morrison 2005, Mayer 2007, Campbell 2008, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). Some swing voters may be politically cross-pressured, holding issue preferences that are not represented by any one party competing, but that are partially represented by multiple candidate options (Lipset 1960, Powell 1976). For such voters, deciding who to vote for depends on which issue consideration takes precedence on Election Day. Others may respond preferentially to offers of excludable (i.e. clientelistic) benefits, voting on the basis of which party provides them goods at election time rather

[80] Tavits and Annus (2006, 77) define "hopeless" votes as votes cast for parties whose final voteshare was more than 1 percent below the threshold for representation. "Wasted" votes are votes cast for parties who do not win any seats.

than leaning on programmatic preferences (Auyero 1999, 2001, Gay 1994, 1999, Kitschelt 2000). Regardless of the reason for their willingness to vote across party lines, swing voters' preferences are fluid, especially in comparison to faithful party supporters (also called "core" voters, or "standpatters," see Key 1966).

Candidates from all parties likely use a mixture of tactics to ensure electoral victory, both mobilizing their staunch supporters and persuading some portion of these unaligned swing voters to vote for the party (Rohrschneider 2002, Albright 2008). A substantial line of political science scholarship seeks to clarify elites' incentives to preferentially target core versus swing voters. Some argue that all parties should preferentially mobilize swing voters, as core constituents' loyalties are stable and, therefore, the best means to win is to expand the party's base by bringing in new voters (Stokes 2005, Dixit and Londregan 1996). Others (Nichter 2007, Diaz-Cayeros et al. forthcoming) argue for an opposing perspective: although core supporters may be loyal to the party, their *participation* in elections is not a given.[81] Thus, according to this second perspective, elites who are election oriented and have time horizons beyond the current electoral period should preferentially target their core supporters lest their support dwindle over time.

How do these incentives change in contexts where partisanship is low and volatility and fragmentation are high? In all contexts, candidates and parties shoulder the non-trivial costs of campaigning, which are compounded by the potential costs of losing the election. Low predictability in the political space can increase these costs, as features of competition that signal opportunity in more established political contexts (i.e., a high percentage of wasted ballots in the previous election)

[81] Turnout is mandated in several Latin American countries, which might decrease parties' fears of low participation rates. However, high levels of invalid voting are more common in countries with mandatory vote laws (see Hirczy 1994, Chapter 3 of this dissertation); candidates might reasonably target their base lest their supporters opt to abstain from selecting a candidate after turning out.

can indicate a volatile electorate and, as a result, greater risk of loss upon entry.[82] Candidates who represent established parties that are working to expand their presence to new districts should be better able to bear these costs when competition is volatile. Even when a nationally competitive party enters competition for the first time in a district, its candidates stand to benefit electorally from voters' recognition of its national "brand" (Lupu 2014). Candidates from established parties thus face a relatively low burden in terms of the advertising and activism necessary to achieve name recognition. Furthermore, parties build up their reputations over repeated interactions with voters; a candidate's affiliation with an established party can therefore serve as a high-quality heuristic for voters, providing information about a candidate's quality and policy preferences.

Candidates representing smaller or nascent political organizations, on the other hand, campaign with none of these advantages and thus the costs of competing (and the costs associated with losing) are higher. For such candidates, high levels of wasted votes in previous elections can indicate saturation of the political space by stronger alternative party options. Rather than signify an electoral opportunity, wasted ballots (especially cast for ideologically distinct parties) can signal that a district is a bad match for small or extreme parties. That is, high levels of wasted ballots provide a weak signal of opportunity for radical parties considering entering competition when uncertainty is high. Thus, such parties might discount wasted ballots in previous elections when making their strategic entry decisions. This discussion implies the following testable hypotheses,

> **H1:** *For established parties, new entry will be more likely at time* t *as the proportion of wasted votes cast at* t-1 *in a district increases.*

[82] In Peru's 2011 legislative elections, 6.7 percent of votes were "wasted" or cast for non-winning parties, on average. However, this value ranged from 0.5% to 55.96% (most observations were below 15% of votes wasted). While these higher values indicate substantial electoral opportunity for newly entering parties, they also indicate substantial uncertainty in terms of the behavior of the district as a whole.

H1B: *For non-established parties, the proportion of wasted votes cast at* t-1 *in a district will have a minimal effect on new entry at time* t.

Invalid Ballots

In Latin America generally, and in Peru specifically, some candidates might take invalid ballots—those left blank or mismarked—into account when making strategic entry decisions. Rates of invalid voting in Peru have historically been high: more invalid votes are cast than valid ballots for winning legislative candidates on a regular basis across constituencies and years.[83] At the same time, invalid vote rates vary across time within constituencies, which could indicate that some individuals who cast blank or spoiled ballots change their vote choice across parties and elections. Notably, invalid votes do not count in the final vote tally; in order to win election, candidates must attain a given percentage of the *valid* vote.[84] Given the prevalence of the phenomenon across the region, and especially in Peru, election-seeking politicians who believe that invalid voters form part of their natural constituency may have strategic incentives to win over these unclaimed voters by campaigning directly to those who are likely to cast invalid ballots by accident or intentionally, although these two behaviors imply distinct responses. That is, invalid ballots arguably constitute a special type of "wasted" vote, and the individuals who leave their ballots blank or spoil them constitute another group of potential swing voters.

[83] In the 2011 legislative elections, for example, invalid ballots ranged from 16.55 percent of all votes in the subnational department of Arequipa to 30.33 in the department of Cajamarca (more than twice the vote share of the winning vote earner).

[84] In Peru, as in many Latin American countries, a new election is called if a super-majority—in this case, two-thirds—of votes are cast invalidly. In the extreme case, then, a politician must not only win a sufficient portion of the valid vote, but must also ensure that the proportion of invalid votes cast does not exceed this threshold.

Rates of invalid voting in legislative and local elections are often higher than in presidential contests, and it is unclear to what extent invalid votes for these down-ballot contests constitute voter protest. Existing perspectives of invalid voting often argue that a substantial portion of the spoiled ballots cast in legislative elections are in fact *accidental,* caused by voter confusion about ballot structure and voting technology, or (especially among illiterate voters) mechanical difficulties in correctly marking the ballot (see Bowler et al. 1992, Wattenberg 2000, Reynolds and Steenbergen 2006, Cunow 2014). If a candidate believes that a substantial proportion of her supporters or members of her natural constituency are disproportionately likely to cast invalid votes by accident, she has an incentive to pre-empt invalid voting in order to increase her final vote share. Doing so implies absorbing the substantial costs of teaching those who invalidate their votes by accident to correctly mark their ballots to cast a positive vote. Indeed, interviews with Peruvian legislators and candidates for regional presidencies in 2013-4 affirmed that candidates disseminate flyers,[85] hold town hall meetings,[86] and air television commercials[87] to assure correct voting among their constituents. Candidates whose natural constituency includes the less wealthy and less educated—specifically, populist or workers parties and those that rely on vote-buying as a core mobilizational strategy—who believe that invalid voting in legislative elections is mostly accidental should also be inclined to use historical invalid vote rates to identify districts in which they will be most competitive.

While some invalid votes in legislative elections are likely cast by accident, a non-trivial portion are also cast as an expression of protest. Scholars have suggested (see McAllister and Makkai 1993, Zulfikarpasic 2001, Power and Garand 2007, Cisneros 2013) and this dissertation has shown

[85] Interview with legislator from *Alianza Para el Progreso* (APP), May 31, 2013.
[86] Interview with candidate for regional presidency, Arequipa, October 20, 2014.
[87] Interview with sitting legislator from *Acción Popular* (AP), May 19, 2014.

(see Chapter 2) that intentionally cast invalid ballots constitute an "against all" protest of candidate options by voters who are fed up with government outputs or feel unrepresented by the political status quo. To mobilize voters expressing such attitudes, a candidate has two options: she can mirror voters' anti-establishment sentiment in her rhetoric, or she can invest in convincing voters that, unlike other politicians, she is trustworthy.[88] Candidates across the political spectrum may work to convince voters that they are trustworthy candidates (in Fearon's (1999) words, "good types"). While all candidates likely seek to build trust in their campaigns among the electorate, as a sole campaign strategy, this is unlikely to net many votes. On the other hand, given the "against all" sentiment commonly associated with intentional invalid voting, those candidates running as political outsiders or on "radical" or broadly against all platforms should be the most likely to view those who intentionally invalidate their ballots as members of their natural constituency. High historical rates of invalid voting in a district should therefore serve as a high-quality signal of electoral opportunity for such parties and make them more inclined to enter competition.

While invalid votes may indicate electoral opportunity (i.e., a natural constituency) for radical parties, high levels of invalid voting decrease the predictability of election outcomes in a district, and could imply substantial risk for parties looking to enter competition.[89] Campaigns interested in capturing invalid votes must invest considerable effort in separating the signal from the noise to determine how best to target these individuals, and must also commit significant resources to such mobilization efforts. This combination of high mobilization costs and high uncertainty in election outcomes should lead candidates from nascent parties that do not profess a radical ideology

[88] In interviews, candidates and staffers on regional campaigns who indicated they had worked to mobilize invalid voters to support their candidate reported focusing on building trust in the candidate and the party organization through conversation (especially through town hall meetings) or party-supported social programs.

[89] One senior strategist from a regional leftist party indicated that winning over potential invalid voters was of particular importance because it improved certainty about the final result: "[when you do not convince] that kind of voter, anything can happen." Personal interview conducted with party operative in Cajamarca on October 5, 2014.

to compete less frequently in districts where historical rates of invalid voting are high. Campaigns with alternative bases of support—established parties—face no immediate threat from invalid votes, as these ballots are excluded from the final vote tally, and might reasonably choose to ignore them altogether in making entry decisions. On the other hand, if invalid voting indicates growing anti-establishment sentiment within a region, then candidates from established parties may view high historical invalid voting in recent elections as a signal that the constituency is a bad ideological fit for their candidate and, therefore, as a deterrent to entry. This discussion leads to the following hypotheses,

> **H2A***: New party entry will be more likely at time* t *among radical parties in districts where rates of invalid voting were high in the previous election.*
>
> **H2B**: *New party entry will be less likely at time* t *among established parties in districts where rates of invalid voting were high in the previous election.*

Saturation of the Political Space

In deciding to enter competition in a district, parties must consider their own likelihood of winning relative to the likelihood that other candidates will win. When election-oriented parties calculate that their candidates will be very unlikely to win seats in a district, they have two options. First, parties may opt simply not to enter competition in a district where their likelihood of winning is low or extremely unpredictable. Second, to improve their chances of winning representation, parties can choose to coordinate and form electoral coalitions (Cox 1997, 1999). These coalitions combine parties' strengths, while minimizing some of the risk associated with campaigning alone by

decreasing the number of alternative candidate options to which voters may be drawn. Thus, coalitions are cost- and risk-sharing agreements that can improve a given party's chance of election. Calculating the likelihood that a party will win is more complex under proportional electoral rules, especially when many seats are available in each district (Sartori 1968, Cox and Shugart 1996). In such circumstances, coordination among parties at the district level (that is, coalition formation) can break down, even when the national menu of candidates is relatively stable.

