CRIMINOLOGY

INSTITUTIONAL INEFFECTIVENESS, ILLEGITIMACY, AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR VIGILANTISM IN LATIN AMERICA*

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Why do individuals or groups support vigilantism as a means of conflict resolution? Most researchers tend to agree that support for and participation in vigilantism occurs in "stateless locations," that is, when formal justice institutions are weak or absent. Despite this general consensus, quantitative evidence of this relationship is limited to a handful of country-specific studies that used only subjective survey-based measures of institutional weakness. This study seeks to extend research on vigilantism by assessing the relationship between subjective and objective conditions of formal justice institutions and public support for vigilantism across 323 provinces in 18 Latin American countries by using the 2012 AmericasBarometer Survey. Specifically, this study uses multilevel logistic regression techniques to examine the variability of public support for lethal vigilantism within and across Latin American countries. When controlling for a wide range of potential confounds, the results show that the most robust predictors of support for violent vigilantism are subjective indicators of institutional illegitimacy, personal victimization, and punitive attitudes. Evidence also exists that objective insecurity, as measured by province-level homicide rates, fosters public support for violent vigilantism in certain situations.

Why do individuals or groups support vigilantism as a means of conflict resolution? Most researchers tend to agree that support for and participation in vigilantism occurs when formal justice institutions are weak, absent, or otherwise "unavailable" (Abrahams, 1998; Buur and Jensen, 2004; Cooney, 1997; Schuberth, 2013). Despite this general consensus, quantitative evidence of this relationship is limited to a handful of country-specific studies that used only subjective survey-based measures of institutional weakness (Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma, 2012, 2014; Tankebe, 2009; Weisburd, 1988). This study seeks to extend research on vigilantism by assessing the relationship between subjective and objective conditions of formal justice institutions and public support for vigilantism across 323 provinces in 18 Latin American countries by using the 2012 AmericasBarometer Survey (Latin American Public Opinion Project, 2015a).

Specifically, this study is concerned with explaining support for *lethal* vigilantism or extralegal capital punishment. Support for serious violent vigilantism is a particularly

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interesting puzzle. Although, generally speaking, the goals of vigilantism are complementary to those of formal institutions—that is, to provide security, justice, and order—in the long run, violent vigilantism can contribute to insecurity, injustice, and disorder (Schuberth, 2013). The exercise of punishment outside formal institutions lacks accountability, predictability, impartiality, and often proportionality. Accounts of violent vigilante groups "turning bad" are numerous [e.g., the Bakassi Boys (Baker, 2002; Smith, 2004), gangs in Nicaragua (Rodgers, 2008), and People Against Gangsterism and Drugs and Mapogo a Mathamaga in South Africa (Buur and Jensen, 2004)], whereas others are motivated to use violence to protect a socially unjust or racist status quo (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan; see Tolnay and Beck, 1995). Furthermore, if extralegal violence becomes the norm, this can impede the development and reform of formal institutions (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004).

Latin America is a particularly suitable setting for the study of state power and vigilantism. According to the Fragile States Index, Latin America has some of the most stable (e.g., Uruguay and Chile) and the most fragile (e.g., Guatemala and Colombia) states in the world (Fund for Peace, 2015). In cases such as Colombia, Mexico, and El Salvador, paramilitary groups, drug traffickers, and youth gangs have actively challenged the sovereignty of the state (Mattaini, 2010; Pearce, 2010; Serres, 2000; Shirk, 2010; Waldmann, 2007). Formal criminal justice in Latin America is typically characterized by corruption, lack of professionalism, impunity, and violence (Ungar, 2009). Although there are many causes and correlates of violence in the region (e.g., inequality, poverty, proliferation of weapons, and drug trafficking networks; see Imbusch, Misse, and Carrión, 2011), some of the most systemic seem to be political instability and the lack of legitimate criminal justice institutions (Huggins, 1991; Pearce, 2010). These widespread political problems generate conditions of "statelessness" in which citizens are more likely to ignore legal avenues of conflict resolution to engage in techniques of violent self-help (Black, 1983; Nivette, 2014).

DEFINING VIGILANTISM

This study defines vigilantism as a form of self-help or private justice, which falls under a broader category of informal norm enforcement (Black, 1983). Specifically, vigilante acts are committed by private persons, usually in the form of corporal punishment or violence, against a perceived perpetrator (Buur and Jensen, 2004; Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma, 2014; Johnston, 1996). This study is concerned with what Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1976) called "crime control vigilantism," in which punishment is directed at private citizens who have violated legal norms. Although vigilantism typically connotes a degree of organization and premeditation (Johnston, 1996; Roche, 1996), some scholars also have considered more "disorganized," individual, and spontaneous reactions to perceived criminality as forms of vigilantism (Eriksson, 2009; Huggins, 1991; see generally Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma, 2012). Huggins (1991: 4) pointed out that although there are well-organized vigilante groups in Latin America, most vigilantism tends to be "relatively spontaneous and clandestine" compared with historical manifestations in the United States. Therefore, this study takes a broad approach to conceptualizing vigilantism in regard to perpetration. For example, vigilante offenders may be part of an organized extralegal crime control group, ad hoc participants in violent vigilantism, or individuals.

Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1976) identified two other types of vigilantism, "regime control" and "social-group-control" vigilantism, in which punishment is directed against government officials and groups that challenge the status quo (typically minorities), respectively. Although this study is largely concerned with support for crime control vigilantism, it is important to note that these types can overlap considerably. For example, vigilante groups that patrol the U.S.–Mexico border, such as the American Border Patrol, are targeting perpetrators of illegal border crossings and therefore are punishing (or threatening to punish) criminal acts. However, some have noted the anti-immigrant motivation behind many of these vigilante groups, suggesting these vigilante acts are motivated by social group control (e.g., Anti-Defamation League, 2005; Doty, 2007; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.).

STATELESSNESS, SELF-HELP, AND VIGILANTISM

In modern states, the formal rules and procedures governing responses to law-breaking behaviors generally proscribe the use of physical force by private citizens, with some exceptions (e.g., self-defense). Support for violent vigilantism entails support for the violation of these rules. To explain this social phenomenon, two important questions must be answered. First, one must explain why people support the violation of the law to punish perceived wrongdoers. Second, it is important to explain why people support the use of lethal violence to punish perceived wrongdoers. A range of potential punishments and degrees of violence may be used for extralegal crime control and justice. The question here is under what circumstances do individuals support "unofficial" capital punishment? Research on vigilantism has tended to focus on the first question, whereas the second has typically been the domain of studies on punitive attitudes. However, studies on lynching in the United States have noted the close conceptual relationship between unofficial (vigilante) and official (state) executions (Jacobs, Carmichael, and Kent, 2005; Messner, Baumer, and Rosenfeld, 2006; Phillips, 1987; Zimring, 2003). As Phillips (1987: 363) argued, "these acts of social control differ only in the agent administering the response." Therefore, to understand support for extralegal lethal executions, we must consider determinants of both vigilantism and punitiveness.

Under what conditions might individuals support vigilantism when other forms of conflict resolution (i.e., the police or courts) might be used instead? Black (1983) proposed that vigilantism ("self-help") is more likely to occur in "stateless locations" where law is unavailable. In this context, "law" often is used as shorthand for the provision of a public good (i.e., security) by state political, legal, and criminal justice institutions. This can include protection from violence or property theft, access to courts and other legal services, law enforcement, and regulation of public space. Under conditions in which these public goods are unavailable, individuals will support alternative, private means of social control to fill the security "gap" (Nivette, 2014; Ungar, 2013). In quantitative terms, "law varies inversely with other social control" (Black, 1976: 6).

CONDITIONS OF STATELESSNESS: INSTITUTIONAL INEFFECTIVENESS AND ILLEGITIMACY

Law can be "unavailable" in multiple ways. According to Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1976), state (formal) institutions may lack the capability to police and punish violations of the law. Formal institutions that cannot provide security are considered ineffective,

weak, or at worst failed states (Schuberth, 2013). In Rotberg's (2004: 6) words, an "indicator of state failure is the growth of criminal violence. As state authority weakens and fails, and as the state becomes criminal in its oppression of its citizens, so lawlessness becomes more apparent. … For protection, citizens naturally turn to warlords and other strong figures …, thus offering the possibility of security at a time when all else, including the state itself, is crumbling." Although state failure represents an extreme case of ineffectiveness, the mechanism remains the same: When law is unavailable because the state cannot effectively enforce the law and punish violations, people will look for alternative means of social control to provide security.

Many researchers have documented vigilantism in contexts where states or criminal justice agents are absent or weak (e.g., Abrahams, 1998; Burrell and Weston, 2008; Gitlitz and Rojas, 1983; Godoy, 2004; Heald, 1986; Huggins, 1991; Rosenbaum and Sederberg, 1976; Tankebe, 2009; Van Cott, 2006). Reporting on vigilante groups in Tanzania, Abrahams (1987: 179) argued that "there is a strong element of self-help in them [vigilantes], but it is always in the context of the state. Often they appear to be a frontier phenomenon, occurring literally on the edges of state influence and control." Northern Peru's *rondas campesinas*, or peasant patrols, formed in response to rising crime rates and a lack of effective policing in rural communities (Gitlitz and Rojas, 1983; Van Cott, 2006). In Guatemala, several authors noted the rise in *linchamientos* (lynchings) after the completion of the peace process in 1996 (Burrell and Weston, 2008; Godoy, 2004). Burrell and Weston (2008: 376) attributed the rise in *linchamientos* to the failure of the transitional state to "secure an effective rule of law that protects citizen rights and enforces obligations." In Bolivia, Goldstein (2003: 23) described *linchamientos* as "a form of political expression for people without access to formal legal venues, a critique of the democratic state and its claim to a rule of law."

