

Negative Partisanship in Latin America

Abstract

The literature on comparative partisanship has demonstrated the low rates of party identification in Latin America. Such low rates are commonly interpreted as a sign of citizens' disengagement with parties and democracy in the region. This paper revisits this interpretation by considering voters' adverse affection towards a party, or negative partisanship. We show that examining the negative side of partisanship can help us develop a clearer perspective of the partisan linkages in the electorate. To support this claim, we analyze an original conjoint experiment in Argentina and Mexico, as well as two other public opinion surveys fielded in Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador. The study presents empirical evidence indicating that negative partisanship helps voters without an attachment to a party to distinguish themselves from non-partisans, is independent of positive partisanship, and is different from a general distrust of the democratic system.

Keywords: Parties, partisanship, elections, Latin America, political behavior

Introduction

Party identification is one of the most important concepts in political behavior. Voters who identify with a political party are more likely to be politically engaged and knowledgeable (Campbell et al., 1960; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991; Green,

Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002). Party identification is also an important determinant of political participation (Verba, Nie, and Kim, 1978; Finkel and Opp, 1991; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008; Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe, 2014), and it contributes to the stability of the party system (Converse, 1969; Lijphart, Rogowski, and Weaver, 1993; Dalton and Weldon, 2007).

It should not be surprising, then, to observe the pessimistic diagnoses about countries with low or declining levels of partisanship. In Latin America, for example, only about 25% of citizens identify with a political party, a decline from 35% a decade ago (Cohen, Lupu, and Zechmeister, 2017, p. 25). These modest numbers have been explained as the result of the region's economic policies and weak institutions (Hagopian, 1998; Roberts, 2004; Mainwaring and Zoco, 2007; Lupu, 2016). Other works consider the low levels of partisanship a key input to understand the importance of candidates' personal attributes, campaign dynamics, and clientelistic networks in the region (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Greene, 2011; Lupu, Oliveros, and Schiumerini, 2019). All these works share the assumption that voters with *no* partisan identification show more unstable attitudes and vulnerability to short-term forces when defining their vote choice.

This paper explores an alternative, complementary perspective on voters' partisan linkages in the region. We argue that the documented low levels of partisanship do not necessarily imply the irrelevance of party brands. In particular, we show that many voters who are hesitant to express their positive partisanship are able to identify a party they would *never* support. Consider, for example, the evidence from the 2019 LAPOP survey. By only including those individuals expressing a positive identification, the levels of

partisan linkages in Chile and Ecuador are 18% and 22%, respectively.¹ Once we also consider the share of individuals who feel an aversion towards a party—referred to in the literature as negative partisanship—the levels of partisan linkages increase to 35% in Chile and 37% in Ecuador. Motivated by this overlooked type of partisan linkage, we explore how negative partisanship serves voters in the region as a reference point in the political arena.

We posit that negative partisanship is an important component of how voters relate to parties and the political system in Latin America. We do so in three ways. First, using an original conjoint experiment in Argentina and Mexico, we demonstrate that negative partisanship helps voters to distinguish themselves from non-partisans. In fact, our results show that negative partisans are better able to do so than voters who have a positive partisanship. Our research design allows us to separate the effects driven by negative partisanship from other non-political factors that might be correlated with it. Second, we take advantage of a panel survey from Brazil to compare the evolution of negative and positive partisanship at the individual level across time and show that negative partisanship is independent of its positive counterpart. Finally, using data from the LAPOP survey in Chile and Ecuador, which includes a battery of questions measuring negative partisanship and political values, we distinguish negative partisanship from skeptical attitudes towards democracy.

This paper relates to the emerging literature about negative partisanship (Caruana, McGregor, and Stephenson, 2015; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016; Medeiros and Noël,

¹ We focus on these two countries because their respective questionnaires include measurements of positive partisanship, or whether the respondent identifies with a party, as well as negative partisanship, measured as whether the respondent dislikes a party.