At the same time that parties coordinate over whether or not to enter competition, voters can coordinate at the ballot box. When many candidates compete over few seats, voters may opt to cast "strategic" votes for the least objectionable candidate that is likely to win, rather than for their first preference (Downs 1957, Blais and Nadeau 1996, Alvarez and Nagler 2000). Strategic voting is a complex task that requires voters to not only match their preferences to a candidate's platform, but to rank order candidate options, assess their electability, and then select the most electable and least objectionable option. Scholars have shown that some individuals are better able to coordinate over election outcomes than others, especially more educated voters who hold weak first versus second party preferences (Alvarez et al. 2006). Contextual features, especially a greater number of available seats in a district, make the calculations necessary for strategic voting more difficult for voters and therefore make the behavior less likely (Cox and Shugart, 1996, Singer and Stephenson 2009).

When competition is relatively stable, voters and elites coordinate simultaneously. Election oriented parties will opt not to enter competition or to form coalitions with other parties to improve their likelihood of election in districts that are already crowded, that is, where the number of candidates competing relative to the number of seats available is high. At the same time, voters will tend to select candidates from a relatively narrow selection of parties or coalitions that have the potential to win seats. However, strategic coordination is harder for both candidates and voters

operating in unpredictable political contexts, because calculating the likelihood that a given party will win is more challenging. Under high levels of uncertainty, voters' inability to coordinate may cause perverse behavior among candidates from niche parties. New parties may be more likely to enter competition in these contexts precisely because doing so makes it harder for voters to behave strategically. When voters are unable to coordinate successfully over candidate alternatives, newly entering parties' vote shares become artificially inflated, increasing their likelihood of winning election (Crisp et al. 2012); this tendency should be more pronounced in unpredictable political contexts, as coordination becomes even more challenging for voters. The above discussion indicates that relatively small or extreme parties stand to benefit the most from entering competition when political uncertainty is high, as voters' inability to coordinate will artificially inflate their vote shares. At the same time, entering as members of an electoral coalition is one way for parties to maximize their vote share in unpredictable contexts. These insights suggest the following hypothesis:

> **H3:** *New entry among radical parties and electoral coalitions will be more likely at time* t *in districts where political saturation was higher at time* t-1.

Data and Analyses

Case Selection

I test the observable implications of Hypotheses 1-3 using constituency level electoral data from Peruvian legislative contests since that country's democratic transition. Since 1963, Peruvians have elected deputies to the Chamber of Deputies (*Cámara de Diputados*) via open list

proportional representation in each of 25 Departments (*departamentos* or *114egions*). Following the Senate's closure in 1993, this has been the country's sole legislative body. Seats are allocated within each department using the D'Hondt formula (Kenney 2003),[90] and voting is mandatory and enforced for all citizens between the ages of 18 and 75 (voting is optional for those over seventy).

Peru is a presidential democracy with weak party institutions and a recent history of democratic interruption. Following a ten-year military government, Peru returned to democratic governance in 1980, with the same ideologically polarized "traditional" parties that had previously dominated politics at the helm (Tanaka 2006). The 1980's brought substantial economic and social turmoil. A series of economic crises weakened the national currency and led to hyperinflation and limited supply of basic goods. At the same time, guerilla groups (most notably the Maoist *Sendero Luminoso*, or "shining path" rebels) grew increasingly bold, carrying out acts of terrorism first in the countryside and eventually in the national capital, Lima. This potent combination of factors paved the way for the election of an outsider candidate, authoritarian president Alberto Fujimori, in 1990.

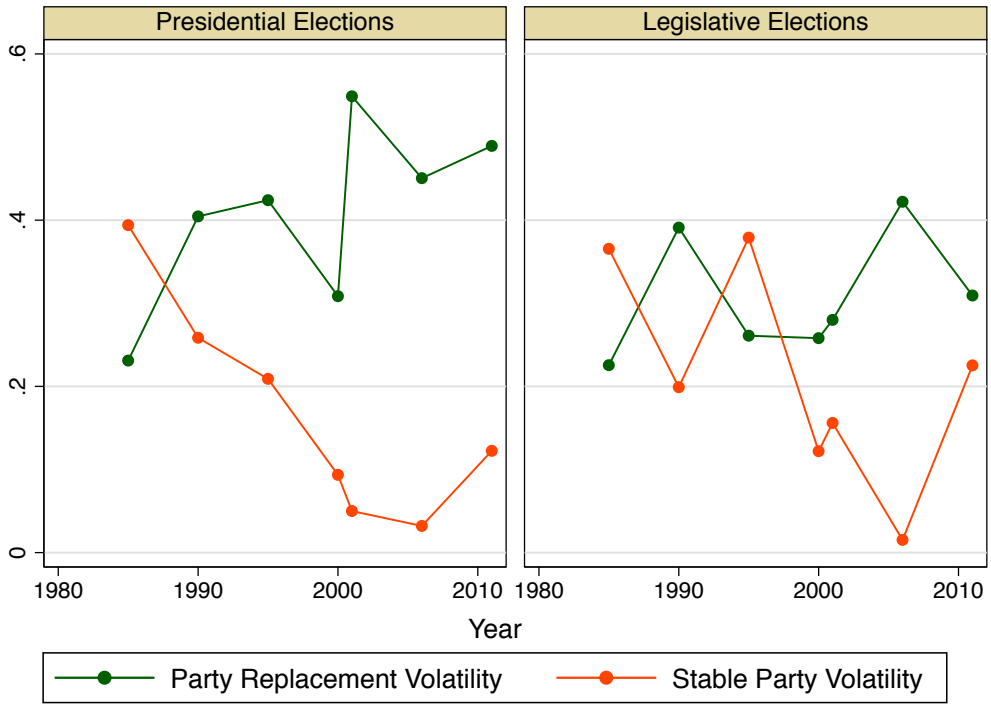
Following Fujimori's election, and especially after his 1992 "self-coup" (*autogolpe*) which permanently shut down the national Senate,[91] established political parties lost substantial power and clout. High-level corruption scandals, coupled with voters' perceptions that traditional parties incompetently managed the economic and social crises that led to domestic terrorism led to the

[90] While list PR has been employed consistently for Peru's Chamber of Deputies since the 1960's, the allocation of seats across electoral districts has changed substantially over time (Kenney 2003). For example, deputies were elected from a single national district from 1993 to 2000 (Carey and Shugart 1993, Payne et al. 2002, Kenney 2003); unfortunately, the Peruvian electoral commission did not preserve constituency-level electoral data from this time period. In all years examined in this chapter (1980-1995, and 2001-2011), legislators were selected at the department level.

[91] In 1992, Fujimori dissolved the bicameral Congress, and elections were held to elect members of an interim congress (the *Congreso Constituyente Democrático*). The interim Congress was responsible for writing a new constitution, which the Peruvian public approved in a referendum election in 1993. The new constitution formally dissolved the Senate, and the interim Congress continued to function until new elections were held in 1995. The Chamber of Deputies reopened following the 1995 elections, and has continued to function uninterrupted to date.

weakening of so-called traditional parties and their roots in society (see, for example, Levitsky and Cameron 2003, Tanaka 2006, Dalton and Weldon 2007). Weakened linkages between parties and voters are evidenced by declining partisanship and trust in political parties in Peru and, as well, by trends in electoral volatility. Figure 1 shows electoral volatility in Peru, disaggregated into its two constituent dimensions: volatility attributable to new party entry and old party exit, or party replacement volatility, and volatility attributable to shifts in vote shares across existing parties (see Powell and Tucker 2014). The breakdown of the Peruvian party system in 1990, when outsider Fujimori won the presidency, precipitated a spike in party replacement volatility that has continued to increase in the intervening years. At the same time, the proportion of votes reassigned to existing parties within the system across elections ("stable party volatility") in both legislative and presidential contests dropped off notably following Fujimori's election in 1990, and again after his resignation in 2000. Even in comparison to the rest of Latin America, a region where electoral volatility is relatively high, these figures are notable: party replacement volatility in Peru is well above the regional average while volatility among stably competing parties is below the mean in the post Fujimori years (see Cohen et al. 2016).

Figure 5.1 Types of Electoral Volatility in Peruvian Elections (1985-2011)



The weakened links between voters and parties, in combination with laws that facilitate new party entry, have resulted in a crisis of political parties in Peru (Levitsky and Cameron 2003, Mainwaring 2006, McNulty 2011). As a result, Peruvian elections in the post-2000 period are characterized by constant party replacement. With each successive election, a wealth of new options competes and proceeds to disappear after Election Day. Because these nascent parties are often dominated by individual personalities rather than programmatic or ideological goals, their members have limited incentives to invest in forming lasting ties with voters. Parties maintain limited

discipline in Congress, and legislators have few incentives to remain loyal to central party organizations. Party switching is common among sitting legislators. For Peruvian voters, the signals sent by elites from newly entering parties are unreliable, as the preferences of individual politicians who lead these movements (and, as a result, the party's platform and central goals) can change substantially over time (see Stokes 2001). In sum, Peruvians have faced a volatile menu of candidate options at each election since 1990, and predicting the behavior of sitting representatives on the basis of their campaign promises is challenging.

Data and Analyses

I present a series of tests of Hypotheses 1-3 using constituency-level electoral data from Peruvian congressional elections from 1980 to 2011.[92] Constituency level data are unavailable for 1995 and 2000, so the data analyzed here represent an interrupted time series.[93] I estimate two sets of models, the first for the 2001 to 2011 period (the volatile period for which hypothesized relationships should hold) and the second using data from the less volatile 1980-1990 period. The dependent variable, *Entry,* is a binary measure generated for each party in each constituency-year observation; the unit of observation is therefore $party_{jtx}$, or party *j* at time *t* in district *x*. *Entry* captures new party entry at time *t*—that is, the variable takes the value of 1 if a party ($party_i$) did not field a candidate

[92] Data come from the Constituency Level Elections Archive (http://www.electiondataarchive.org/datacenter.html)
[93] Following a 1993 referendum, the Senate was closed and a single national electoral district replaced the regional districts in place in those years studied here. While data from these years are publically available at the national level, they are not sufficiently disaggregated to know where candidates within the national district won votes, or where they actively campaigned. I collected disaggregated 1995 data from the *Jurado Nacional de Elecciones* during fieldwork; however, because of the change in the way seats were allocated for this year, the data is not comparable to the other years studied here, so I exclude it from these analyses. Sufficiently disaggregated data from the (widely denounced) 2000 election no longer exist.

in constituency x at time *t-1*, but *did* field a candidate in time *t*. I follow Potter and Olivella (2015) in identifying party competition as a function of votes cast for that party; specifically, $party_i$ is considered to have competed in a district if any of its candidates won at least one vote at time *t*. Parties that competed in a district at *t-1* and time *t*, as well as those parties that have never fielded a candidate in that constituency, are coded as 0 as they have not entered competition.