However, Schuberth (2013: 42) argued that weak state theories cannot fully explain the emergence and persistence of vigilantism in "strong, viable and modern states" such as those in Latin America. Cooney (1997: 393), in drawing from Black (1983), proposed that within states "certain groups occupy stateless locations in social space" and that these people "are largely outside the state's legal system and hence are more likely to use aggressive tactics … to resolve their conflicts." In other words, individuals living in "stateless locations" cannot access formal crime control and so law is in essence unavailable. The state is "absent" in the sense that individuals and groups deny its legitimacy—i.e., the right to rule—and hence its monopoly over the use of physical force (Nivette, 2014). Legitimacy can be lost when institutions and authorities are unjust, illegal, and untrustworthy, as well as when public goods, namely security and welfare, are not fairly and equally provided within society (Beetham, 1991; Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012; Tankebe, 2013).

Generally, a growing amount of evidence shows that people who perceive the state and its powerholders (e.g., police and courts) to lack legitimacy are less likely to cooperate with the police, report crimes, and obey the law (for a review, see Tyler, 2009). More specifically, studies have indicated that individuals who lack confidence in the police, or who perceive the police to be unfair and untrustworthy, are more likely to support the use of extralegal violence to solve disputes and punish wrongdoing (Gau and Brunson, 2015; Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma, 2012, 2014; Jackson et al., 2013; Tankebe, 2009). When examining predictors of attitudes toward the use of self-help violence among minority youth in London, Jackson et al. (2013: 491) found that "illegitimate and

procedurally unjust policing opens up the space for citizens to use private or extralegal force" to defend oneself, deal with disputes, and achieve political goals. Wilkinson, Beaty, and Lurry (2009: 32) found that disadvantaged Black youth in the United States perceive police to be "corrupt, unjust, racially biased, class biased, a tool of state repression, criminal, and abusive" and so rely on self-help to solve disputes. In Latin America, the systematic failure of newly formed democracies to secure citizens' rights means that statelessness is disproportionately felt among the poor (Caldeira and Holston, 1999; Schuberth, 2013). Godoy (2004: 622) reported that *linchamientos* occur primarily in "poor and marginalized communities." In Bolivia, Goldstein (2008: 254) documented one resident's perceptions of the availability of law: "There is no justice in Bolivia. At least for the poor there isn't. You have to have money to get justice." Perlman (2010) argued that the rise in violence and support for extralegal killings in Rio de Janiero's *favelas* are a result of government indifference coupled with the systematic marginalization and stigmatization of *favela* residents.

In summary, support for vigilantism is inversely related to the availability or perceived availability of law. Put another way, when individuals cannot access formal, legal methods of dispute resolution, crime control, and punishment, they will favor alternative means to achieve these goals. Law, or security, can be unavailable or absent because formal institutions are ineffective, illegitimate, or both. Ineffectiveness arises when the state simply fails to punish violations of the law and provide security for its citizens. Ineffective institutions are weak but not necessarily illegitimate. States can lose legitimacy when institutions fail to distribute law in a legal, fair, and equal manner. Likewise, a state can be effective at controlling crime but still lack legitimacy among its populace. However, illegitimacy and ineffectiveness often are conceptually and empirically intertwined: "[I]t is not enough to act in accordance with the law and to ensure both that citizens are treated with procedural justice in interactions and that they receive fair outcomes or fair allocation of police resources; power-holders need to demonstrate, in addition, a capacity to obtain effective results" (Tankebe, 2013: 112; see also Beetham, 1991; Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012).

PUNITIVE PREFERENCES AND LETHAL VIGILANTISM

One question remains: Why might individuals support the use of lethal violence when other forms of informal social control and conflict resolution could be used instead? Baker (2002) noted that explanations that place vigilantism as an anomic response to the lack of legitimate and effective means of crime control are useful for understanding the emergence of vigilantism but not the intensity of violence. As Black (1998) noted, a wide range of options is available for social control and punishment, from avoidance to negotiation to execution. Because lethal vigilantism can be considered a punitive form of informal crime control, it is important to take into account individuals' more general views on punishment, particularly how and when people seek to increase the severity of punishment. Research on public punitiveness and support for the death penalty has offered several important insights on this issue.

Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld (2003) outlined two explanatory paradigms used to understand public support for the death penalty in the United States. The first paradigm focuses on an individual's or a community's exposure to violence. People who live in areas with high violent crime rates, who have been victimized, or who fear crime are

theoretically more likely to support the use of punitive measures to control crime (Rankin, 1979; Stack, Cao, and Adamzyck, 2007). From an instrumental perspective, high crime rates necessitate a strong, punitive response to control and deter future crimes. Evidence for this mechanism can be found in the vigilantism literature (Adinkrah, 2005; Baker, 2002; Godoy, 2004; Weisburd, 1988). Baker (2002: 242) proposed that the logic of the Bakassi Boys' violent vigilantism in Nigeria is largely instrumental: "[C]ounterforce deters and the more severe the counterforce, the less lawlessness there will be." In a survey of media reports on vigilante homicides in Ghana, Adinkrah (2005) reported that lethal vigilantism occurred more frequently in regions with higher crime rates and public anxiety about victimization.

The second paradigm proposes that crime control preferences are not necessarily related to objective risk, but instead, they depend on how political actors construct the problem (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld, 2003). Constructionists view support for punitive policies, including the death penalty, as a product of (typically) conservative political rhetoric framing crime as the result of liberal, welfare-oriented policies (Beckett and Sasson, 2004). In Latin America, rising insecurity has led some right-wing politicians to call for *mano dura*, or "iron fist," crime control tactics, which can include police brutality, militarized police operations, expansive antigang legislation, and extended prison sentences for gang or gang-related behaviors (Holland, 2013; Hume, 2007; Rodgers, 2009). Similar to conservative rhetoric in the United States, which problematized "permissive" criminal justice policies, right-wing politicians in El Salvador and Guatemala have blamed the democratic reforms of the 1990s for rising crime rates (Holland, 2013). President Francisco Flores of El Salvador described these punitive policies as a "counterweight to the passive and protectionist attitude toward criminals caused by a set of laws that protect criminals over citizens" (quoted in Holland, 2013: 47).

It is important to note that research on punitive preferences typically has referred to support for state-sanctioned methods of crime control and punishment, prompting the question as to why punitiveness might generate support for *nonstate* punishments. One explanation might be that punitive attitudes reflect general approval of harsh punishment, regardless of whether imposed by the state or private citizens because they "differ only in the agent administering the response" (Phillips, 1987: 363). Another explanation draws on the constructionist view of punitiveness, wherein politicians appeal to out-group hostility to gain support for harsh crime control measures (Cochran and Piquero, 2011; Jacobs, Carmichael, and Kent, 2005; King and Wheelock, 2007; Messner, Baumer, and Rosenfeld, 2006; Unnever and Cullen, 2007, 2010). Accounts of *mano dura* rhetoric and vigilantism in Latin America have suggested that constructions of the "other" play a role in generating support for punitive and even lethal crime control measures (Hume, 2007). Goldstein et al. (2007: 52) argued that support for *mano dura* and violent vigilantism in the barrios of Cochabamba, Bolivia, "exhibits a distinctive us-versus-them, insider-outsider quality, in which anyone unknown to you is a stranger and hence a potential threat to your security." They contended that this distrust of outsiders is pervasive throughout all social strata but particularly in the cities where migration from rural villages is changing the social fabric of urban communities. In Central America, *mano dura* discourses surrounding gangs and gang members have painted a picture of "good" versus "evil" citizens (Rodgers, 2009), effectively dehumanizing young men thought to be associated with gangs and justifying the use of violent legal and extralegal coercion (Hume, 2007). For example, Hume reported that *mano dura* rhetoric in El Salvador is thought to have inspired the growth of death

squads targeting young men with gang tattoos. Thus, punitive attitudes may tap into this out-group hostility, motivating support for extralegal methods to control the perceived "threat" (Jacobs, Carmichael, and Kent, 2005; Messner, Baumer, and Rosenfeld, 2006; Phillips, 1987; Zimring, 2003).

In sum, both violent vigilantism and punitiveness stem from feelings that formal institutions are somehow ineffective in providing security. High levels of crime, victimization, and feelings of insecurity create an environment in which citizens must consider alternative, more extreme methods of crime and social control. However formed, individual punitive preferences can be expected to influence how the public reacts to, and subsequently its support for, lethal vigilante punishments.

THE CURRENT STUDY

This study seeks to examine under what conditions individuals support the use of extralegal lethal violence to punish wrongdoers. The earlier review suggested that public support for vigilantism increases in "stateless locations" wherein formal institutions are unable or unwilling to provide security and maintain social order. Prior research has outlined two interrelated conditions of statelessness that can generate support for vigilante violence: ineffectiveness and illegitimacy. Although numerous scholars have documented support for vigilantism in stateless locations, few have formally tested these claims, and none have done so by using a quantitative cross-national framework. Specifically, this study seeks to fill this gap by investigating four propositions in the context of Latin America. First, institutional ineffectiveness is associated with higher support for violent vigilantism (Proposition 1), and second, a lack of institutional legitimacy is associated with higher support for violent vigilantism (Proposition 2). One key indicator of statelessness identified in the literature is exposure to criminal violence, and so this study tests the proposition that exposure to high levels of lethal violence increases individual support for lethal vigilantism (Proposition 3). Finally, lethal vigilantism can be understood as a particularly punitive form of extralegal punishment, and as such, the rich research on punitive attitudes can help us understand when and why individuals support the use of lethal violence as punishment. Therefore, this study tests the proposition that punitive attitudes are associated with higher support for violent vigilantism (Proposition 4).