2014; Mayer, 2017; Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Bankert, 2020). In particular, we build on Samuels and Zucco's (2018) seminal study and provide new evidence about the relevance of this concept for distinguishing among different types of voters who do not necessarily feel close to any political party in Latin America. However, we depart from the aforementioned studies in two ways. First, we show the asymmetrical strength of positive and negative partisanship. In particular, our empirical analysis demonstrates that the affections of negative partisans are stronger predictors of perceived social similarity than those of positive partisans. Second, we emphasize that citizens' negative affections towards parties do not necessarily extend to the entire political system. While negative partisans in Brazil are more skeptical about democracy (Samuels and Zucco, 2018), we argue that this is not necessarily the case for other countries in the region.

Negative Partisanship as a Way of Defining What Voters Are Not

Negative partisanship is generally defined as an adverse affection towards a political party. The works on this type of partisanship focus on the emotional component of this attitude, which is interpreted as a “negative evaluation” (Maggiotto and Piereson, 1977), an “affective repulsion” (Caruana, McGregor, and Stephenson, 2015), or the “repelling quality” of a party (Garry, 2007). While the original conception of party identification considered it as “positive or negative, of some degree of intensity” (Campbell et al., 1960, p. 122), negative partisanship is frequently overlooked and relegated as the flip side of its positive counterpart (Fiorina, 1981; Green and Citrin, 1994a).

In this paper, we consider negative partisanship as an example of

disidentification, a concept coined in the literature on social and organizational psychology to explain how individuals can define themselves based on what they are not. Disidentification involves the explicit distancing of the individual from unwanted stereotypes or categorizations (Dukerich, Kramer, and McLean Parks, 1998, p. 245).¹ An important assumption of this concept is that in-group preferences and out-group prejudices are “two different constructs” (Brewer, 2011, p. 83). This implies that disidentification with one group may occur independently from a change in the individual’s feeling of closeness to a different group (Elsbach, 1998). Such a distinction allows, for example, citizens to identify themselves as far away from the National Rifle Association even if they do not feel close to a specific gun control advocacy group (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001).

The independence of positive and negative affections has been well documented in a variety of fields. Consumer research, for example, distinguishes between two types of behaviors: non-choice and anti-choice (Banister and Hogg, 2001; Koenderink, 2014). While the former refers to the consumers’ disinterest, “anti-choice” is their explicit decision to not purchase a product from a brand related to a stereotype they do not want to be associated with (Hogg and Banister, 2001). Similarly, many accounts of humor and comedy avoid emphasizing a positive bias towards an in-group and instead center around victimizing a character we do not identify with (Zillmann, 2000). Sports fans enjoy a victory for their team as much as a defeat of a hated rival (Wann et al., 2001; Cikara, Botvinich, and Fiske, 2011), the latter being more relevant among fans of under-performing teams (Warner, 2009).

After having characterized negative partisanship, we can describe some of its

properties as it relates to voters across the region. First of all, negative partisans will perceive themselves as socially distant from supporters of the party they dislike. This expectation is a corollary of optimal distinctiveness theory, which has demonstrated that individuals balance two powerful, opposing social motives: social inclusion and differentiation from others (Brewer, 1998, 2011). A highly exclusive group satisfies individuals' need for differentiation from others but activates their need for social inclusion. In contrast, and relevant to our argument, highly inclusive groups satisfy the need for assimilation but activate the need for differentiation from other group members. In the case of voters with no positive attachments to a party, they try to distinguish themselves from other "non-partisans" by emphasizing their distance from the party they dislike the most. In other words, the heterogeneity of the non-partisan category activates citizens' need to distinguish themselves from other members by emphasizing the party they are the *least* likely to support.

Just as individuals classified as "non-religious" often specify their opposition to a particular belief or religious organization (Baker and Smith, 2009), voters form a negative partisanship to distinguish themselves from other non-partisans by building a negative attachment towards the party whose members are perceived as being very different. As a result, in their quest to distinguish themselves from other non-partisans, negative partisans will perceive themselves as socially distant from supporters of the party they dislike.