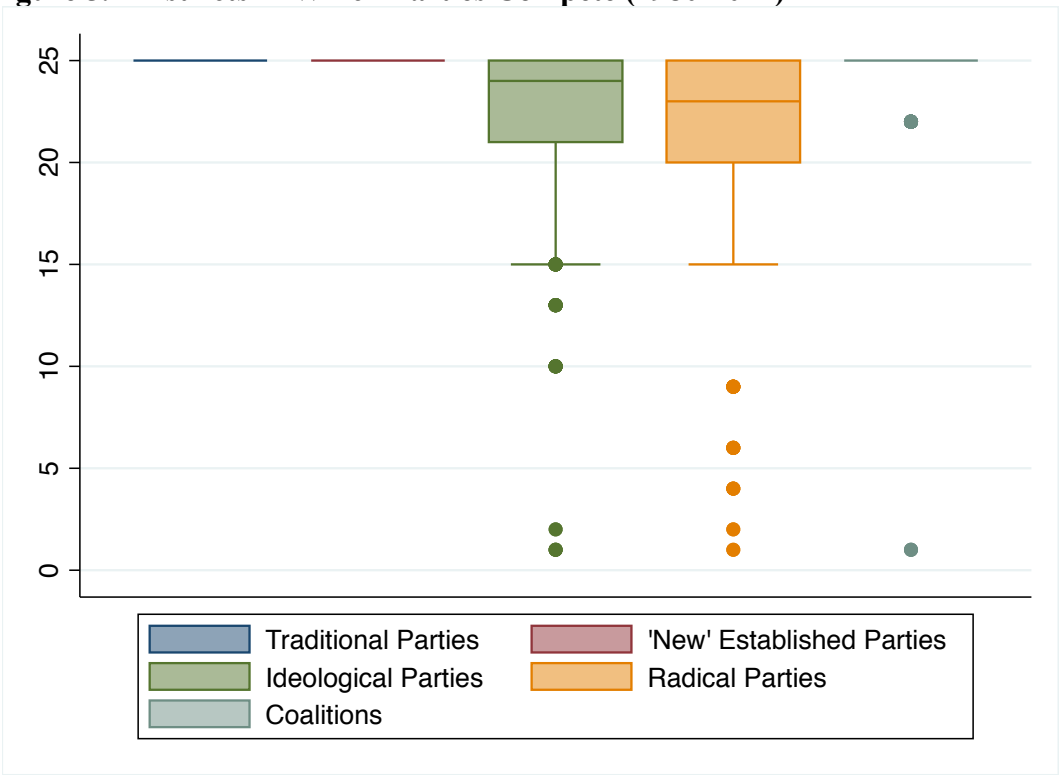
I identify "new parties" on the basis of changes in the names parties use across elections. Any time a party organization changes its name significantly (that is, changes other than the inclusion or exclusion of articles "a," "an," or "the"), I have coded that organization as a new party. There are some cases where continuity in party organization is thus coded as change. For example, Alberto Fujimori and his successors changed the party name with each successive election from 1990 until 2010, when it registered under the name *Fuerza Popular*, which it has continued to use since. Arguably, the party organization remained stable—its major actors and structure did not change significantly in spite of these name changes. Yet, each change in name was accompanied by a change in the party symbol, and voters were thus tasked with identifying the party under its new label and linking it to its former iterations with each election. Because name changes impose an additional burden on voters that may increase confusion and uncertainty around outcomes, I code each of these elections as a new entry by the *Fujimoristas*.[94] I follow the same criteria for identifying newly entering electoral coalitions, for the same reason: although voters might be able to identify the parties that are members of an electoral coalition, the coalition itself runs under a different name and uses a distinct symbol. Thus, in terms of the cognitive load associated with

[94] When the Fujimoristas are coded as a continuous party organization, results are generally consistent with those presented here, although the statistical relationships for the "new" established parties become somewhat weaker.

identifying a candidate, the entry of electoral coalitions is closer to new entry than to true continuity.

In the dataset as a whole, selective entry by parties is more common than universal competition across districts, and newly entering parties are more common than stably competing options. 98.5 percent of all competing parties field candidates selectively (that is, in fewer than 25 departments), and more than two-thirds (68.7 percent) of all competing parties in the dataset represent new entries within a constituency. Figure 2 shows box plots illustrating the distribution of the number of districts in which parties of each type analyzed in this paper competed in the years studied here. If parties always competed in all districts, then the average value for each party would be 25. Instead, the Figure shows that many parties enter competition selectively across districts. Traditional parties and new established parties have historically tended to compete in most constituencies, likely the result of their long histories, name recognition, and resources. While the median number of districts in which ideological and radical parties compete, represented by the horizontal bar, is high—24 and 23 districts, respectively these median values belie substantial variation in competition across districts over time, as illustrated by the box plots. The shaded area indicates the 25^{th}-75^{th} percentile of observations and the horizontal whiskers indicate the maximum and minimum values excluding outliers (which are illustrated by dots). The horizontal line within the shaded box identifies the median value for each category. Smaller ideological parties as well as electoral coalitions and radical parties vary substantially in terms of the number of districts in which they compete in over time, with most niche parties competing in 15 to 25 districts during this period. Most electoral coalitions, on the other hand, compete across all districts.

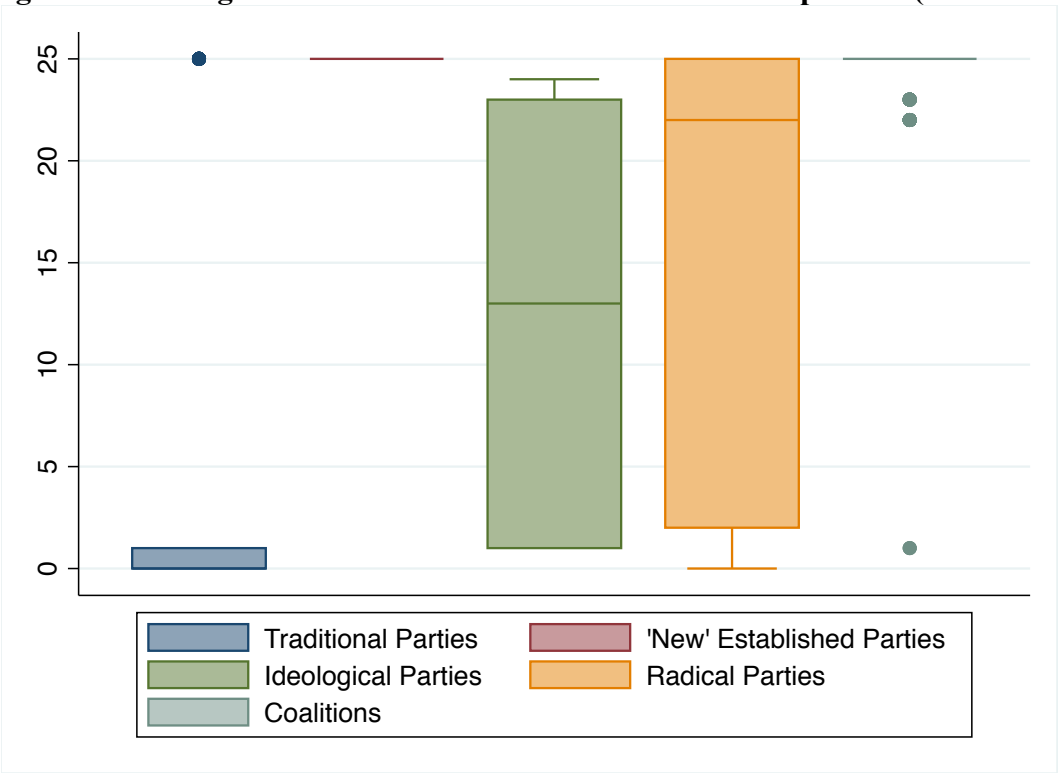
Figure 5.2 Districts in Which Parties Compete (1980-2011)



Not only do smaller parties compete unevenly across districts and over time, they do not usually enter competition in all districts at the same time. Figure 3 illustrates the average number of constituencies in which different types of party entered competition in a given year. As above, the Figure only includes those parties that competed in a given election. With the exception of new established parties and electoral coalitions, most parties did not enter competition in all 25

departments in any year analyzed here. Rather, parties entered competition in as few as one and as many as twenty-five districts in any given election. In some cases, entry in fewer districts represents a gradual step towards nationalizing parties' support (as with the "new" established parties), while in others, smaller ideological parties enter competition in regions where they think they have the best chance of winning an important number of votes.

Figure 5.3 Average Districts in Which Parties Entered Competition (1985-2011)



Because I argue that unpredictability will affect different types of parties differently, I split the sample and run each model separately for parties of each type. *Traditional* parties are those that have been present in Peruvian politics since the early or mid-twentieth century. *"New" Established* parties have entered competition more recently (starting at the end of the 20th century), but their governing record and protection of the party brand indicates plans for continuity and

longtime horizons. *Ideological* captures a party's declared leftist or rightist ideology, while *Radical* identifies parties proclaiming an anti-system (especially communist) ideology.[95] *Coalition* identifies parties that run as part of an electoral accord rather than independently in a given year. There is some overlap across categories. For example, *Acción Popular* and the *Partido Popular Cristiano*, both traditional parties, come from strong ideological traditions (left and right, respectively). Similarly, radical parties necessarily declare leftist or rightist ideologies, but take more extreme positions. For the purposes of the analyses presented here, I have coded all parties as belonging to only one category so that parties are not double counted in the analyses. That is, radical parties and traditional parties are not simultaneously identified as ideological parties or coalition parties.[96]

H1A predicts that, under uncertainty, established parties will be more likely to enter competition in districts where wasted ballots in previous elections were higher, while H1B indicates that smaller or radical parties will view wasted ballots as a risk and will therefore be less likely to enter competition in these districts. I measure *Wasted Ballots* at time t-1 as the proportion of valid ballots cast for candidates who won no seats in a constituency in the most recent legislative election. In theory, this variable could range from 0 to 1; observed values range from 0.005 to 0.64 (with a mean of 0.059) for all years analyzed here. H2A predicts that radical parties will be more likely to enter competition in districts where historical rates of invalid voting are high under

[95] I identified party ideology on the basis of party names and case specific knowledge. Any party that used the words "left," "socialist," "of the people" (*del pueblo*) or any of their variants were coded as left parties. Parties with names including the words "right," "order," and "security" as well as the Christian Democrats (PPC) and their variants were coded as right. Parties that included the region's name in their title and were not local chapters of a nationally recognized party were coded as regional parties. Radical parties are those that profess a radical version of these ideologies, i.e., those whose names include "communist" or "radical." I also generated a fourth category, "non-ideological parties," which included single-issue parties (for example, the *Fonavistas del Peru*, a single issue party working to assure that those who had contributed to the FONAVI (a social security scheme created under the military government in the 1980s) receive the benefits from this fund), although these parties are not analyzed here. See Appendix Table A for the complete categorization.