DATA AND METHODS

The AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys have been conducted regularly in North and South America since 2004 by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) (2015a). The LAPOP is one of the most extensive and methodologically rigorous surveys in the region, covering a wide range of political and social topics (Mishler and Bratton, 2004). The AmericasBarometer 2012 survey is based on 41,632 face-to-face interviews with voting age adults across 26 Latin American, Caribbean, and North American countries (LAPOP, 2015b). Samples are nationally representative of each country's noninstitutionalized, voting age population, and they were drawn from a stratified multistage cluster design. Each national sample was stratified based on the size of municipalities, urban/rural areas, and regions by using the most recent national census. One individual was interviewed per household, and quotas for age and sex were adopted to avoid sampling error resulting from disproportionate nonresponse from males. In certain

cases, geographical areas such as islands and territories were excluded as a result of small or insular populations (e.g., the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador).

The current study uses AmericasBarometer 2012 survey data from 18 Latin American countries and 323 provinces/departments to examine the individual and contextual determinants of public support for lethal vigilantism. This study focuses on Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking countries to limit possible differences arising from survey translations.[1] The 2012 survey contains a module measuring public support for the use of violence in six situations. Two situations involve the use of lethal violence in retaliation to wrongdoing: killing someone who has raped a child and killing someone who has terrorized/threatened a community.[2] This analysis includes all respondents for whom complete information is available ($N = 19{,}742$).

MEASURES

This study examines determinants of support for lethal vigilantism in two situations. In each situation, the respondent is asked whether he or she would approve, would not approve but understand, or would neither approve nor understand. For the purpose of this article, the categories "would not approve but understand" and "would neither approve nor understand" were collapsed into a single category, creating a binary variable coded 1 for those who approve and 0 for those who do not approve. This is done to focus on respondents who fully approve of the use of lethal violence in these situations. Furthermore, because two categories register disapproval of the use of violence, it is arguably acceptable to combine these categories.

The two situations are described to the respondent as follows (LAPOP, 2015c: 8):

> Suppose that a person has killed someone who has raped a son or daughter. Would you approve of killing him, or would you not approve but understand, or would you neither approve nor understand? (*Approval of vigilantism (rape))*
>
> If a person frightens his community and someone kills him, would you approve of killing the person, or would you not approve but understand, or would you neither approve nor understand? *(Approval of vigilantism (community threat))*

It is important to note that these questions are quoted directly from the English version of the survey. The Spanish versions contain slightly more information:

> *Suponga que una persona mata a alguien que le ha violado a un/a hija/o. ¿Usted aprobaría que mate al violador, ó no aprobaría que lo mate pero lo entendería, ó no lo aprobaría ni lo entendería?*

1. In Bolivia, Ecuador, and Guatemala, surveys also were conducted in respective indigenous languages to prevent the exclusion of monolingual speakers (LAPOP, 2015d).
2. The four remaining vignettes depict the use of different levels of violence in response to perceived wrongdoing and deviance (LAPOP, 2015c: 8–9). These vignettes, although potentially interesting to the study of general attitudes toward the use of violence, were excluded because they did not conform to this study's working definition of crime control vigilantism. In three situations, the victim(s) of violence have not necessarily violated legal norms. In the fourth situation, the perpetrator of violence is a public official, not a private citizen.

> *Si hay una persona que mantiene asustada a su comunidad y alguien lo mata. ¿Usted aprobaría que maten a esa persona que mantiene asustada a la comunidad, ó no aprobaría que lo maten pero lo entendería, ó no lo aprobaría ni lo entendería?*

First, the Spanish version asks more specifically whether the respondent supports the use of violence against the perpetrator of the initial deviant act, i.e. "al violador" (the rapist) in the first scenario and "esa persona que mantiene asustada a la comunidad" (that person who frightens the community) in the second scenario. Second, the phrase *mantiene asustada* implies that the person is keeping the community scared, or frightened, over a period of time.

These situations depict the use of lethal violence in response to two different grievances.[3] The first is relatively straightforward. Lethal violence is used to punish someone who has committed a serious sexual offense against a child. Specific details about the perceived offender are not given; however, the victim is identified as a "son or daughter" evoking a sense of close relational distance between the victim and the vigilante perpetrator. The second situation is less clear about what offense is being committed and against whom when someone "frightens" the community. However, the situation echoes grievances between neighborhood residents and the local gangs or organized crime groups that have overrun many communities in Latin America (Decker and Pyrooz, 2010). As one resident in Rio de Janiero described it:

> They [the militias] control everything; they impose curfews; they make you pay for coming and going in your own community. … If you don't do what they say, they shoot you—not to wound but to kill. That's their way. (quoted in Perlman, 2010: 168)

Therefore, one possible interpretation in this case reflects the use of lethal violence as a response to collective victimization by criminal groups to restore social order.

Measures of "Statelessness"

The key explanatory variables were chosen to represent the ways in which individuals experience statelessness.[4] Conditions of statelessness can be measured both subjectively on the individual level and objectively by using aggregate indicators of state weakness or illegitimacy. The subjective measures used here capture individual perceptions of two major dimensions of statelessness: institutional ineffectiveness and illegitimacy. First, formal institutions can be absent because they lack the capability to control crime and provide security. Three items were included to operationalize perceptions of institutional crime control capability. *Likelihood of justice* asks respondents on a 4-point scale from "None" (coded 0) to "A lot" (coded 4) "if you were a victim of robbery or assault how much

3. Importantly, as one anonymous reviewer pointed out, the vigilante perpetrator is not identified, and so it is conceivable that the respondents may imagine the act being carried out by the state. Yet this is unlikely because capital punishment has been abolished or fallen out of use in Latin America. It is possible that the respondents may imagine the infamous off-duty police "death squads" as the perpetrators (Huggins, 1991). Even so, these death squads typically operate outside formal institutions and rules, and as such, they are acting as informal, private agents of social control.

4. Generally for ease of interpretation, some variables were recoded so that higher values on the item indicate greater substantive values (e.g., greater likelihood of justice, more economic security, gang problems, and trust).

faith do you have that the judicial system would punish the guilty?" Substantively, this question reflects the perceived capability of formal institutions to punish and provide justice when needed. *Gang problem* measures the extent to which the respondent perceives that his or her neighborhood is affected by gangs (ranging from 0 "None" to 4 "A lot"). Finally, personal victimization is measured by using the following item: "Have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months?" Responses are coded 0 "No" and 1 "Yes" (*Victimization*). Collectively, these items represent dimensions of personal and community insecurities about crime and the lack of formal crime control.

Second, formal institutions can be "virtually" absent because they lack legitimacy and are distrusted by citizens. Researchers in criminology and political science have used a wide range of variables and operationalizations to represent the latent concept of legitimacy (Booth and Seligson, 2009; Eisner and Nivette, 2013; Tankebe, 2013). Some have operationalized legitimacy as trust, respect, and confidence, distinct from but related to perceptions of procedural and distributive justice (Murphy and Cherney, 2012). Others have framed legitimacy as a multidimensional concept, of which trust and fair treatment are only one part (Booth and Seligson, 2009; Tankebe, 2013). Here, three variables are used to represent dimensions of legitimacy, such as trust, equality, and legality (Beetham, 1991; Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012). *Institutional trust* is constructed by using 12 items that reflect a respondent's trust, confidence, and support for political, electoral, and criminal justice institutions. For example, items include the following:

- "To what extent do you think the courts in [country] guarantee a fair trial?"
- "To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of [country]?"
- "To what extent do you trust the justice system?"
- "To what extent do you trust the police?" (See Appendix A for a full list of items.)

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement by using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 signifies "Not at all" and 7 signifies "A lot." The 12 items were averaged to create a combined scale, where higher scores indicate greater trust in political and criminal justice institutions (Alpha = .905). Notably, the trust, support, and fairness items used here were designed to represent a particular dimension of legitimacy, what Booth and Seligson called "support for regime institutions" (Booth and Seligson, 2009: 49–53). Furthermore, by using data from the 2004 LAPOP survey, Booth and Seligson (2009) found that the items formed a distinct latent construct, which was related to other dimensions of legitimacy, such as regime performance and support for local government.

Additionally, the way powerholders behave when representing and enforcing the law (i.e., lawfulness) sends important signals to citizens about the legitimacy of state representatives and institutions (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012). Lawfulness refers to the extent to which "power has been acquired and exercised in accordance with established rules in a given society" (Tankebe, 2013: 6). Police lawfulness, here measured by perceived criminal activities of police and experiences of misconduct (e.g., bribery), is therefore an important component of institutional legitimacy. *Police criminality* is a nonordered categorical variable that measures respondents' perceptions as to whether police in their community 0 "protect people from crime" or 1 "are involved in crime." A third category captured and combined the unprompted responses "neither" or "both" (coded 2). This category was left as is, but it is not theoretically meaningful because it is impossible to distinguish the two responses in the data set. A binary variable (0 "No" and 1 "Yes")

measures whether a police officer has asked the respondent for a bribe in the past 12 months (*Bribe experiences*).