Moreover, the sense of social distancing that negative partisanship produces should be stronger than the perceived resemblance that positive partisanship creates between supporters of the same party. Previous evidence demonstrates that negative

emotions, interactions, and social perceptions tend to outweigh positive ones (Rozin and Royzman, 2001; Baumeister et al., 2001; Vaish, Grossmann, and Woodward, 2008). Such an asymmetry is also present among voters, who often privilege negative information and emotions over their positive counterparts (Kernell, 1977; Lau, 1985; Goren, 2007; Soroka, 2014). In particular, this negativity bias should be stronger among voters who do not feel close to any political party, for they will be unable to counteract their negative affections (Haselmayer, Hirsch, and Jenny, 2020). Therefore, we expect that negative partisans' perceived distance from a supporter of the party they dislike is larger than the perceived proximity between supporters of the same party.

We also expect that negative partisans do not require an in-group reference to identify the party that they do not belong to (Caruana, McGregor, and Stephenson, 2015; Samuels and Zucco, 2018). Previous works on political behavior suggest that positive and negative partisanships have different psychological origins and should be considered as different constructs (Maggiotto and Piereson, 1977; Green and Citrin, 1994b; Weisberg and Greene, 2003; Bankert, 2020). Similarly, the literature on social and organizational psychology shows that out-group antagonism is built independently from in-group favoritism (Brewer, 1998, 1999; Zhong et al., 2008). In our case, even when an individual cannot feel close to any party, she may be able to notice which parties diverge the most from herself. As a result, positive partisanship does not need to precede the individual's negative identification with another party.

Finally, we distinguish negative partisanship from citizens' perceptions about democracy. In particular, we claim that the negative affection towards a party does not extend to the entire political system. As discussed above, voters' negative partisanship is

part of their self-image, which is centered on the rejection of the characteristics attached to an out-group. If this is the case, negative party identification should be unrelated to individuals' overall confidence in democracy as a political system. Recent works have already distinguished negative partisanship from other political attitudes like anti-establishment feelings (Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017) or political apathy by nonpartisans (Samuels and Zucco, 2018). We extend this proposition arguing that negative partisanship differs from a general distrust or anger towards democracy and political disaffection more broadly. Therefore, citizens' negative partisanship should not erode their attitudes towards democracy.

Empirical Analysis

While there is a growing literature on negative partisanship, the evidence on the topic is still scarce, particularly from cross-national comparative research. One of the main difficulties of studying negative partisanship using public opinion surveys is the lack of a consistent wording of survey questions that measure it. Some works identify negative partisans as those citizens rating a party in a feeling thermometer below an arbitrary threshold (Richardson, 1991; Maggiotto and Piereson, 1977; Stanga and Sheffield, 1987; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016). Other works account for whether citizens can mention a party they “would never vote for” (Rose and Mishler, 1998; Caruana, McGregor, and Stephenson, 2015; Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Given the scant data on the topic in Latin America, we leverage different data sources and measures of negative partisanship. Such an approach follows a few of the seminal cross-national studies on the topic (Medeiros and Noël, 2014; Mayer, 2017;

Samuels and Zucco, 2018) and is validated by the fact that the affective and behavioral measurements for negative partisanship are highly correlated (Ridge 2020). On the other hand, we recognize the shortcomings that using these different measures supposes for the generalizability of our findings. We explain the purposes of each data source below and provide a detailed description of each study and variable in the Online Appendix (OA).

Negative partisanship and social (dis)similarity

We first examine the strength of negative partisanship as a source of social similarity. In particular, we want to determine its relative importance over positive partisanship. The main challenge to examine this empirically, however, is to separate the impact of negative partisanship from other non-political factors that might be correlated with it (Shafranek 2019). Without doing so, the results may overemphasize the importance of negative partisanship on social distancing.

To address this problem, we use an original conjoint experiment embedded in two online surveys in Argentina and Mexico during the summer of 2018.² Conjoint experiments are a common tool in marketing to examine the importance that different product attributes have on consumer preferences. The use of conjoint experiments in political science has been useful to disentangle preferences over policy alternatives (Bechtel, Hainmueller, and Margalit 2017), immigration policies (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015), and vote choice (Franchino and Zucchini 2015). To test our particular theoretical expectation, a conjoint experiment offers two main advantages. First, conjoint experiments have been found to predict real-world behavior better than traditional survey experiments such as vignettes (Hainmueller et al. 2015). Second, this design allows us to

examine the relative influence that negative partisanship can have as a source of similarity or difference with respect to others vis-à-vis positive partisanship (and other non-political characteristics).