[96] Statistical results are substantively similar to those presented here when parties are double counted.

uncertainty, while H2B argues that other parties will tend avoid entering competition in such districts. *Invalid Vote (t-1)* is a constituency-level measure of blank and spoiled ballots cast during the most recent legislative election. This variable also ranges theoretically from 0 to 1; the observed mean is 0.196, with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 0.458.

H3 argues that radical and coalition parties, will be more likely to enter competition in districts where the field is already saturated. Rather than control for the number of candidates competing in the previous time period, I follow Shugart and Carey (1996) and Crisp et al. (2012) and include a measure of *Candidate Saturation (t-1),* or the number of candidates running in the most recent election, weighted by district magnitude.[97] District magnitude in Peru varies across districts, averaging 5.9 representatives per constituency, but ranging from 1 to 36. The relative importance of three newly entering candidates in a winner take all versus 36 seat contest likely differs substantially, as relatively fewer candidates will tend to contest single seat districts than multi-candidate districts (Duverger 1967), making new entrants more relevant in smaller districts. Indeed, the ratio of candidates to seats in the most recent election ranges widely in Peru, from a minimum of 0.314 candidates per seat to a maximum of 19 candidates per seat (although most observations have fewer than ten candidates per seat). Those parties most likely to benefit electorally from voters' inability to coordinate—small ideological parties and radical parties—as well as electoral coalitions should be more likely to enter competition as this variable increases.

I control for a number of features of political competition and performance that might condition parties' decisions to enter competition strategically. First I include a measure of local

[97] In alternative model specifications, I controlled for each of the measure's components—the number of parties competing at t-1, the district magnitude, and the ratio—sequentially and simultaneously. Results are consistent with those shown in the tables below.

economic performance (regional GDP per capita) [98] and a measure of growth in the year prior to the election (change in GDP per capita), with the expectation that parties will view poor economic performance as an opportunity to win over the incumbent's former supporters and therefore will be more likely to enter competition when the economy is doing poorly.[99,100] I include a measure of the threshold for inclusion in each district, that is, the percentage of votes needed to win a seat, with the expectation that smaller parties will be less likely to enter competition in regions where barriers to representation is high.[101] Finally, I control for district magnitude, with the expectation that entry should be lower when there are fewer seats available to be won.

Table 5.1 Summary Statistics, Political Uncertainty and New Candidate Entry (Peru, 1980-2011)

Variable Name	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Entry	25,551	0.09	0.28	0	1
Wasted Votes (t-1)	25,551	0.06	0.07	0.005	0.64
Invalid Votes (t-1)	21,375	0.20	0.13	0	0.46
Candidate Saturation (t-1)	21,209	3.69	2.89	0.31	19
Threshold for Inclusion	25,551	0.22	0.12	0.02	0.5
Logged GDP per capita	12,024	7.96	1.01	6.01	11.60

[98] The subnational GDP data comes from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadistica e Informática* (http://www.inei.gob.pe/).

[99] Because illiterate voters may have mechanical difficulties correctly marking the ballot (Reynolds and Steenbergen 2006), most candidates may find the costs of mobilizing illiterate voters to be prohibitive and therefore select not to enter when *Illiteracy* in the district is high. I tested this expectation in robustness checks; literacy in a department was never significantly related to parties' entry decisions, so I do not include the variable here.

[100] Lagged turnout is another variable that is commonly included in studies of strategic entry, with the expectation that low turnout indicates electoral opportunity, so new entry should be inversely related to turnout. Even though voting is mandatory strictly enforced in Peru, turnout varies subnationally from just over 70 percent to well over 90 percent in any given election, which is enough variation that the variable ought to be included as a control. Unfortunately, disaggregated turnout information is not available prior to 2001. Because including this variable results in a substantial decrease in the number of observations analyzed, I do not include it here.

[101] The threshold for inclusion is the minimal proportion of votes that a candidate must win to achieve representation in a district, calculated using the formula 1/[magnitude+1]. Individual parties should be less likely to enter under these circumstances, and coalitions should be more likely to form when it is more difficult to reach the minimum vote threshold.

ΔGDP per capita (1 year)	8,517	5.35	1.50	2.42	10.81
District Magnitude	25,551	5.94	7.01	1	40

For the sake of simplicity, I present here the results from simple logistic regression models including year fixed effects, which are not shown here to preserve space, and with robust standard errors clustered by constituency.[102] Table 2 shows the results of six logistic regression models predicting new party entry in Peruvian legislative elections from 2001 to 2011. I find results consistent with H1A and H1B: traditional parties and new established parties are more likely to enter competition in districts where more wasted votes were cast in recent elections, perhaps because candidates view these voters as members of a winnable constituency. Although traditional parties enter competition rarely in this time period (their coverage of districts is already high), their likelihood of entering competition increases significantly when the wasted ballots cast in recent elections increases, from 0.3 percent when wasted ballots take their minimum value (0.85 for the mean value), to 2.8 percent when wasted ballots increase by one standard deviation above the mean. Smaller parties, on the other hand, enter competition with *less* frequency as the proportion of wasted votes increase. The likelihood that an ideological party will enter competition when wasted ballots take their mean value is 14.63 percent, which decreases to 10.57 as wasted votes increase by one standard deviation (and to 7.5 percent when wasted ballots takes a value two standard deviations above the mean).

Table 5.2 Predicting Entry for Different Party Types (2001-2011)

[102] Given the nested nature of the data (with parties nested in constituencies, which are in turn nested in country-years), this analysis potentially lends itself to a hierarchical modeling framework. The results from hierarchical estimations are consistent with those shown here.

	All Parties	Traditional Parties	"New" Established Parties	Ideological Parties	Radical Parties	Coalitions
Wasted Votes (t-1)	2.91*	16.51***	5.240**	2.15	3.03^	0.55
	(1.78)	(3.39)	(2.161)	(1.46)	(2.10)	(2.07)
Invalid Votes (t-1)	2.91*	-8.34***	-0.943	2.95**	2.68*	3.37**
	(1.78)	(2.55)	(1.227)	(1.46)	(1.44)	(1.71)
Candidate Saturation (t-1)	0.06	0.11	0.346**	0.07	0.14***	-0.00
	(0.04)	(0.13)	(0.142)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(0.06)
Threshold for Inclusion	0.72	-12.39	-16.92***	0.11	0.73	4.61^
	(2.88)	(8.85)	(5.066)	(4.37)	(3.89)	(3.06)
Logged GDP per capita	0.36	1.93^	-1.387***	0.37	0.44	0.42
	(0.33)	(1.30)	(0.481)	(0.39)	(0.42)	(0.43)
ΔGDP per capita (1 year)	0.00	0.00	-0.00***	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
District Magnitude	-0.01	-0.450	0.058**	-0.01	-0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.54)	(0.028)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Pseudo R-Square	0.0423	0.6199	0.0728	0.0702	0.0644	0.0495
N	2,435	179	84	692	1240	1260

Standard errors are clustered by constituency. Party type controls are included in Model 1, and year fixed effects are included in all models but not shown here. ^p<0.15, *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Consistent with hypotheses H2A and H2B, invalid ballots affect the likelihood that parties will enter competition differentially. Traditional parties are less likely to enter in constituencies where recent rates of invalid voting are high, while radical parties are more likely to enter in these constituencies. Surprisingly, smaller ideological parties were also more likely to enter in response to high invalid vote rates, and these effects are substantively large. A maximal increase in recent invalid vote rates is only associated with an increase in the likelihood of entry from 5.80 percent to 8.25 percent among radical parties, and the same increase in invalid voting increases the likelihood that smaller ideological parties will enter from 8.20 percent to 14.61 percent. These results could be interpreted to mean that wasted ballots are still a signal of opportunity for niche parties, just a lower *quality* signal of opportunity than invalid votes. Traditional parties opt not to

enter competition in constituencies where invalid voting is high; a maximal increase in lagged invalid voting is associated with a decline in the likelihood of new party entry by established parties, from 18.14 percent when invalid voting is at its minimum to 0.26 percent at its maximum. This suggests that, while high rates of blank or spoiled voting in previous elections can indicate electoral opportunity for small or relatively extreme parties, larger parties will tend to avoid competing in districts where historical rates of invalid voting are high.

Finally, I find some evidence in support of the expectations presented in H3 regarding candidate saturation and new party entry. When the number of candidates competing relative to the district magnitude increases, that is, as the candidate space becomes increasingly saturated, new candidate entry increases significantly among radical parties, as expected. A maximal increase in candidate saturation is associated with an increase in radical parties' likelihood of entry from 4.57 percent to 34.33 percent. However, I find no support for the expectation that coalition parties will enter competition more frequently when the candidate space is saturated. Similar variables, the threshold for inclusion and the district magnitude, only reach statistical significance in select models. The threshold for inclusion reaches significance for new established parties, which are less likely to enter competition as more votes are needed to achieve representation. The coefficient is negative across most party types, but is positive and marginally significant for coalition parties. Given the expectation that electoral coalitions form as a means to help parties overcome coordination problems, the positive coefficients for both district magnitude and the threshold for inclusion indicate a somewhat weak tendency for them to form when winning seats is more difficult.

Notably, economic performance has little if any effect on candidates' entry decisions for most party types. Measures of economic performance are only significant for new established

parties, which are more likely to enter competition in wealthier constituencies, and are less likely to enter when the economy is in decline. However, while these effects are statistically significant, the substantive effects are mixed. A maximal decline in GDP only increases the likelihood that a new established party will enter by one percentage point. In contrast, the likelihood of new party entry by new established parties decreases from the poorest regions (95 percent when GDP is at its minimum) to substantially more wealthy constituencies (12.23 percent when GDP is two standard deviations above its mean). That is, new established parties prefer to enter competition in places where the public is poorer, and will arguably be more receptive to vote buying and economic populism (policies commonly associated with the new established parties).[103]

Robustness Check: Comparing Pre- and Post-Breakdown Results

Above, I find evidence consistent with the argument that political uncertainty has differential effects on parties' behavior depending on their ideological leanings and experience. To assess the extent to which these results are the result of uncertainty rather than another set of case-specific factors, I replicate the core analysis for the pre-breakdown years (1980-1990) in Table 2. Because Peru's first post-military democratic election was held in 1980, 1985 is the first year for which lagged data are available. As above, standard errors are clustered by constituency, and year

[103] In additional analyses, I tested for the presence of a curvilinear relationship between a district's wealth and the likelihood of new candidate entry by party type. As the GDP passes the national average, the likelihood of entry drops off steeply.

controls are included but not shown here. Because disaggregated economic data are not available prior to 1995, I do not include economic factors in the analyses presented here.