Statelessness also is measured objectively on an aggregate level. Although prior research has suggested that support for vigilantism, and particularly lethal punishment, stems from exposure to high levels of violence (Adinkrah, 2005; Baker, 2002; Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld, 2003; Holland, 2013; Van Cott, 2006), no study on vigilantism has statistically assessed this relationship. To measure the contextual effects of violent crime on support for violence, this study uses provincial- or department-level homicide rates ($n = 323$). Homicide data are preferable to other types of crime because homicides have been shown to be historically and cross-nationally comparable (Marshall and Block, 2004). Average homicide rates per 100,000 population were drawn where possible from each country's mortality statistics for the years 2009 to 2012 and supplemented where necessary by police data (*Provincial homicide rate*). Detailed information on the sources and calculation of provincial homicide rates can be found in the online supporting information.[5]

Punitiveness

Two variables are used as proxies for individual punitive attitudes. First, a general nonordered categorical indicator of punitiveness measures the respondents' preference for retributive versus preventative policies (*Punitiveness*). Respondents are asked, "What should be done to reduce crime in a country like ours?" and presented with two options: "Implement preventative measures" (coded 0) or "Increase punishment of criminals" (coded 1). Respondents who, unprompted, answered "Both" are coded 2. Second, punitiveness research has emphasized the role of political actors in shaping attitudes and justifying the use of legal and extralegal violence against perceived threats. Calls for "law and order" or "iron fist" responses to social problems tend to play off citizens' insecurities about changing sociopolitical order. Therefore, this study takes into account respondents' favorable attitudes toward right-wing "iron fist" political policies (*Mano dura attitudes*). To measure an individual's preference for *mano dura*, the AmericasBarometer asks, "Do you think that our country needs a government with an iron fist, or do you think that problems can be resolved with everyone's participation?" (0 "Everyone's participation" and 1 "Iron fist"). Holland (2013) reported that this operationalization in public opinion surveys captures (typically) politically conservative preferences for authoritarian leadership and, thus, repressive criminal justice policies.

Control Variables

Additionally, some researchers have proposed that insecurity and, consequently, support for private justice stem from broader economic and social insecurities (Loader, 1997; Smith, 2004). In particular, individuals with low social standing are more likely to experience institutional inefficiencies or, in Black's (1983) terms, the unavailability of law. Therefore, four items capturing individual perceptions of economic insecurities, social distrust, and social status are included as control variables. The first two measure an individual's perceptions of both personal and national economic situations. Respondents are

5. Additional supporting information can be found in the listing for this article in the Wiley Online Library at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/crim.2016.54.issue-1/issuetoc.

asked to describe their country's (*Country economy*) and their personal overall economic situation (*Personal economy*, coded from 1 "Very bad" to 5 "Very good"). The third is a single variable measuring the trustworthiness of citizens in the respondent's community (*Trust*, coded from 1 "Untrustworthy" to 4 "Very trustworthy"). Social status is measured by using an indicator of educational attainment. Educational attainment is typically correlated with several socioeconomic outcomes including higher occupational status, better housing, and higher incomes (Shavers, 2007). The AmericasBarometer asks each respondent how many years of schooling he or she has completed. Years of education were categorized to represent roughly low, medium, and high attainment: 0–6 years (no education to primary school), 7–12 years (primary to secondary school), and 13+ years (tertiary and above). Categories were coded 0, 1, and 2, respectively.

Several variables were included to control for potential confounds that have previously been shown to predict violence and vigilantism, including age, employment, urban residence, and sex. *Age* is a continuous variable measured in years, including an *age-squared* term for nonlinear effects. *Unemployed* is a binary variable coded 1 for respondents who reported they were "not working and not looking for a job" or "actively looking for a job" and 0 for all other categories (i.e., the employed, pensioners, homemakers, or students). Rural (coded 0) and urban (coded 1) classifications were derived from each country's official definition (*Urban*). Male respondents are coded as 1 and females as 0 (*Male*). Finally, parenthood may influence an individual's sympathy with vigilante actions, particularly in relation to the first scenario wherein the victim is a "son or daughter." Therefore, a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent has children (0 "No" and 1 "Yes") was included as a control (*Parenthood*).[6]

Missing Data

The percentage of missing data for most variables was low, that is, between 0.3 percent and 2.8 percent missing. Missing values for the two variables *Institutional trust* and *Police criminality* were relatively higher at 16.1 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively. Subsequent inspection of missing data patterns for *Police criminality* showed no substantial relationship between missingness and other variables in the analysis (i.e., the partial correlations were less than 0.05), which suggests that in this case nonresponse is unlikely to bias the estimates of effect. An inspection of missing data patterns for *Institutional trust* found that missingness was related to *Social status*. Specifically, those who reported completing up to a primary-level education were less likely to respond to institutional trust questions (partial $r = .09$). However, nonresponse for *Institutional trust* will arguably not bias the estimates of effect as long as *Social status* is included to control for the probability of missingness (Gelman and Hill, 2006). Nevertheless, the full models are reestimated with imputed values for *Institutional trust* as a robustness check (results are reported in the Results section).

6. Given that ethnic minorities are more likely to distrust the police (Murphy and Cherney, 2012), a measure of ethnicity would be an important control variable. The AmericasBarometer does include a measure of respondent ethnicity; however, it was not possible to include it in the present analysis because of comparability issues across countries. Loveman (2014) argued that both categorization techniques and what it means to be indigenous or mestizo varies across Latin American countries and time, particularly in relation to the state and the distribution of public goods.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

This study uses multilevel logistic regression techniques to examine the variability of public support for lethal vigilantism within and across Latin American countries. Multilevel modeling is more appropriate than aggregation or a single-level design for two reasons: 1) It accounts for group-level dependence resulting from sampling respondents within nations, and 2) it avoids ecological fallacy (Snijders and Bosker, 2004). In this case, a mixed-effects design is advantageous over fixed effects for both substantive and methodological reasons. Substantively, this study is interested in any potential between-country and between-province differences in the outcome, and so a model must be used that can estimate this variability. Methodologically, the number of groups (countries, provinces) is too large to be considered unique categories (Snijders and Bosker, 2004: 46–7). Thus, the results are estimated by using a three-level, mixed-effects design with random province- and country-level intercepts to examine the extent to which subjective and objective conditions of statelessness explain variation in support for lethal vigilantism. Models are estimated by using the `xtmelogit` command in Stata 13 (StataCorp, 2013).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analyses. Overall, support for lethal vigilantism in response to someone raping a child is higher (36.3 percent) than support for killing someone who frightens the community (20.8 percent). McNemar's chi-square statistic indicates that the proportions of approval to disapproval in each scenario are significantly different ($\chi^2 = 1911.34$, $p < .001$). In line with previous findings (Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma, 2012), this suggests that public opinion about vigilantism depends on the circumstances and actors involved. Beliefs about police misconduct are prevalent in Latin America: Almost half of the sample report that they believe the police are involved in crime (44.7 percent). Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents (12 percent) report that they have been asked for a bribe by a police officer in the past 12 months. Compare this with the incidence of bribery experiences in 27 European Union countries, where 4 percent report that they have been asked or expected to pay a bribe from any institution in the past 12 months, and only 1 percent have been asked by the police or customs (see Special Eurobarometer 397 conducted by TNS Opinion and Social, 2014: 79). Respondents are exposed to varying conditions of insecurity as measured by levels of homicide: The level of aggregate violence ranges from very low, that is, 1.5 homicides per 100,000 population, to very high, that is, 136.8 per 100,000, with an average province-level homicide rate of 23.6 per 100,000 people.

Figure 1 illustrates the mean level of support and 95 percent confidence intervals (CIs) for lethal vigilantism in both situations by country. Support for killing someone who has raped a child ranges from 21 percent in Panama (95 percent CI: .19–.23) to 54 percent in Peru (95 percent CI: .51–.57). For most countries, average support hovers between 30 and 40 percent. This suggests that beliefs about the use of lethal violence in a situation where a sex offense was committed against a child are relatively consistent across countries. Figure 2 shows more between-country variation in support for killing someone who threatens the community. Support ranges from 9 percent (95 percent CI: .07–.11) in Chile to 39 percent (95 percent CI: .36–.42) in Honduras.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Included in the Analysis