The first part of the survey included a battery of sociodemographic questions and inquired about the party voters identify with as well as the political party they “would never vote for” (if any).³ The estimated rates for positive and negative partisanship were 31% and 86% in Argentina, and 42% and 89% in Mexico.⁴ For the conjoint part of the survey, respondents were presented with a pair of hypothetical citizens and asked to choose the one who “is more similar to you.”⁵ We chose this paired profile with a forced-choice design given that it is known to outperform other designs (e.g., single profile design) both in reflecting actual decision-making processes as well as in mirroring the substantive effects of attributes observed in the real world (Hainmueller et al., 2015).

The profiles of the hypothetical citizens included a random combination of political and non-political attributes that could influence whether a respondent perceives others as more or less similar (e.g., Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudent 1944; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002).⁶ These attributes were party identification (the main treatment of interest),⁷ gender, occupation, religion, region of residence, ethnicity (for the Mexican survey),⁸ and perceived likeability.⁹ Every respondent repeated this exercise for five hypothetical citizen pairs.¹⁰

The goal of a conjoint analysis is to quantify the premium or the penalty that each attribute has for the individual to identify herself with the hypothetical subject. Specifically, we estimate the marginal effect of each attribute against a baseline, or the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE) (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto,

2013). To obtain the AMCE, we regress the dependent variable—in this case, whether the hypothetical citizen was chosen as “more similar” to the respondent—on a battery of dummy variables, each of them representing a specific attribute level. The regression excludes the estimation of one level per attribute, which works as the baseline category. Since the attributes of each profile are fully randomized, the AMCE should be interpreted as the average difference in the probability that a profile is chosen when it includes the listed attribute value in comparison with the baseline attribute value.¹¹

We expect a negative and statistically significant value of the AMCE of the party attribute that matches the respondent’s negative partisanship. That is to say, respondents are less likely to find similarities with a hypothetical supporter of the party they dislike than with a hypothetical individual with no party identification (our baseline category). Moreover, the magnitude of the AMCE for negative partisanship should be larger than the one observed between a respondent and a hypothetical individual who supports the same party.

Figure 1 summarizes the AMCEs coming out of the different models for each sub-group of positive and negative identifiers of the three most popular parties in each country.¹² The plots show that, for each sub-group of negative partisans, the fact that a hypothetical citizen identifies with the party for which they have negative preferences decreases the probability that they consider him/her *more similar to themselves*, compared to a non-partisan individual. In Argentina, the magnitude of the effect is about 0.30 across groups of negative partisans. In Mexico, the effect among groups of negative partisans varies from 0.20 for the PRI or PAN to about 0.30 for MORENA. Figure B8 in the OA further suggests that, for each sub-group of negative partisans, the magnitude of

the effect for the partisan affiliation of the hypothetical individual exceeds the effect reported for any other attribute in the conjoint. In Argentina, for example, for all three groups of negative partisans, the effect of the party attribute that matches their negative preference is at least three times larger than the one corresponding to someone “hated by everyone.”

Furthermore, the negative AMCEs of each party level are higher than the positive AMCEs in both countries.¹³ To illustrate this trend, consider the case of the PRI in Mexico in Figure 1. PRI’s negative partisans are 20% less likely to find a resemblance between themselves and a PRI partisan in comparison to a non-partisan individual. By contrast, among PRI’s positive partisans, there is no statistical difference between the perceived resemblance to a hypothetical PRI partisan and what is reported for a hypothetical non-partisan. A similar situation appears for Argentina’s FPV. Changing the partisanship of a hypothetical individual from non-partisan to FPV decreases the probability that they would choose the profile by 30%. By contrast, FPV’s positive partisans are equally likely to find a resemblance between themselves and another FPV supporter than between themselves and a non-partisan. The exception to this trend is the effect of Mexico’s PAN, where their AMCEs denote similar magnitudes between negative and positive partisans (0.20).