Table 5.3 Predicting Entry for Different Party Types (1980-1990)

	All Parties	Traditional Parties	"New" Established Parties	Ideological Parties	Radical Parties	Coalitions
Wasted Votes (t-1)	0.21	-2.38	1.77	0.19	1.91**	2.88***
	(0.48)	(3.14)	(10.47)	(0.72)	(0.85)	(0.58)
Invalid Votes (t-1)	-1.22	0.13	0.26	-4.14	-1.75^	-1.29^
	(0.96)	(0.85)	(4.20)	(3.22)	(1.12)	(0.83)
Candidate Saturation (t-1)	-0.13***	-0.28	-0.16	0.09	-0.17***	-0.10^
	(0.05)	(0.31)	(0.28)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Threshold for Inclusion	3.86^	0.85	-2.60	-20.62	2.71	2.40
	(2.42)	(8.53)	(10.74)	(26.59)	(2.95)	(2.34)
District Magnitude	-0.00	0.01	-0.00	-1.76	0.00	-0.003
	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(2.76)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Pseudo R-Square	0.0282	0.2973	0.4492	0.2184	0.0263	0.0334
N	1,783	126	64	529	848	976

Standard errors are clustered by constituency. Party type controls are included in Model 1, and party ID controls and year fixed effects are included but not shown in all models. ^p<0.15, *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Overall patterns in the pre-Fujimori years are somewhat different than those observed in the more recent period. In the aggregate, there is no relationship between wasted or invalid votes and new candidate entry; indeed, invalid votes are negatively (rather than positively) associated with new candidate entry. Candidate saturation in the earlier period is a deterrent to new entry overall, and parties are marginally more likely to enter competition when the threshold for inclusion is higher (although the direction of the coefficient for this variable changes across party types). For traditional parties, new established parties, and ideological parties, none of the coefficients reaches accepted thresholds for statistical significance. It is perhaps noteworthy that

the estimated direction of the relationship between wasted and invalid votes, as well as candidate saturation, the threshold for inclusion, and entry vary from the above model for these party types.

The estimated relationships between various metrics of opportunity or uncertainty change substantially for radical parties in the pre- and post-Fujimori periods. In the second analysis, radical parties are substantially more likely to enter competition when the proportion of wasted votes in the previous period is high, as predicted by existing perspectives from European contexts. As the proportion of wasted votes increases from its minimum to its maximum, the likelihood of new entry for radical parties in the pre-Fujimori period increases from 11.53 percent to 30 percent. The estimated relationship between invalid votes and new entry for radical parties is only marginally significant in this specification, but the estimated direction of the effect also switches. As invalid voting increases, the likelihood of new entry by radical parties decreases from about 18.2 percent to 9.5 percent. Finally, in the pre-breakdown model, radical parties are substantially less likely to enter as candidate saturation increases: when saturation is low, radical parties are 22.4 percent likely to enter. As candidate saturation reaches its mean, the likelihood of entry by radical parties decreases to 14.2 percent, and at its maximum, new party entry among radical parties in the pre-Fujimori period is only 1.2 percent likely.

Much like radical parties, coalition parties are more likely to enter in districts where wasted ballots were higher in the previous election (the likelihood of new coalition entry increases from 11.3 percent to 43.6 percent as wasted ballots increase from their minimum to their maximum). The negative relationship for lagged invalid voting and new entry for coalitions is only marginally significant, and the size of the effect is somewhat smaller: a maximal increase in invalid voting in the past election results in a decrease in the likelihood of entry from 17.3 percent to 10.8 percent. Contrary to expectations, I find that new entry by coalitions is less likely in regions where

candidate saturation was higher in recent contests (although this relationship is only marginally significant): the probability that a coalition party will enter competition decreases from 18.8 percent to 3.5 percent as saturation increases from its minimum to its maximum.

In sum, during a historical period with less electoral uncertainty, measures usually linked to electoral opportunity predict new party entry in Peruvian legislative contests. In the years following the party system breakdown, however, I find evidence that is broadly consistent with the expectations laid out in Hypotheses 1-3. When political outcomes are unstable, parties behave in ways that are broadly predictable and consistent with winning elections; however, different *types* of parties respond to different metrics of political opportunity and uncertainty.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to explain changes in elites' incentives to enter competition when political uncertainty is high. Using data from one relatively uninstitutionalized Latin American country (Peru), I show that parties behave predictably when uncertainty is high, but that different types of parties respond differently to uncertainty. "Big tent" parties behave in ways that are broadly consistent with existing perspectives of new party entry drawn from the relatively more stable European context. Large, relatively established parties tend to enter competition preferentially in districts where opportunity as measured by valid votes cast for losing party options was higher in recent elections. Smaller ideological parties and radical parties, on the other hand, respond to different metrics of electoral opportunity. While they still respond positively to wasted votes, these parties tend to enter competition more frequently in districts where historical rates of against-all

voting—that is, the percentage of invalid votes—are high. This project suggests that clarifying our understanding of strategic party entry, particularly as it pertains to the developing world, requires considering how parties' incentives shift differentially under uncertainty.

While I have linked the statistical relationships between historical political outcomes to strategic entry through political uncertainty, it is plausible that an alternative "Z" factor explains the varied relationships between invalid and wasted ballots, candidate saturation, and strategic party entry. Invalid voting may not be the metric elites respond to, but may be associated with other variables—urbanization, education, protest capacity, or some other factor—that predicts radical parties' likely success.

This chapter presents evidence from one country that may or may not be broadly generalizable to other party systems in the developing world. In future iterations of this project, I plan to extend the dataset to account for more varied levels of unpredictability in the political space. To what extent are these differences in strategic entry by party type due to uncertainty? Or, do different party types respond differentially to diverse incentives around the globe? At the same time, this chapter uses data from only one election type and level of aggregation in Peru. In future iterations of this project, I plan to take advantage of finer grained data on elite competition. Specifically, using electoral returns from subconstituencies within each region, I plan to explore how parties that have opted to enter competition in a constituency campaign strategically at the sub-regional level (i.e., the extent to which radical parties truly seek to capture rural or invalid voters, and the extent to which big tent parties focus on winning votes in subconstituencies where wasted votes were high in recent contests). This deeper dive into Peru's subnational elections could also be extended to recent gubernatorial and mayoral contests within Peru, as a means to capture parties' progressive growth

over time—that is, when and how nascent parties build up from local contests to regional contests to national contests.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

While scholars disagree about whether the presence of free and fair elections is sufficient to identify a democracy, they agree that elections are a necessary element of democratic political systems (Schumpeter 1942, Dahl 1971, Przeworski 1999). In turn, the right to vote is a fundamental feature of democratic society. Indeed, Dahl (2015) indicates that one foundation of democracy is that "every citizen must have an *equal and effective opportunity to vote, and all votes must be counted as equal*" (p. 95, emphasis in original). Yet, around the world, and especially in Latin America, millions of individuals bear the costs associated with voting on Election Day – they register, travel to the polls, and wait in long lines – and then intentionally leave their ballots blank or mismark them. That a substantial portion of the citizenry in Latin America chooses to participate in the democratic process but refuses to register a candidate preference, removing their preferences and the power of their vote from consideration, is both puzzling and somewhat unsettling to democracy's proponents.

This dissertation therefore begins by addressing the individual- and contextual features that drive individuals to cast invalid ballots with greater or lower frequency. Individuals who choose to invalidate their ballots may do so as a means to express frustration with a specific slate of candidates, with the representative process more generally, or with democracy itself. Alternatively, voters may be insufficiently informed to use voting technology correctly, and most invalid ballots may be cast by accident. These possibilities imply substantively different interpretations of invalid voting by academics and political elites. Protest motivations for invalid voting suggest lagging

democratic quality, which could be rectified by improving the quality of communication between representatives and their constituents, while invalid voting motivated by more aggressive anti-system sentiment could indicate trouble for democracy across the region. If, on the other hand, most invalid voting in presidential elections is accidental, this implies important demographic inequities in voters' abilities to access the franchise and to influence policy by voting. At the same time, this latter possibility implies at least one straightforward solution: improved civic education.

Chapters 2 and 3 show that protest motivations are the primary drivers of intentional invalid voting in Latin American presidential elections. Chapter 2 uses individual level data to assess various protest motivations of invalid voting in Latin America, and finds that most invalid votes in presidential elections are cast intentionally, and not as the result of voter error. I show that, on average, the behavior reflects voters' discontent with particular political options and outputs or their feelings of political alienation, but does not reflect anti-system attitudes. I also find that these motivations are mostly stable across political institutions.

Given this understanding of invalid voting as a protest phenomenon, Chapter 3 assesses the extent to which political features that could drive protest attitudes predict rates of invalid voting. I show that accounting for the dynamic nature of political variables over time—specifically, elite polarization, the number of candidates competing, and electoral volatility caused by party replacement—substantially improves our understanding of invalid voting in presidential elections across the region. As the lines of political debate become better delineated and more representative, voters tend to cast fewer invalid ballots, as they are able to more easily identify candidates that represent their preferences. When political options are less distinct and less representative, in contrast, voters become frustrated and cast invalid ballots with increasing frequency.

While invalid voting can serve as an expressive means for alienated individuals to participate in political life, highly publicized, widespread invalid voting has the potential to harm electoral mandates and democratic legitimacy. Chapter 4 addresses this possibility by providing initial evidence about the presence and influence of efforts to mobilize invalid voting. I find that invalid vote campaigns led by political elites occurred regularly in Latin American presidential elections from 1980 to 2015, though their ability to affect election outcomes is mixed. These campaigns regularly seek to address grievances related to candidate or electoral quality. However, it is unclear whether invalid vote campaigns serve a representative function, channeling existing grievances through political participation, or if these campaigns actually generate new dissatisfaction with political outcomes among the public.

These chapters focus on citizen inputs, and represent only half of the representative process. Any assessment of citizens' motivations for invalid voting begs the question: given that individuals cast invalid ballots to express politically relevant grievances, do their representatives respond? This dissertation begins to address this question by assessing elite response to invalid voting. Chapter 5 seeks to understand elites' response to invalid voting in Peru, a democracy where political institutions are weak and levels of invalid voting are high. I find that, in time periods when the certainty of political outcomes is higher, politicians in Peru are largely unresponsive to rates of invalid voting. However, following the breakdown of the party system, those parties for whom protest voters represent a natural constituency—niche or radical parties—are substantially more likely to enter competition in regions where rates of invalid voting are higher. That is, while elite response to invalid voting exists, it is somewhat limited in its scope.

What, then, are the representative consequences of invalid voting? This dissertation finds evidence that elites can respond to invalid voting in at least two ways. First, elite-led movements

promoting invalid voting occur regularly in Latin America, suggesting that some elites hear voters' concerns and use against-all movements as a way to channel existing dissatisfaction. Second, radical parties respond directly to invalid voting by entering competition with increased frequency. Very high rates of invalid voting are thus associated with an expansion of the political space, a direct response to invalid voters' discontent.

At the same time that elites from catch all parties benefit electorally from high rates of invalid voting, high rates of invalid voting also encourage the entrance of electorally viable radical challengers, which disadvantage larger parties. This suggests that elites from big tent parties have limited, but not nonexistent, incentives to respond to invalid voting. Indeed, elites from established parties must likely walk a fine line between moderating policy enough that the electorate funnels its protest tendencies through invalid voting and being sufficiently unresponsive to voters' preferences as to encourage the emergence of viable protest candidates or movements. The presence of such countervailing tendencies suggests a political boom and bust cycle around elite representation of invalid voting, and protest voting more generally as candidates over-moderate and then readjust their policy positions that could help explain the persistent emergence and electoral success of protest candidates in Latin American democracies.