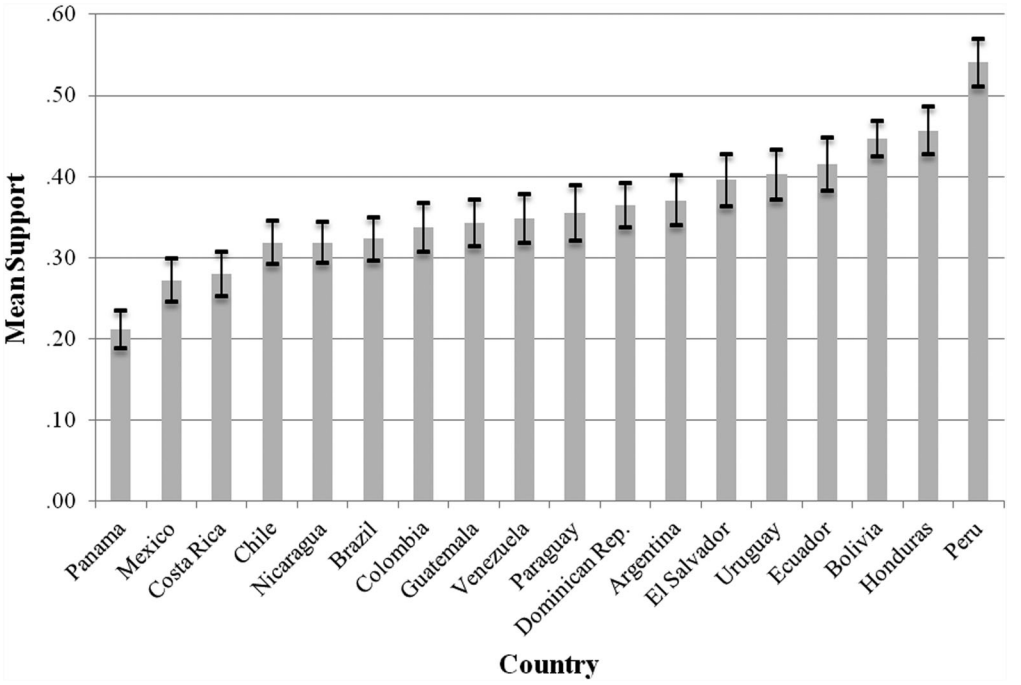
Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Individual-level Variables				
Approve of vigilantism (rape)	.363	.481	.0	1.0
Approve of vigilantism (community threat)	.208	.406	.0	1.0
Institutional trust	3.991	1.252	1.0	7.0
Police criminality (Ref: Police protect people from crime)				
Police involved in crime	.447	.497	.0	1.0
Neither/Both	.194	.395	.0	1.0
Bribe experiences	.120	.325	.0	1.0
Likelihood of justice	2.291	.998	1.0	4.0
Gang problem	2.189	1.038	1.0	4.0
Victimization	.205	.404	.0	1.0
Mano dura attitudes	.324	.468	.0	1.0
Punitiveness (Ref: Preventative measures)				
Increase punishment	.472	.499	.0	1.0
Both	.132	.339	.0	1.0
Country economy	2.847	.910	1.0	5.0
Personal economy	3.098	.786	1.0	5.0
Trust	2.838	.885	1.0	4.0
Parenthood	.728	.445	.0	1.0
Urban	.723	.448	.0	1.0
Male	.514	.500	.0	1.0
Unemployed	.088	.283	.0	1.0
Educational attainment (Ref: None/Primary)				
Secondary	.501	.500	.0	1.0
Tertiary	.212	.409	.0	1.0
Age	39.076	15.660	16.0	96.0
Province-level Variables				
Provincial homicide rate	23.579	24.363	1.5	136.8
Provincial homicide rate (ln)	2.669	1.028	.4	4.9

NOTES: Individual-level descriptives are based on a sample of 19,742. Provincial-level descriptives are based on a sample of 323.
ABBREVIATIONS: Max = maximum; Min = minimum; SD = standard deviation.

Tables 2 and 3 present the odds ratios for support for lethal vigilantism in response to raping a child and frightening the community, respectively. Four models were estimated for each outcome. First, an unconditional "empty" model estimates the mean support for lethal vigilantism and the amount of variation in support across provinces and countries. The second model estimates the effects of a series of social, economic, and demographic control variables. Models 3 and 4 test the key propositions of this article, that is, that subjective and objective conditions of statelessness and punitive attitudes are associated with higher support for lethal vigilantism. Specifically, the third model incorporates all individual-level explanatory variables, including subjective indicators of institutional effectiveness, institutional legitimacy, and punitive attitudes (Propositions 1, 2, and 4). The fourth model estimates the impact of objective conditions of statelessness, that is, province-level homicide rates, on support for lethal vigilantism (Proposition 3).[7]

7. Three additional model specifications were estimated: 1) control and punitiveness variables; 2) control, punitiveness, and institutional ineffectiveness variables; and 3) control, punitiveness, and institutional legitimacy variables. With some minor exceptions, the results do not change across specifications. Results for these additional models are available in the online supporting information.

Figure 1. Average Support for Killing Someone Who Has Raped a Son or Daughter, by Country, With 95 Percent Confidence Intervals

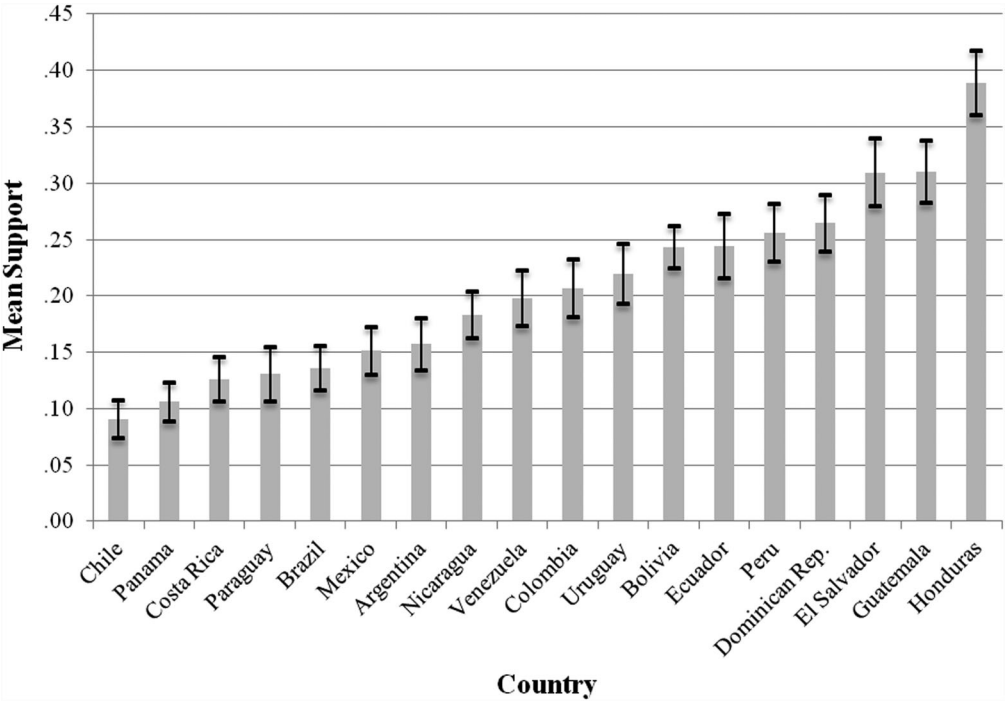


Model 1 in table 2 shows that the average odds of support for killing someone who has raped a child is .514 ($p < .001$), which corresponds to a mean probability of .339 (.514 / (1 + .514)). The random effects estimates show that support varies significantly across provinces (variance = .191, $p < .001$) and countries (variance = .106, $p < .001$). Model 2 shows that individuals who feel their country's economy is doing well, who are more generally trusting, and who have higher social status as measured by educational attainment are significantly less likely to support the use of lethal violence. Most notably, respondents with children were more likely to support vigilante violence against someone who has committed a sexual offense against a child [odds ratio (OR) = 1.422, $p < .001$].

Model 3 estimates the effects of perceived institutional ineffectiveness and insecurity on support for lethal vigilantism, independent of controls and punitive attitudes. Subjective perceptions of the likelihood of justice (OR = 1.006, $p > .05$) and neighborhood gang problems (OR = 1.015, $p > .05$) have no direct effect on support for lethal vigilantism when perceived legitimacy, punitiveness, and sociodemographics are accounted for. However, an individual's experience of insecurity and ineffectiveness, as measured by personal victimization, plays a significant role in determining support for the use of violent vigilantism. Those who have been victimized in the past 12 months are 1.212 times more likely to support vigilantism.

Institutional legitimacy variables also contribute significantly to our understanding of support for lethal vigilantism in response to raping a child. Individuals who trust and

Figure 2. Average Support for Killing Someone Who Threatens the Community, by Country, With 95 Percent Confidence Intervals



support their country's political and criminal justice institutions are significantly less likely to approve of vigilantism (OR = .901, $p < .001$). By contrast, citizens who believe that the police are involved in crime (OR = 1.348, $p < .001$) and who have experienced police corruption (OR = 1.166, $p < .001$) are more likely to support vigilantism. As expected, individuals who believe that the best way to reduce crime is to increase punishment are 1.662 ($p < .001$) times more likely to support killing someone who has raped a child. Those who believe authorities should rule with an "iron fist," an indicator of authoritarianism and a proxy for political "claims-making activities" (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld, 2003), are significantly more likely to support the use of extreme forms of punishment, that is, violent vigilantism (OR = 1.365, $p < .001$).

Model 4 shows that objective conditions of statelessness, as measured by aggregate province-level homicide rates, appear to have no direct effect on an individual's support for lethal vigilantism in response to raping a child (OR = .998, $p > .05$).

Overall, the reduction in province-level variance from .191 in model 1 to .167 in model 4 suggests that individual and contextual variables together account for 13 percent of the variation in support between provinces ((.191 – .167) /.191). The reduction in country-level variance is relatively larger, from .106 to .070, meaning the explanatory and control variables account for 34 percent of the variation in support for vigilantism between countries ((.106 – .070) /.106).