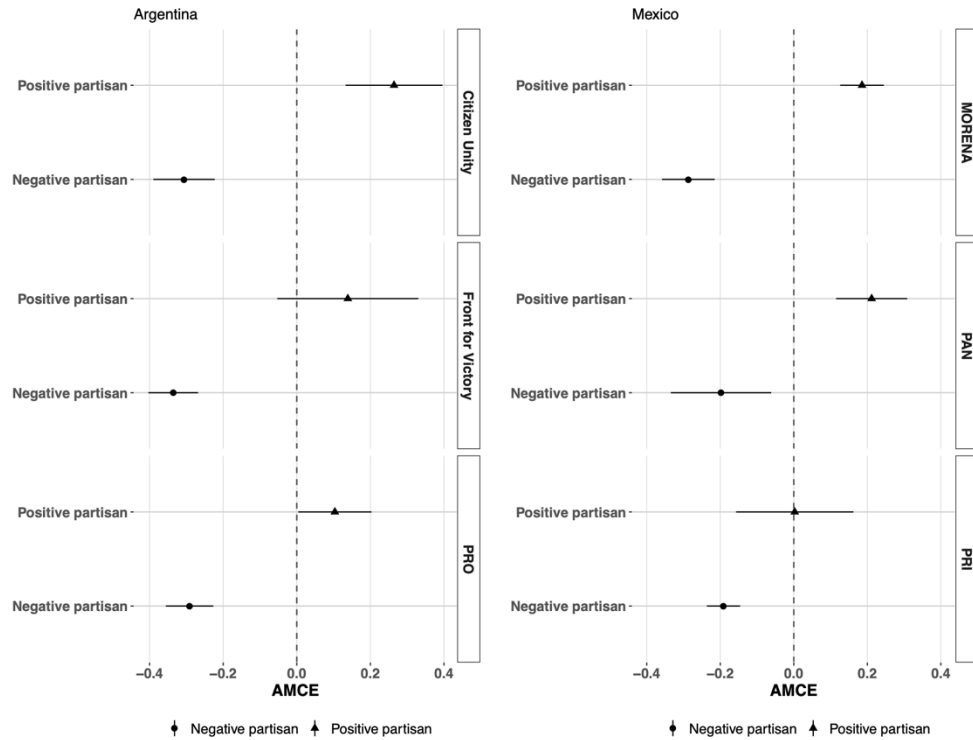


Figure 1: Average Effects of the Partisanship of a Hypothetical Citizen on the Probability of considering him/her more similar to yourself in Argentina and Mexico: negative and positive identifiers of each party. (Note: Each facet indicates the party with which respondents negatively or positively identify. Each circle represents the estimated average marginal component effect (AMCE) of the level of the party attribute of that same party on a respondent's probability of choosing a hypothetical individual containing that attribute level, compared against another individual with the baseline level for the same attribute. The horizontal bars represent 95% confidence intervals robust to clustering at the respondent level. The baseline level ("no party identification") is not included in the Figure. Models are run separately for each party's negative and positive

partisans.)

An alternative explanation to our results might focus on the ideological location of the individuals rather than their dislike towards certain parties. In other words, it could be the case that respondents view others as different from themselves because they are simply on the opposite ideological or policy continuum rather than because of their partisanship. However, Figures B9 and B10 in the OA show that the results hold after grouping respondents according to their ideological position.¹⁴

Alternatively, our results could be driven by “hard-core respondents,” or those individuals having both positive and negative partisanship. If this is the case, our results could be masking an effect of positive partisanship: voters could be less likely to find similarities with a hypothetical supporter of a party not because they *dislike* this party but because they identify with another party whose supporters are very different from this hypothetical supporter. To verify this possibility, Figure B11 in the OA restricts the analysis to negative-only partisans. The results show that these respondents are still less likely to find a resemblance between themselves and supporters of the party they dislike. In Mexico, PRI has the highest effect among all party levels and attributes (0.15), followed by MORENA (0.10). In Argentina, FPV has the highest effect (0.21) among all party levels and attributes.