As a whole, this dissertation presents a relatively sanguine view of invalid voting and its effects on democratic politics in Latin America. Rather than indicate impending trouble for democracy, invalid voting appears to constitute one more participatory behavior for individuals who are knowledgeable about politics. In this view, high rates of invalid voting, while puzzling and perhaps troubling if persistent across time, are just one more form of citizen response to imperfections in the representative process.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

Table A1. Question wording

Variable (code)	Question Wording or Explanation
Turned out in Presidential Election (VB2)	"Did you vote in the [first round of the] last presidential elections of (year of last presidential elections)?" (1) yes, (2) no.
Vote Choice (VB3)	"Who did you vote for in the last presidential elections of [year]?" Response options are not read aloud. Individuals who respond that they cast an invalid vote are assigned country specific codes in 2008, and the code "00" in 2010 and 2012.
Support for Democracy (ING4)	"Changing the subject again, democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?" 1 to 10 scale; higher values = more support for democracy.
Preference for Democracy (DEM2)	"Now changing the subject, which of the following statements do you agree with the most: (1) For people like me it doesn't matter whether a government is democratic or non-democratic, or (2) Democracy is preferable to any other form of government, or (3) Under some circumstances an authoritarian government may be preferable to a democratic one." The indicator variable codes a strict preference for democracy (response 2) as a 1.
Trust in Elections (B47; B47A; B11)	"To what extent do you trust elections?" 1-7 scale; higher values = more trust. B11 [used in Peru]: To what extent do you trust the electoral tribunal?" 1-7 scale; higher values=more trust. [104]
Performance (N1, N3, N9, N11).*	N1: "To what extent would you say the current administration fights poverty?"; N3: "To what extent would you say the current administration promotes and protects democratic principles?"; N9: "To what extent would you say the current administration combats government corruption?"; N11: "To what extent would you say the current administration

[104] In Peru, the question about trust in elections was not asked in 2012; in this case, I use a similar question tapping trust in the electoral court. Results are robust to removing Peru from the analysis.

	improves citizen safety?". 1-7 scale; higher values = better performance.
National Economy Worse (SOCT2)	"Do you think that **the country's** current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago?" Variable was recoded as a dummy, with 1 indicating "worse" and 0 indicating "the same" or "better."
Own Economy Worse (IDIO2)	"Do you think that **your** current economic situation is better than, the same as or worse than it was 12 months ago?"
Alienation (EFF1)	"Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?" 1-7 scale; higher values = more efficacy. I then reversed the coding so that lower efficacy (1) became high alienation (7).
Age (Q2)**	Respondent's age measured in years, from 16 to 99.
Gender (Q1)	Dummy variable: male = 0, female = 1
Education (ED)**	Number of years the respondent reports completing (0-18+).
Urban (UR)	Interviewer codes if respondent lives in rural (0) versus urban (1) location.
Knowledge (GI1, GI2, GI3, GI4, GI5, GI7)***	GI1. "What is the name of the current president of the United States of America?" GI2. "What is the name of the president of the legislature in [country]?" GI3. "How many provinces/ departments/ states does [country] have?"GI4. "How long is the presidential term of office in [country]?" GI5. "What is the name of the president of Brazil?" GI7. "How many legislators are there in [the lower house of] the legislature?" Correct answers = 1, incorrect/ don't know = 0
Political Interest (POL1)	"How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little, or none?" 1 = a lot, 4 = none; I recoded the variable so that lower responses indicated less interest in politics.

Contextual Variables	**Source and Description**
Mandatory Vote Laws	I condensed Fornos et al.'s (2004) four-category designation of mandatory voting in Latin America. Countries with legal sanctions for abstention are coded as having mandatory vote laws regardless of enforcement, while countries with no sanctions in place are coded as voluntary. Chile is coded as a voluntary vote country after 2012.

	Voluntary vote countries: Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile (2013). Compulsory voting: Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
Election Rounds	The second round election category only includes those countries where second round contests were held, not where they are legally possible. Data were collected from Electoral Management Bodies. Second round held: Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Peru, Uruguay
Effective Number of Candidates	I apply Laakso and Taagapera's (1979) formula ($1/[\sum voteshare_i^2]$) to official presidential candidate vote share data collected from Electoral Management Bodies from the countries in the dataset.
Quality of Democracy	Freedom House scores countries separately for political and civil rights, and both are measured from a 1 (high freedom) to 7 (low freedom) scale. I follow the strategy outlined by Power and Garand (2007) and generate a composite index of these measures, which I then rescale so that higher values indicate higher levels of freedom. I then subtract 2, resulting in a measure that ranges (in Latin American cases from 1980 to 2015) from 0 to 10. For the country-year cases used here, the measure ranges from 4 to 10.

* Following confirmatory factor analysis, I generated an additive index using these variable measures.
** I included a squared term as a robustness check in additional analyses, but found no support for a curvilinear relationship.
*** Not all questions were included in all years. Specifically, GI1, GI4, and GI7 were included in 2012 and 2014, GI1, GI3, and GI4 were included in 2010, and GI1, GI2, GI3, GI4, and GI5 were included in 2008. The index was generated for each year, using all available knowledge questions.

Appendix B: Composition and validity of the electoral dataset

Given the challenges associated with predicting past actions using present attitudes, I generated an "electoral dataset" using AmericasBarometer data only from years when the data collection closely followed an election. A given country was only included in the dataset if data collection occurred within 12 months of the most recent presidential election. Countries were not double-counted—if a country had two presidential elections that were shortly followed by data collection for the AmericasBarometer, I included the year for which the time lapse was shortest. Finally, not all countries are included in the electoral dataset due to the rule establishing a maximum time lapse (No election year data is available for Mexico in the AmericasBarometer, for example). The following countries are included in the analyses for this paper.

Table B1. Survey and Election Dates, Electoral Dataset

Country	Election Year	Election Date	LAPOP data: year	LAPOP data: collection date	Time Lapse
Argentina	2007	October 28	2007-8	December 1 – January 25	2 – 3 Months
Bolivia	2009	December 6	2010	February 1 – March 27	2 – 4 Months
Chile	2013	November 17 & December 15	2014	April 16-May 22	4 – 5 Months
Costa Rica	2014	February 2	2014	March 4 – May 6	1-3 Months
Ecuador	2009	April 26	2010	February 2– March 19	9 – 10 Months
El Salvador	2014	February 2	2014	March 28-April 30	1.5 -2 Months
Guatemala	2007	September 9 & November 4	2008	February 3 – 16	5 Months
Honduras	2009	November 29	2010	February 18-March 26	2.5-4 Months
Nicaragua	2011	November 6	2012	February 4 – March 1	3 – 4 Months

Panama	2009	May 3	2010	January 8 – February 3	8 – 9 Months
Paraguay	2013	April 21	2014	January 18- February 8	9 -10 Months
Peru	2011	April 10 & June 5	2012	January 20- February 10	7-9 Months
Uruguay	2009	October 25 & November 9	2010	March 5 – April 4	4 – 5 Months
Venezuela	2006	December 3	2007	August 2- September 30	9-11 Months

One concern with using public opinion data rather than electoral data for the analyses presented in this paper is that these data might have limited validity—that is, self-reports might be biased downward, particularly if casting a blank or spoiled ballot is a sensitive action in a given country or election period. On average, this does not appear to be the case. For each country included in the sample, I compared reported rates of invalid voting to official electoral returns from the national Electoral Commission (see table B2 below). In most countries, rates of invalid voting are quite close to official results (+/- 2.5%). The Nicaraguan government did not report the blank and null vote totals for the 2011 election, so this comparison was not possible in that case.

Table B2. Accuracy of Electoral Dataset

Country	Invalid (official)	Invalid (LAPOP)	Difference (Official-LAPOP)
Argentina	7.61%	5.91%	1.7%
Bolivia	5.7%	5.83%	-0.14%
Chile	1.55%	1.54%	0.01%
Costa Rica	2.08%	2.27%	-0.19%
Ecuador	13%	10.07%	2.93%
El Salvador	1.26%	1.69%	-0.43%
Guatemala	9.32%	4.49%	**4.83%**
Honduras	6.69%	3.82%	**2.87%**
Nicaragua	.	1.34%	**.**
Panama	3.1%	2.56%	0.45%
Paraguay	5.47%	1.42%	**4.05%**
Peru	12.29%	5.11%	**7.18%**
Uruguay	2.19%	3.98%	-1.79%

Venezuela	0.44%	1.15%	-0.71%

Four cases stand out because the difference in invalid votes is large: Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, and Peru. In each of these cases, reported rates of blank or spoiled ballots are substantially *lower* than official electoral results. I compared results from the AmericasBarometer survey to those from the cross-national Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and local pre-election or exit polls when possible and found that the disparity between reported and official results is present across studies for these countries. Because these data are observational, I am unable to adjudicate the underlying reasons for the underreporting of invalid voting in these cases. However, results from a series of analyses excluding these four countries, as well as Nicaragua (where official invalid vote data are not available) yield results similar to those presented in the paper body: across models, performance evaluations are negatively correlated with invalid voting behavior, while political alienation and low interest in politics are positively related to null voting.