Table 2. Three-level Logistic Regression of Support for Killing Someone Who Has Raped a Son or Daughter

Fixed Effects	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI
Intercept	.514***	.437 – .606	.451***	.339 – .599	.260***	.196 – .345	.260***	.196 – .345
Controls								
Country economy			.864***	.831 – .898	.927***	.891 – .965	.927***	.891 – .965
Personal economy			.979	.937 – 1.023	1.009	.965 – 1.055	1.009	.965 – 1.055
Trust			.921***	.889 – .954	.972	.937 – 1.008	.972	.936 – 1.008
Parenthood			1.422***	1.309 – 1.546	1.424***	1.309 – 1.550	1.424***	1.309 – 1.550
Urban			1.133**	1.048 – 1.226	1.070	.987 – 1.160	1.070	.987 – 1.160
Male			1.230***	1.156 – 1.308	1.198***	1.124 – 1.276	1.198***	1.124 – 1.276
Unemployed			1.105	.993 – 1.230	1.080	.968 – 1.204	1.080	.968 – 1.204
Age			.998	.986 – 1.009	.998	.987 – 1.010	.998	.987 – 1.010
Age squared			1.000	1.000 – 1.000	1.000	.999 – 1.000	1.000	.999 – 1.000
Educational attainment (Ref: None/Primary)								
Secondary			.929	.858 – 1.006	.960	.885 – 1.041	.960	.885 – 1.041
Tertiary			.747***	.677 – .825	.797***	.720 – .882	.797***	.719 – .882
Attitudes Toward Punishment								
Mano dura attitudes					1.365***	1.276 – 1.461	1.365***	1.276 – 1.461
Punitiveness (Ref: Preventative measures)								
Increase punishment					1.662***	1.551 – 1.781	1.662***	1.551 – 1.781
Both					1.123*	1.012 – 1.246	1.123*	1.012 – 1.246

(*Continued*)

Table 2. Continued

Fixed Effects	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI
Subjective Conditions of "Statelessness"								
Institutional effectiveness								
Likelihood of justice					1.006	.973 – 1.041	1.006	.973 – 1.041
Gang problem					1.015	.983 – 1.049	1.015	.983 – 1.049
Victimization					1.212***	1.121 – 1.310	1.212***	1.121 – 1.310
Institutional legitimacy								
Institutional trust					.901***	.875 – .928	.901***	.875 – .928
Police criminality (Ref: Police protect people from crime)								
Police involved in crime					1.348***	1.247 – 1.457	1.348***	1.247 – 1.457
Neither/Both					1.000	.911 – 1.098	1.000	.911 – 1.098
Bribe experiences					1.166**	1.058 – 1.285	1.166**	1.058 – 1.285
Objective Conditions of "Statelessness"								
Province-level homicide rates (logged)							.998	.915 – 1.087
Random Effects	**Variance Component**		**Variance Component**		**Variance Component**		**Variance Component**	
Province-level intercept	.191***	.144 – .253	.185***	.140 – .247	.167***	.124 – .225	.167***	.124 – .225
Country-level intercept	.106***	.049 – .232	.109***	.050 – .237	.070***	.031 – .161	.070***	.031 – .161

NOTES: Continuous variables are grand mean centered. Models are estimated using maximum likelihood techniques. Individual-level n = 19,742. Province-level n = 323. Country-level n = 18.
ABBREVIATIONS: CI = 95 percent confidence interval; OR = odds ratios.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 3. Three-level Logistic Regression of Support for Killing Someone Who Has Threatened the Community

Fixed Effects	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI
Intercept	.219***	.173 – .276	.145***	.102 – .207	.081***	.057 – .116	.082***	.058 – .116
Controls								
Country economy			.919***	.878 – .961	.995	.950 – 1.043	.995	.949 – 1.042
Personal economy			.990	.940 – 1.042	1.025	.973 – 1.081	1.025	.973 – 1.080
Trust			.866***	.831 – .903	.925***	.886 – .965	.926***	.887 – .966
Parenthood			1.056	.958 – 1.165	1.048	.948 – 1.157	1.048	.949 – 1.157
Urban			1.071	.977 – 1.173	.981	.893 – 1.078	.974	.886 – 1.070
Male			1.290***	1.199 – 1.388	1.254***	1.163 – 1.353	1.254***	1.163 – 1.352
Unemployed			1.076	.950 – 1.219	1.053	.928 – 1.194	1.052	.927 – 1.194
Age			1.017*	1.004 – 1.031	1.018**	1.004 – 1.032	1.018**	1.005 – 1.032
Age squared			.999**	.999 – .999	.999**	.999 – .999	.999**	.999 – .999
Educational attainment (Ref: None/Primary)								
Secondary			.880**	.802 – .965	.904*	.823 – .994	.906*	.824 – .995
Tertiary			.689***	.613 – .775	.732***	.648 – .826	.736***	.652 – .831
Attitudes Toward Punishment								
Mano dura attitudes					1.453***	1.343 – 1.571	1.452***	1.342 – 1.571
Punitiveness (Ref: Preventative measures)								
Increase punishment					1.697***	1.562 – 1.843	1.702***	1.567 – 1.849
Both					1.204**	1.059 – 1.370	1.206**	1.060 – 1.372

(*Continued*)

Table 3. Continued

Fixed Effects	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI
Subjective Conditions of "Statelessness"								
Institutional effectiveness								
Likelihood of justice					1.026	.986 – 1.067	1.027	.988 – 1.068
Gang problem					1.073***	1.034 – 1.115	1.072***	1.033 – 1.114
Victimization					1.271***	1.162 – 1.389	1.271***	1.162 – 1.390
Institutional legitimacy								
Institutional trust					.883***	.854 – .914	.884***	.854 – .914
Police criminality (Ref: Police protect people from crime)								
Police involved in crime					1.299***	1.184 – 1.425	1.298***	1.183 – 1.424
Neither/Both					.981	.874 – 1.101	.980	.874 – 1.100
Bribe experiences					1.171**	1.050 – 1.305	1.173**	1.052 – 1.307
Objective Conditions of "Statelessness"								
Province-level homicide rates (logged)							1.159**	1.045 – 1.287
Random Effects	**Variance Component**		**Variance Component**		**Variance Component**		**Variance Component**	
Province-level intercept	.231***	.171 – .312	.227***	.167 – .307	.198***	.143 – .274	.200***	.144 – .274
Country-level intercept	.228***	.109 – .474	.207***	.099 – .434	.170***	.080 – .362	.121***	.053 – .274

NOTES: Continuous variables are grand mean centered. Models are estimated using maximum likelihood techniques. Individual-level n = 19,742. Province-level n = 323. Country-level n = 18.
ABBREVIATIONS: CI = 95 percent confidence interval; OR = odds ratios.
$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

The "empty" model in table 3 shows that the average odds of support for killing someone who threatens a community is .219 ($p < .001$), which corresponds to a probability of .180 (.219 / (1 + .219)). However, in contrast to support for vigilantism in response to rape, support for vigilantism in response to community threat is more varied across provinces (variance = .231, $p < .001$) and countries (variance = .228, $p < .001$). The estimates for sociodemographic controls in table 3 (model 2) are largely similar to those in table 2 but with some minor differences. Like the first scenario, more generalized trust equates to less support for lethal vigilantism (OR = .866, $p < .001$), but unlike in table 2, the effect remains significant across models. Economic security is associated with lower support for vigilantism (Model 2: OR = .919, $p < .001$); however, this effect disappears when institutional characteristics are added to the equation (Model 3: OR = .995, $p > .05$). These findings suggest that the effects of broader socioeconomic insecurities on support for vigilantism are dependent on situational characteristics and conditions of statelessness.

Model 3 estimates the effects of key explanatory factors on support for lethal vigilantism. The estimated effect of perceived likelihood of justice is not significantly different from zero (OR = 1.026, $p > .05$); however, an individual's perceptions of his or her neighborhood's gang problem play a role in determining support for violence against community threat (OR = 1.073, $p < .001$) when controlling for all other individual-level explanatory and control variables. It makes intuitive sense that people who are exposed to gang problems are more likely to support drastic actions taken to remove the threatening presence in the community. Individuals who consider state political and criminal justice institutions to be trustworthy are less likely (OR = .883, $p < .001$) to support the use of lethal violence in response to community threat. Those who believe the police are involved in crime (OR = 1.299, $p < .001$) and who have been solicited for a bribe by a police officer (OR = 1.171, $p < .01$) are significantly more likely to support lethal vigilantism. Here, too, conventional attitudes toward punishment influence the likelihood that people will support the use of extralegal violence. Model 3 shows that individuals who believe that punishments should increase to reduce crime are 1.697 ($p < .001$) times more likely to support lethal vigilantism, whereas those who hold favorable attitudes toward *mano dura* ("iron fist") authoritarian rule are 1.453 ($p < .001$) times more likely to support lethal vigilantism.

The addition of province-level homicide rates as an objective indicator of statelessness in model 4 does not significantly alter the individual-level effects. However, in contrast to model 4 in table 2, high levels of homicide in one's province significantly increase the likelihood that people will support killing someone who has frightened the community (OR = 1.159, $p < .01$). The random effects parameters in table 3 indicate that individual-level and province-level variables account for 13 percent of the variation between provinces ((.231 – .200) / .231) and for 47 percent of the variation between countries ((.228 – .121) / .228) in relation to support for killing someone who frightens the community.

Table 4 displays the predicted probabilities and 95 percent confidence intervals for approval of lethal vigilantism according to values of selected explanatory variables. Probabilities are calculated by using fixed effects only and by holding all other predictors at their means. The range of probabilities is modest. For individuals living in areas with homicide rates in the 10th percentile, that is, 4.5 homicides per 100,000 population, the probability of supporting killing someone who frightens the community is approximately 15.6 percent. For individuals living in areas with homicide rates in the 90th percentile,

Table 4. Predicted Probabilities for Support for Lethal Vigilantism

	Approve Vigilantism (Rape)		Approve Vigilantism (Community Threat)	
Variable	**Predicted Probability**	**CI**	**Predicted Probability**	**CI**
"Statelessness" Variables				
Gang problem				
None			.195	.166 – .223
A little			.206	.174 – .238
Somewhat			.217	.181 – .254
A lot			.230	.188 – .271
Victimization				
No	.334	.303 – .366	.177	.150 – .203
Yes	.379	.342 – .415	.214	.182 – .247
Institutional trust				
Lowest (= 1)	.320	.289 – .352	.166	.141 – .191
Median (= 4)	.256	.222 – .291	.121	.097 – .145
Highest (= 7)	.202	.162 – .241	.087	.063 – .110
Police criminality				
Police protect people from crime	.314	.282 – .346	.167	.141 – .194
Police involved in crime	.381	.347 – .416	.207	.177 – .237
Neither/Both	.314	.280 – .348	.165	.138 – .192
Bribe experiences				
No	.339	.308 – .371	.181	.154 – .208
Yes	.374	.336 – .413	.206	.173 – .239
Province-level homicide rates (logged)				
10th percentile			.156	.127 – .186
90th percentile			.219	.178 – .261
Other Variables				
Mano dura attitudes				
Problems solved with everyone's participation	.321	.290 – .352	.166	.141 – .192
Rule with an iron fist	.392	.357 – .427	.225	.192 – .257
Punitiveness				
Preventative measures	.288	.258 – .318	.146	.123 – .169
Increase punishment	.402	.368 – .437	.225	.193 – .257
Both	.313	.277 – .348	.171	.142 – .200
Educational attainment				
None/Primary	.359	.324 – .394	.202	.171 – .232
Secondary	.350	.317 – .382	.186	.158 – .214
Tertiary	.309	.276 – .342	.157	.131 – .183

NOTES: Predicted probabilities are calculated by using fixed effects only and holding all other variables at their means. Predicted probabilities were not calculated for nonsignificant effects.
ABBREVIATION: CI = 95 percent confidence interval.

that is, 71.5 per 100,000, the probability of supporting violence is 21.9 percent, which is an increase of 40 percent. However, this is comparable with the size of most other effects in the model. For example, support for killing someone who threatens the community ranges from 16.7 percent among individuals who believe the police protect people from crime to 20.7 percent among individuals who believe the police are involved in crime. In other words, perceived police criminality increases the likelihood of supporting violent vigilantism by 24 percent. The probability of supporting violence in the same situation decreases by approximately 48 percent among individuals with the highest levels of trust in formal institutions compared with those with the lowest levels of institutional trust.

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Several robustness checks were performed (full results not shown but available from the author upon request). First, models were run accounting for population weights. Weighted models were estimated by using generalized linear latent and mixed models (GLLAMM; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2012). Aside from small changes to the coefficients, the substantive results regarding institutional characteristics and punitiveness remain the same for both outcomes. Second, the results might be sensitive to the variables chosen to reflect respective dimensions of statelessness and punitiveness. It is possible that citizens' feelings of safety in their neighborhood better reflect whether they believe the criminal justice system is effective. The AmericasBarometer asks respondents the extent to which they feel safe in their neighborhood, with responses on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from "very unsafe" to "very safe." Feelings of safety had no effect on support for vigilantism in either situation, and the substantive results remained. Punitiveness can be measured by using an alternative item, which asks respondents whether they "strongly disagree," "somewhat disagree," "somewhat agree," or "strongly agree" that "the best way to fight crime is to be tougher on criminals." Additional models were run replacing the categorical punitiveness measure with this Likert-type measure, and punitiveness remained a significant indicator of support for killing someone who has raped a child (OR = 1.353, $p < .001$) and for killing someone who frightens the community (OR = 1.306, $p < .001$).

Third, as discussed, nonresponse for *Institutional trust* can be accounted for by other variables in the models (i.e., *Social status*). Nevertheless, as a robustness check, values for *Institutional trust* were imputed by using all other variables in the analysis and the univariate regression-based imputation technique. The full models were estimated by using imputed values for *Institutional trust* ($n = 22{,}408$), and the substantive results remained for both outcomes.

Finally, province-level homicide rates may simply reflect differences in socioeconomic characteristics at the country level, such as economic development or income inequality (Nivette, 2011). To examine this possibility, two further models were run incorporating country-level measures of economic development (measured by GDP per capita from 2011; World Bank, 2015a) and income inequality (measured by the Gini Index from 2011 or nearest year; World Bank, 2015b) into the full model. As a result of the small number of countries, separate models were run for each country-level predictor. A country's level of economic inequality had no direct effect on public support for lethal vigilantism in either situation, nor did the addition of the variable alter the individual- or province-level results. Economic development did not affect support for lethal vigilantism in response to raping a child, but it did have a small negative effect on approval of lethal vigilantism in response to someone threatening the community (OR = .999, $p < .05$). However, the substantive individual- and province-level results remained. In addition, to check the robustness of the relationship between objective statelessness and support for lethal vigilantism, a model was run replacing province-level homicide rates with country-level rates from 2011 or nearest year (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). In line with province-level results, homicide rates had no effect on support for killing someone who has raped a child, whereas respondents in countries with high levels of criminal violence are more likely to support the use of lethal violence against those who threaten the community (OR = 1.329, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

Researchers have long asserted that public support for vigilante violence stems from the absence of formal justice institutions. A great deal of cross-cultural qualitative evidence exists to support this claim. However, few studies have statistically assessed the relationship between "statelessness" and public support for vigilantism, and none have done so by using a cross-national, multilevel framework. Following calls from Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma (2012, 2014), this article sought to move beyond broad conceptualizations of vigilantism as "taking the law into one's own hands" by using measures that incorporate situational characteristics: killing someone who rapes a son or daughter and killing someone who frightens the community. By drawing from extant literature on vigilantism and self-help, two interrelated dimensions of statelessness were theorized to increase support for vigilantism: institutional ineffectiveness and illegitimacy. When controlling for a wide range of potential confounds, the results show that the most robust predictors of support for lethal vigilantism are indicators of institutional illegitimacy. Indicators of perceived institutional ineffectiveness were inconsistently related to support for vigilantism, with the exception of personal victimization, which increased support for the use of violence in both scenarios by 1.21 times and 1.27 times, respectively. Although objective insecurity (homicide rates) had no effect on support for killing someone who has raped a child, exposure to high homicide rates, both locally and nationwide, significantly increased the likelihood of support for killing someone who frightens the community. Evidence also exists that punitive attitudes, low social status, feelings of economic insecurity, and a lack of generalized trust foster public support for vigilantism.

These results advance our understanding of violent vigilantism in at least four ways. First, in line with Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma's (2014) findings, levels of public support for vigilantism vary according to situational characteristics. Across countries, support for killing someone who has raped a child was higher (36.3 percent) than support for killing someone who threatens the community (20.8 percent). This suggests that judgments about appropriate vigilante punishments are sensitive to both the crime committed and the actors involved. These findings have methodological and theoretical implications for further research on vigilantism. Methodologically, given the growing evidence that situational factors in part determine the level of support for vigilantism, global questions that ask about "taking the law into one's own hands" should be avoided.

Theoretically, researchers must consider why certain situations evoke more or less support than others. In this case, why are people more likely to support the use of violence against sex offenders compared with individuals who frighten the community (e.g., gang members, organized crime leaders, and drug traffickers)? One possible answer stems from sociological research on the behavior of law (Black, 1976, 1998; Cooney, 2009). According to this perspective, the form, severity, and acceptability of violence used as punishment are determined by the position of actors in social space. In other words, the socioeconomic status of both the victims and offenders and the relationship between the two are necessary for predicting public support for vigilante killings. For example, Black (1998: 77) argued that vengeance is more likely between parties that are socially and economically independent: "People more readily kill those they can do without." Compared with a lone sex offender, gang members or drug traffickers often are more firmly ingrained in community social structures. Criminal groups that control a community by fear and threat of violence sometimes fulfill security roles, as well as provide social services and (illicit)

economic opportunities in the absence of the state (Gutiérrez Sanín and Jaramillo, 2004; Perlman, 2010). In the words of one São Paulo resident describing the arrival of a criminal group (the PCC) in the community (quoted in Willis, 2009: 173):

> This place has never been safer in the 18 years that I have lived here. Before, we used to have to hide and not go out at night because of the violence and gun fights. Now, with [the PCC] here … things are better than they have ever been. You have to be careful though, always blind, deaf and dumb.

As a result, residents unwillingly become socially and economically dependent on criminal groups, reducing the likelihood of vengeance (Black, 1998).

Second, in line with a great deal of qualitative research and case studies, in the absence of the state and access to law, support for informal methods of social control increases. These effects are robust across model specification and, with some exceptions, situational characteristics. More specifically, where formal institutions lack legitimacy and fail to provide security, people are more likely to support extralegal means of crime control. These findings add to emergent research on the criminogenic consequences of losing legitimacy (Jackson et al., 2012; LaFree, 1998; Nivette, 2014; Nivette and Eisner, 2013; Tankebe, 2009). Police misconduct and a lack of trust in formal institutions to solve community conflicts leads citizens to reject the state's monopoly of physical force and seek out alternative sources of conflict resolution and social control, including vigilantism (Nivette, 2014). Likewise, one can argue that individuals who have been victimized by crime in the past 12 months have personally experienced the state's limitations of protection, and in Rosenbaum and Sederberg's (1978) terms, these citizens have been "deprived" of security. Results for other measures of ineffectiveness, namely perceived likelihood of justice and community gang problems, were mixed. However, given the conceptual relationship between institutional effectiveness and legitimacy (Tankebe, 2013), as well as the cross-sectional design of this study, there is not enough evidence to draw firm conclusions regarding these effects. It is likely that ineffectiveness feeds into citizens' perceptions of institutional legitimacy, which in turn affects support for vigilantism.