	Mandatory Vote Laws		Election Rounds		Effective Number of Candidates		Democratic Quality	
	Invalid vs. Abstain	Invalid vs. Valid	Invalid vs. Abstain	Invalid vs. Valid	Invalid vs. Abstain	Invalid vs. Valid	Invalid vs. Abstain	Invalid vs. Valid
ıtext	2.06	0.28	0.04	0.41	0.35	0.45	-0.13	0.16
	(0.87)	(0.69)	(0.88)	(0.67)	(0.41)	(0.31)	(0.02)	(0.20)
ti-System Motivation								
›port Democracy	-0.01	-0.06	-0.01	-0.01	-0.09	-0.08	0.01	0.10
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.12)
ıtext*Support nocracy	0.00	0.04	-0.03	-0.05	0.02	0.02	-0.01	-0.02
	(0.07)	(0.06)	0.07	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
fer Democracy	0.09	0.02	-0.21	-0.20	-0.16	-0.05	0.07	0.17
	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.39)	(0.33)	(0.58)	(0.50)
ıtext*Prefer nocracy	-0.36	-0.26	0.14	0.13	-0.00	-0.04	-0.01	-0.05
	(0.28)	(0.25)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.07)
st Elections	0.01	-0.05	-0.00	-0.03	0.16	0.14	-0.29	-0.27
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.13)
ıtext*Trust Elections	-0.05	-0.01	-0.07	-0.09	-0.06	-0.07	0.04	0.03
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
icy Discontent Motivation								
formance	-0.05	-0.12	-0.13	-0.19	-0.20	-0.35	0.08	0.11
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.19)	(0.16)
ıtext*Performance	-0.06	-0.04	0.10	0.13	0.04	0.07	-0.02	-0.04
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)
n Econ Worse	-0.05	0.03	0.10	0.12	0.03	0.04	1.44	1.08
	(0.23)	(0.22)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.42)	(0.36)	(0.61)	(0.54)
ıtext* Own Econ rse	0.07	0.02	-0.37	-0.32	-0.02	-0.01	-0.21	-0.16
	(0.28)	(0.25)	(0.29)	(0.25)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.08)
’l Econ Worse	0.05	0.03	-0.16	-0.08	-0.21	-0.27	-0.27	0.30
	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.39)	(0.34)	(0.57)	(0.51)
ıtext* Nat’l Econ rse	-0.20	-0.07	0.61	0.22	0.05	0.09	0.03	-0.05
	(0.27)	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.24)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.08)
ɛnation Motivation								
ɛnation	0.01	-0.01	0.05	0.07	0.27	0.31	-0.22	-0.09
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.12)
ıtext* Alienation	0.06	0.10	-0.03	-0.02	-0.08	-0.09	0.04	0.02
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
ɔwledge	-0.07	-0.23	0.38	0.23	0.65	0.71	0.06	-0.39
	(0.32)	(0.28)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.48)	(0.39)	(0.67)	(0.55)
ıtext*Knowledge	0.55	0.55	-0.01	0.03	-0.10	-0.17	-0.03	0.10
	(0.35)	(0.30)	(0.32)	(0.26)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.08)
ɛrest	-0.02	-0.49	-0.25	-0.50	-0.53	-0.70	-0.09	-0.20
	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.26)	(0.23)
ıtext*Interest	-0.28	-0.04	0.13	-0.05	0.11	0.07	-0.02	-0.05
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.03)
ɱpulsory								

			1.45	0.82	1.43	0.81	1.42	0.85
			(0.55)	(0.33)	(0.52)	(0.30)	(0.55)	(0.32)
ıstant	-6.82	-1.87	-6.42	-2.39	-7.42	-3.57	-5.38	-3.39
	(0.77)	(0.66)	(0.75)	(0.55)	(1.39)	(1.07)	(1.86)	(1.42)
ıservations	4,069	15,696	4,069	15,696	4,069	15,696	4,069	15,696
ımber of groups	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
bar^2	371.75	107.80	372.29	108.40	362.56	103.26	372.98	104.30
=$Chibar^2$	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III

Table A1. Variable Descriptions

Variable Name	Description
Invalid Vote (percent)	The percentage of all votes cast left blank or spoiled in a given election. Data collected from Electoral Management Bodies and supplemented with data from Nohlen (2005) and IDEA (http://www.idea.int/vt/) when not available.
Polarization (Change Polarization)	I calculate the dispersion of left-right preferences among sitting legislators using data from elite surveys and the equation ($\sqrt{\sum si(LR_i - LR_{country})2}$), where s_i denotes the party's seat share in the legislature, LR_i denotes the mean ideological position assigned the party by its members, and $LR_{country}$ denotes the average ideology of the chamber. (Sources: Singer, forthcoming; http://americo.usal.es/oir/elites/)
Number of Candidates (Change Number of Candidates)	To generate this variable, I collected information about the number of candidates and their vote shares from official electoral returns from national electoral commissions when possible, and supplemented with data from Nohlen (2005) when no official data were available. When the "other candidates" category appeared in online archives, I searched alternative sources for information identifying how many candidates were included in this category. If this information was unavailable, I counted "others" as one party.
Party Replacement Volatility	I applied the formula (Party Replacement Volatility = $\lvert\sum p_{exit(t-1)} + \sum p_{enter(t)}\rvert/2$) to official electoral data collected from Electoral Management Bodies (supplemented with data from Nohlen 2005) for all parties that won at least five percent of the total (valid) vote share.
Null Vote Campaign	This measure was generated using online newspaper archives to identify stories about null vote movements. Spanish-language (Portuguese in Brazil) searches were conducted in online news archives from each of the 18 Latin American countries using the terms: "voto nulo," "voto [en] blanco," "voto viciado," "voto [de] protesta," "movimento [de] protesta," "voto bronca". A single mention of a null vote movement in a nationally circulated newspaper was considered sufficient to code the observation as a "1". The variable used in this analysis includes organized social movements as well as public calls for ballot invalidation by influential politicians.
Margin of Victory	The difference in vote share between the first and second place candidates in a first round presidential election.
Incumbent	If the president elected at time t-1 ran for re-election at time t, *Incumbent* is coded as 1. Previous incumbents (those who run for non-consecutive terms) therefore enter as 0's in the dataset. There are several countries in the dataset where incumbents are prohibited from running for a consecutive second term; for those cases, *Incumbent* variable always takes the value of 0.

Second Round Election	This dummy variable takes the value of "1" only for those countries where second round contests were held, not where they are legally possible. Data were collected from Electoral Management Bodies.
Freedom House Democracy (Change FH Democracy)	Freedom House scores countries separately for political and civil rights, and both are measured from a 1 (high freedom) to 7 (low freedom) scale. I follow the strategy outlined by Power and Garand (2007) and generate a composite index of these measures, which I then rescale so that higher values indicate higher levels of freedom. I then subtract 2, resulting in a measure that ranges (in Latin American cases from 1980 to 2015) from 0 to 10. For the country-year cases used here, the measure ranges from 4 to 10.
Ln(GDP)	I take the natural log of GDP per capita for each election year. Data come from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): http://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/web_cepalstat/perfilesNacionales.asp?idioma=i.
Urbanization	The percentage of the total population that lives in urban areas (source: United Nations).
Literacy	Percentage of the population aged 15 years or older that can read and write (source: United Nations).
Mandatory Vote Laws	I collapsed Fornos et al.'s (2004) four-category designation of mandatory voting in Latin America. Countries with legal sanctions for abstention are coded as having mandatory vote laws regardless of enforcement, while countries with no sanctions in place are coded as voluntary. Chile is coded as a voluntary vote country after 2012. Voluntary vote countries: Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile (2013). Compulsory voting: Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay

Table A2. Time Series Corrected OLS Regression Analyses: Percent Invalid Votes

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Polarization			1.571*** (0.423)	1.145*** (0.407)	3.957*** (0.453)	6.296*** (0.970)
Polarization Squared					-1.392*** (0.453)	-2.153*** (0.366)
ΔPolarization						-0.664*** (0.263)
Number of Candidates			0.333*** (0.068)	0.415*** (0.055)	-0.117 (0.213)	-0.395*** (0.084)
Number of Candidates Squared					0.028*** (0.011)	0.045*** (0.003)
ΔNumber of Candidates						-0.182*** (0.024)
Party Replacement Volatility			4.758*** (1.190)	5.172*** (0.752)	4.974*** (0.586)	4.213*** (0.668)
Null Vote Campaign					0.256 (0.510)	0.758*** (0.240)
Margin of Victory		7.704*** (1.714)		7.752*** (1.931)	4.946** (1.960)	0.478 (1.396)
Incumbent		0.500 (0.584)		0.669 (0.518)	1.514** (0.600)	-0.104 (0..340)
Second Round		2.858*** (0.489)		0.433 (0.377)	0.403 (0.437)	-0.517** (0.249)
Freedom House Democracy		-0.540*** (0.130)		-0.001 (0.150)	-0.092 (0.123)	-0.225*** (0.088)
ΔFreedom House Democracy						0.733*** (0.145)
Ln (GDP per capita)	-0.426 (0.657)			-0.671 (1.101)	-0.486 (0.484)	-0.733*** (0.252)
Urbanization	-0.002 (0.033)			-0.062** (0.029)	-0.068*** (0.026)	-0.068*** (0.015)
Literacy	-0.111** (0.051)			-0.091* (0.050)	-0.040 (0.047)	-0.081*** (0.029)
Compulsory	2.160*** (0.267)	1.952*** (0.256)		1.905*** (0.212)	1.802*** (0.256)	1.834*** (0.229)
Constant	-98.246^ (66.648)	115.456^ (76.191)	226.698*** (68.152)	.	-27.132 (78.839)	-426.754*** (63.316)
N	69	69	73	62	62	47
Wald Chi Squared Pr>Chi Squared	142.37 (0.00)	140.80 (0.00)	74.72 (0.00)	1.73e07 (0.00)	927.45 (0.00)	47,568.84 (0.00)

Due to the limited number of cases, Stata does not estimate a constant for Model 4. Model 6 estimates more parameters than there are groups in the model, so these results (especially the statistical significance) should be interpreted very

cautiously. Country and year controls are included but not shown. Robust standard errors clustered by country. †p<0.20, ^p<0.15, *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01 (two-tailed).

Appendix B. Mechanisms linking political features to protest attitudes

In the paper body, I propose a number of mechanisms that link contextual features to invalid voting behavior. I argue that levels of polarization and volatility, as well as the number of candidates, will make certain attitudes more or less prevalent in the population, thereby leading to more or less invalid voting in the aggregate. I find evidence that polarization has a positive direct effect on invalid voting, that many candidates (more than eight) is associated with higher rates of invalid voting, and that party replacement volatility increases invalid voting. These aggregate findings suggest the following associations between second-level and individual-level variables:

Polarization: direct negative effect on protest relevant attitudes (but, with a non-linear positive effect).

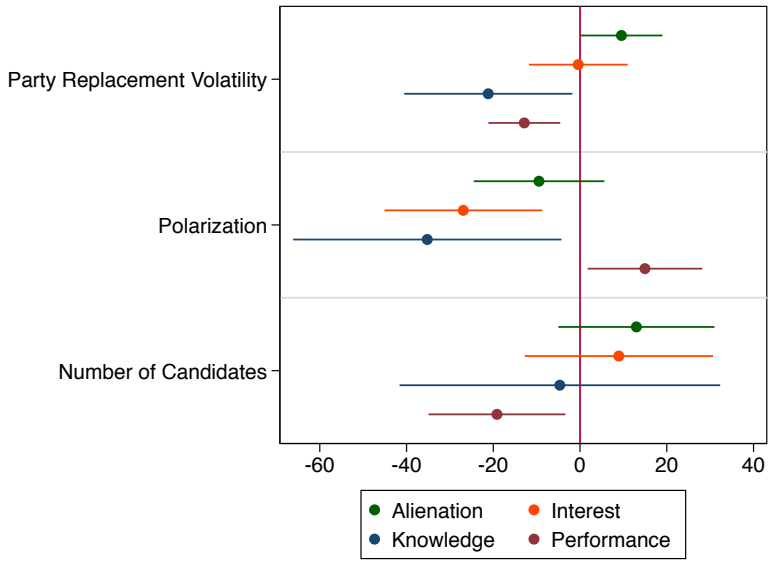
Number of candidates: direct positive effect on protest relevant attitudes (non-linear).

Party replacement volatility: direct positive effect on protest relevant attitudes.

I assess these mechanisms by estimating a series of hierarchical linear models combining the second level variables identified in Chapter 3 with the AmericasBarometer electoral data used in Chapter 2. The dependent variables in these models are political alienation, interest, knowledge of political facts, and performance assessments—variables that consistently predicted invalid voting in the behavioral models estimated in Chapter 2. Figure B1 shows the coefficients (colored dots) and 90 percent confidence intervals (horizontal bars) associated with a maximal change in each political variable and four dependent variables. If the horizontal bar crosses the

vertical line at 0, the estimated relationship is not significant with 90 percent confidence. Dependent variables have been rescaled to range from 0 to 100.

Figure B1. Maximal Effects of Political Variables on Attitudes



Estimates and 90 percent confidence intervals shown.

These results are based on models estimated using data from 12 countries, and so their generalizability may be limited. However, the multilevel models are consistent with results estimated using the larger set of elections analyzed in Chapter 3. A maximal increase in party replacement volatility is associated with a sizeable increase in average levels of alienation (about 10 units on the 100-point scale), while performance assessments and political knowledge in such countries are substantially lower (15 and 20 units on the 100-point scale). I find no direct effect of volatility on interest in politics. These relationships are consistent with findings from the paper body linking volatility to higher rates of protest-motivated invalid voting.

Polarization, on the other hand, is associated with lower levels of political interest (25 units on the 100-point scale) and knowledge of political facts (38 units). Performance assessments, in contrast, are substantially higher in polarized contexts, and alienation is not substantially affected by polarization. While the AmericasBarometer does not include a measure of negative partisanship, I find a negative, direct effect of polarization on affective partisan identification (see B2 below), and no support for a non-linear relationship. This finding may change with the inclusion of more (or a different set of) countries.

B2. Mixed Effects Logistic Regression: Maximal Effects

	PID
Party Replacement Volatility	0.230
	(0.742)
Polarization	-4.036***
	(1.185)
Number of Candidates	1.917
	(1.415)
Mandatory Voting	-0.311
	(0.511)
Observations	19,052
Number of groups	11

Demographic variables and year controls included but not shown to preserve space.

Finally, the presence of many presidential candidates is significantly associated with poorer performance assessments, consistent with increased protest voting. However, the number of candidates does not have a significant direct effect on any of the other protest variables assessed here. There are two ways to interpret these results: first, more candidates may run for president in

countries where performance assessments are low. That is, the direction of causality may not run from the second level feature (number of candidates) to individual attitudes, but rather from mass attitudes to second level realities. Second, the non-significance of effects on protest variables may be due to the limited number of country cases. On the other hand, the relatively weak relationships between the number of candidates and other protest variables may suggest that this variable tends to work through accidental rather than protest motivated voting.

These analyses are somewhat preliminary, and caution should be used in determining that these are, in fact, the mechanisms through which invalid voting increases or decreases in Latin American presidential elections. Future attitudinal analyses should include a more diverse set of country years in order to confidently assess the theorized curvilinear relationships identified in the chapter body, and should compare the effects of attitudes on invalid vote intentions in countries where elections took place following survey data collection, as additional evidence suggesting the causal nature of these relationships.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

Table A1. Variable Descriptions

Variable Name	Description
Invalid Vote (percent)	The percentage of all votes cast left blank or spoiled in a given election. Data collected from Electoral Management Bodies and supplemented with data from Nohlen (2005) and IDEA (http://www.idea.int/vt/) when not available.
Effective Number of Candidates (ENC)	To generate this variable, I collected information about the number of candidates and their vote shares from official electoral returns from national electoral commissions when possible, and supplemented with data from Nohlen (2005) when no official data were available. When the "other candidates" category appeared in online archives, I searched alternative sources for information identifying how many candidates were included in this category. If this information was unavailable, I counted "others" as one party. I then applied Laakso and Tagapera's (1979) formula: $1/\sum(\text{voteshare}_i^2)$.
Null Vote Campaign	This measure was generated using online newspaper archives to identify stories about null vote movements. Spanish-language (Portuguese in Brazil) searches were conducted in online news archives from each of the 18 Latin American countries using the terms: "voto nulo," "voto [en] blanco," "voto viciado," "voto [de] protesta," "movimento [de] protesta," "voto bronca". A single mention of a null vote movement in a nationally circulated newspaper was considered sufficient to code the observation as a "1". The variable used in this analysis includes organized social movements as well as public calls for ballot invalidation by influential politicians.
Margin of Victory	The difference in vote share between the first and second place candidates in a first round presidential election.
Second Round Election	This dummy variable takes the value of "1" only for those countries where second round contests were held, not where they are legally possible. Data were collected from Electoral Management Bodies.
Freedom House Democracy (Change Democracy Score)	Freedom House scores countries separately for political and civil rights, and both are measured from a 1 (high freedom) to 7 (low freedom) scale. I follow the strategy outlined by Power and Garand (2007) and generate a composite index of these measures, which I then rescale so that higher values indicate higher levels of freedom. I then subtract 2, resulting in a measure that ranges (in Latin American cases from 1980 to 2015) from 0 to 10. For the country-year cases used here, the measure ranges from 4 to 10.
Ln(GDP)	I take the natural log of GDP per capita for each election year. Data come from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC): http://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/web_cepalstat/perfilesNacionales.asp?idioma=i.

Literacy	Percentage of the population aged 15 years or older that can read and write (source: United Nations).
Mandatory Vote Laws	I collapsed Fornos et al.'s (2004) four-category designation of mandatory voting in Latin America. Countries with legal sanctions for abstention are coded as having mandatory vote laws regardless of enforcement, while countries with no sanctions in place are coded as voluntary. Chile is coded as a voluntary vote country after 2012. Voluntary vote countries: Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile (2013). Compulsory voting: Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
Corruption (V-DEM; lagged)	Measure of corruption, collected from the Varieties of Democracy Project.
Corruption (World Bank)	Expert assessment of corruption, collected from the Word Bank's World Development Indicators.

Table A2. Logistic Regression: Null Vote Movements as a Function of Political Variables

	Null Vote Movement	Null Vote Movement
Literacy	0.150	0.122
	(0.0962)	(0.107)
GDP per capita (logged)	1.016	1.770
	(1.044)	(1.698)
GINI	-0.0665	0.0408
	(0.115)	(0.121)
Freedom House Democracy	-0.740	-0.824
	(0.492)	(0.589)
Change Democracy Score	-0.856	-1.294
	(0.978)	(1.094)
ENC	0.338	0.179
	(0.455)	(0.397)
Corruption (V-DEM)	7.240***	24.42*
	(2.483)	(14.64)
Lagged Corruption (V-DEM)		-19.34
		(15.10)
Corruption (World Bank)	-0.610	-0.901
	(2.017)	(2.762)
Second Round	4.465***	3.484***
	(1.458)	(1.241)
Margin of Victory	-17.26	-19.15

	(15.70)	(22.67)
Constant	-19.03	-25.26
	(11.96)	(18.04)
Observations	42	42

Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V

Table A. Categorization of parties by type

Party Type	Party Name
Traditional Parties	Acción Popular* Partido Aprista Peruano* Partido Popular Cristiano*
New Traditional Parties	Alianza Para el Progreso* Fujimoristas (Cambio 90, Alianza Electoral Cambio 90 –Nueva Mayoría, Cambio 2000, Fuerza Popular)*
Ideological Parties	Acción Popular Socialista Cambio Radical Campesina De Trabajadores Socialistas Frente Nacional De Trabajadores Y Campesinos Frente Obrero Campesino Estudiantil Y Popular Fuerza Democrática Fuerza Nacional Izquierda Andina Nacionalista Izquierda Nacionalista Movimiento de Izquierda Movimiento Nueva Izquierda Perú Posible Progresemos Peru Unión Por El Perú
Radical Parties	Cambio Radical De Trabajadores Socialistas Frente De Izquierda Revolucionario Frente Nacional De Trabajadores Y Campesinos Frente Obrero Campesino Estudiantil Y Popular Izquierda Nacionalista Movimiento Nueva Izquierda Movimiento Revolucionario Velasquista Obrero-Campesina Organización Política De La Revolución Peruana Partido Comunista Revolucionario Partido Renacimiento Andino Partido Revolucionario De Los Trabajadores Partido Socialista Partido Socialista De Los Trabajadores Partido Socialista del Peru Popular Socialista

	Unión Revolucionaria
Coalition Parties	Alianza Electoral Izquierda Unida Alianza Electoral Cambio 90 –Nueva Mayoría Alianza Electoral Unidad Nacional Alianza Por El Futuro Alianza Por El Gran Cambio Alianza Solidaridad Nacional Alianza Unidad De Izquierda Convergencia Democrática Izquierda Socialista Izquierda Unida Unidad Democratico Popular Unión De Izquierda Revolucionaria
Non-Ideological Parties	Acuerdo Independiente Unión Por El Perú – Social Democracia Acuerdo Popular Agrupación Política Independiente Cooperación Nacional Avanza País – Partido de Integración Social Avanzada Democrática De Integración Cabellista Con Fuerza Perú Cooperación Popular De Avanzada Peruano Democrática Despertar Nacional En Acción Movimiento Independiente Fonavistas Del Perú Frente Cívico Independiente Frente Cívico Independiente Fortaleza Y Libertad Frente Democrático De Unidad Nacional Frente Independiente De Retirados Frente Independiente Democrático Frente Independiente Moralizador Frente Independiente Nacionalista Frente Patriotico Frente Popular Agricola Fia Del Peru – FREPAP Justicia, Tecnología, Ecología Lista Avanzada Democrática Independiente Movimiento Cívico Nacional 7 De Junio Movimiento Cívico Nisei Movimiento De Bases Hayistas Movimiento De Interés Popular Movimiento De Lucha Por La Justicia Social Movimiento De Reconstrucción Nacional Movimiento Democrático Independiente Movimiento Democrático Peruano

	Movimiento Independiente Frente Agrario Democrático "Atusparia" Movimiento Independiente Solidaridad Movimiento Independiente Somos Peru – Causa Democrática Movimiento Popular De Acción E Integración Social Movimiento Renovación Popular Movimiento Social Independiente Movimiento Velasquista Organización Democrática Independiente Partido Avanzada Nacional Partido Justicia Nacional Partido Mariateguista Para La Liberación Nacional Partido Pasop Partido Político Adelante Partido Proyecto País Partido Reconstrucción Democrática Perú Ahora Republicanos Por El Plan Perú Restauración Nacional Resurgimiento Peruano Todos Por La Victoria Unidad Democrática Independiente Unidad Nacional Unidad Nacional Democrática Unidos Unión Cívica Independiente Unión Del Pueblo Peruano Unión Democrática Unión Nacional Unión Nacional Ordiista (1963, 1990) Unión Renovadora Del Perú Y Se Llama Perú

*Denotes parties that fit into multiple categories (for example, all radical parties are ideological parties, and all traditional parties are ideological parties). Parties have been categorized here according to how they were analyzed in the paper.

**Denotes coalition parties that had ideological leanings. These parties were included only in "coalition" analyses in the paper body.

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