Third, objective insecurity only increases support for vigilantism in certain situations. Support for the use of extralegal violence against sex offenders did not depend on area homicide rates. By drawing from the punitiveness literature, individuals exposed to high levels of violence should support more punitive, and even extralegal, measures of crime control (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld, 2003). However, the situation-specific effects suggest that support for vigilantism is not purely instrumental as it does not always coincide with objective risk. Godoy (2004) pointed out that lethal vigilantism often is used for punishing minor crimes such as theft (also Vilas, 2001). In a survey of 93 lynchings in Ecuador, Castillo Claudett (2000: 214) reported that 48 percent of lynchings occurred in response to general theft, 32 percent in response to theft of cattle, and only 2 percent (2 cases) in response to murder. Alternatively, some have argued that the risk of victimization, as understood by the public, is constructed by political actors to gain electoral support (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld, 2003; Beckett and Sasson, 2000; Roberts and Hough, 2002). Public officials, often reinforced by the media, draw from common fears of the "other" to construct a credible threat to public security (Beckett, 1994). Sex offenders in particular have been subject to "othering" by politicians and the media, who typically use what Lynch (2002: 532) described as "a constellation of emotional expressions of

disgust, fear of contagion, and pollution avoidance" to implement more punitive policies, such as civil commitment, sex offender registries, and chemical castration. This discourse of dehumanization coupled with the implementation of severe punishments by formal authorities can shape the public's perceived risk of sexual victimization and legitimize the use of both legal and extralegal violence against sex offenders.

It is important to note that provincial homicide rates broadly reflect residents' risk of violent victimization and, therefore, may not accurately capture an individual's objective risk of sexual victimization. Homicide rates likely reflect the type of victimization risk more relevant for the second scenario, which depicts a situation in which criminal groups (e.g., gangs, organized crime groups, and drug traffickers) hold power over communities and local residents (Perlman, 2010; Rodgers, 2008). In Latin America, a substantial proportion of homicides are gang-related, and conflict over drug trafficking routes and territory can dramatically increase levels of violence against rival groups and residents (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). This means that individuals exposed to high levels of provincial homicide also are likely to be exposed to gang or organized crime activity. Homicide rates can therefore be interpreted as the objective risk of exposure to both conventional violence and gang/organized crime activity, which bears directly on an individual's support for vigilante violence against members of criminal groups.

Fourth, these findings also suggest that support for vigilantism is not just about the function and legitimacy of formal institutions, nor is support simply the outcome of insecurity. Support for vigilantism, and particularly the use of extralegal violence, is in part explained by an individual's broader attitudes toward punishment or punitiveness. Criminologists have previously drawn parallels between legal and extralegal social control, yet research strands on vigilantism and punishment have remained largely independent. This study shows that conventional attitudes toward legal punishment play a significant role in determining support for extralegal punishments. The rich body of research on punitive attitudes can greatly inform our understanding of public support for vigilantism.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. First, although a wide range of individual-level indicators were used to capture dimensions of insecurity and institutional legitimacy, the measures are nevertheless imperfect operationalizations of complex and interwoven institutional conditions such as effectiveness and legitimacy. In criminology, there is a growing debate on how to measure institutional legitimacy (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012; Eisner and Nivette, 2013; Tankebe, 2013) and whether operationalizations should incorporate both subjective and objective measures of key dimensions of legitimacy, that is, legality, fairness, and equality (Gilley, 2009; Nivette and Eisner, 2013). This study was not able to incorporate alternative objective measures of institutional weaknesses, such as the number of police per area, conviction rates, the provision of legal services, or the extent of political and police corruption. Furthermore, as a result of the difficulty of comparing crime categories across countries, this study was limited to using homicide rates as an indicator of objective conditions of security. Subnational patterns of criminal violence likely reflect complex constellations of social, political, and economic factors. For example, in Brazil, Hoelscher (2015: 38) found that municipal-level homicide rates were driven in part by "semi-democratic political-institutional contexts" that "create conditions where violence

becomes a viable tactic in solving disputes or gaining advantage in personal or political realms." As such, both homicide rates and support for vigilantism may be a by-product of institutional characteristics that incentivize violence as self-help. Future studies should try to disentangle these effects by incorporating more objective and subjective multidimensional measures of institutional conditions.

Second, this study is limited to one wave of the AmericasBarometer, and so it is not possible to establish a causal relationship between institutional weakness and support for vigilantism. Endogeneity concerns persist. For instance, one may argue that individuals who support the use of lethal violence are more likely to put themselves in risky situations, which can lead to higher victimization. Recent research also has suggested that negative perceptions of the law might act as a neutralization technique, meaning that individuals involved in illegal acts may develop negative attitudes toward authorities to justify previous wrongdoing (Eisner and Nivette, 2013; Nivette et al., 2015). As such, an important variable missing from this theoretical model is prior engagement in criminal activities. To address these endogeneity issues, researchers should use longitudinal data and between-subjects experimental designs (Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma, 2012).

Third, the vignettes used to represent two situations that reflect the use of vigilante violence are limited in that they do not specify key details of the actors involved. Little information is given about the perceived offender, the victims, and the perpetrator of vigilante violence. Research has shown that attitudes toward sentencing and punishment are dependent on the severity of the crime, offender characteristics, and the amount of harm suffered by the victims (Payne et al., 2004). Thus, there is likely a certain degree of noise in the outcome variable as respondents mentally impute these characteristics into the scenarios. Following Haas, de Keijser, and Bruinsma (2012, 2014), future studies should incorporate situational effects and offender characteristics into models of vigilantism by using vignettes and experimental design.

Finally, this study has been concerned with explaining support for vigilantism, and so we cannot draw conclusions about actual engagement in vigilante behaviors. Although evidence exists that support is linked to actual involvement in vigilantism (Weisburd, 1988), more generally theoretical and empirical research on involvement in vigilantism is lacking. Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1978) hypothesized that the intensity and scope of feelings of statelessness combined with the intensity and scope of support for vigilantism significantly increase the likelihood of actual vigilante violence. In addition, the capacity of the state to control extralegal violence and, relatedly, the state's own support for vigilante actions also bear directly on the magnitude of violence. Future research should move beyond models of support for vigilante violence to examine determinants of violent extralegal behaviors.

Despite these limitations, this study advances vigilantism research beyond individual case studies and toward a criminological model of support for extralegal social control. Support for the use of lethal vigilantism stems from multiple individual, situational, and contextual sources, in particular, (mis)conduct within formal political and criminal justice institutions. Violent vigilantism is not a unique social phenomenon but merely one type of informal control (Black, 1983; Jacobs, Carmichael, and Kent, 2005). Theories and explanations of public opinion about vigilantism, therefore, require a broader understanding of how individuals form judgments about rightful punishments and punitive crime control measures (Weisburd, 1988).

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Appendix A. Description of Variables Used in the Analysis

Variable	Item
Institutional trust	"To what extent do you think that courts in (country) guarantee a fair trial?" "To what extent do you respect the political institutions of (country)?" "To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of (country)?" "To what extent do you think that one should support the political system of (country)?" "To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of (country)?" "To what extent do you trust the justice system?" "To what extent do you trust the (Supreme Electoral Tribunal)?" "To what extent do you trust the (National Legislature)?" "To what extent do you trust the (National Police)?" "To what extent do you trust the (President/Prime Minister)?" "To what extent do you trust the (Supreme Court)?" "To what extent do you trust elections in this country?"
Police criminality	"Some people say that the police in this community (town, village) protect people from criminals, while others say that the police are involved in the criminal activity. What do you think?"
Bribe experiences	"Has a police officer asked you for a bribe in the last twelve months?"
Likelihood of justice	"If you were a victim of a robbery or assault how much faith do you have that the judicial system would punish the guilty?"
Gang problem	"To what extent do you think your neighborhood is affected by gangs?"
Victimization	"Have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months? That is, have you been a victim of robbery, burglary, assault, fraud, blackmail, extortion, violent threats or any other type of crime in the past 12 months?"
Mano dura attitudes	"Do you think that our country needs a government with an iron fist, or do you think that problems can be resolved with everyone's participation?"
Punitiveness	"In your opinion, what should be done to reduce crime in a country like ours . . . ?"
Country economy	"How would you describe the country's economic situation?"
Personal economy	"How would you describe your overall economic situation?"
Trust	"And speaking of the people from around here, would you say that people in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy . . . ?"
Parenthood	"Do you have any children? How many?"
Urban	Coded by interviewer, based on country's definition of urban/rural.

Variable	Item
Male	Gender, coded by interviewer.
Unemployed	"How do you mainly spend your time? Are you currently…"
Educational attainment	"How many years of schooling have you completed?"
Age	Age calculated at time of interview based on birth date.

NOTE: All variables are drawn from LAPOP (2015c), AmericasBarometer Core Questionnaire.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

SOURCES FOR PROVINCIAL HOMICIDE RATES