In sum, the findings of this conjoint study suggest that negative partisanship helps voters to distinguish themselves from other voters in the political arena to a greater extent than positive partisanship.

Negative Partisanship as an Independent Force

We now provide evidence against the conceptualization of negative partisanship as just the flip side of positive partisanship (Maggiotto and Piereson 1977; Green and Citrin 1994, Medeiros and Noël 2013). To demonstrate that both types of partisanship are independent from each other, we need to show that the probability of having a negative attachment is not preceded by a positive one. We do so using data from a four-wave panel survey in two Brazilian cities (Baker et al., 2016).¹⁵ The advantage of using a panel for answering this question lies in the fact that we can compare the evolution of partisanship at the individual level across time. This survey is, to the best of our knowledge, the only panel survey in Latin America that includes questions on both positive and negative partisanship.

We estimate the relationship between positive and negative partisanship using a cross-lagged structural equation to verify whether positive identification at $t-1$ precedes negative partisanship at t (Finkel, 1995). In other words, having repeated answers for the same individuals over time allows us to check whether positive identification comes before a negative one for any given voter. This approach follows what Lupu (2015) does with the same data to check the relationship between party identification and vote choice.

For this analysis, positive partisanship accounts for whether an individual reported being identified with a political party. To measure negative partisanship, we identify those responses in the parties' feeling thermometers with a value equal to 0 on a 0-10 scale. This operationalization of negative partisanship is similar to that used in other works (Richardson, 1991; Maggiotto and Piereson, 1977; Stanga and Sheffield, 1987; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016), and it is the only question offered by the survey to

measure our main concept of interest. However, the main caveat of using this as a proxy for negative partisanship is the documented poor reliability of feeling thermometers when applied to ambiguous or not very salient issues (Lupton and Jacoby 2016). This concern is particularly relevant for studying partisanship in Latin America where the thermometer answers for small or new parties are likely to contain a high level of noise. We also control for socio-demographic variables such as the respondent's education, residence, and race.¹⁶

Table 1 shows the results of the structural equation model. The most relevant finding is that lagged positive partisanship does not increase the probability for the individual to report negative partisanship. If anything, the negative sign of this relationship suggests that having a positive party identification at time $t-1$ decreases the probability that an individual reports a negative one at time t . Table 1 also shows that individuals who have consistent party attachments and those with either positive or negative identification in the past are more likely to report the same type of identification in the present.

Table 1: Positive and Negative Partisanship in Brazil.

Source: Brazil Two-City Panel Study, 2002-2006.

	(1) Negative Partisanship	(2) Positive Partisanship
Lagged Positive Partisanship	-0.047*** (0.017)	0.486*** (0.016)
Lagged Negative Partisanship	0.197*** (0.018)	0.006 (0.015)
Education	-0.001 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Female	-0.015 (0.017)	-0.025 (0.016)
Race	-0.010 (0.010)	0.023* (0.009)
Juiz de Fora	-0.008 (0.018)	-0.050** (0.016)
Constant	0.386*** (0.033)	0.193*** (0.029)
σ	0.232*** (0.002)	0.188*** (0.004)
Observations	3259	3259

*Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$*

Negative partisanship and anti-system attitudes

Our last piece of evidence shows that negative partisanship is different from a general distrust of the democratic process or a symptom of political apathy. The conventional expectation is that negative partisans would be less committed to democracy than other voter groups. To verify this possibility, we use data from the last LAPOP wave in Chile and Ecuador,¹⁷ where the surveys included a measurement for negative partisanship (as shown in Figure 1) along with a standard battery of questions to measure democratic values and attitudes. These data allow us to check for negative partisanship's relationship with respondents' democratic values across two countries with very different levels of party system institutionalization and democratic performance (Mainwaring, 2018).

Our dependent variable is *Attitudes towards democracy*, which measures respondent's agreement (on a 1-to-7 scale), to the statement: "democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government." This question has been previously used to evaluate individuals' preferences for a democratic regime despite its practical shortcomings (Rose and Mishler, 1996; van Ham and Thomassen, 2017). If our expectation is correct, we should not find that negative partisanship negatively affects respondents' attitudes towards democracy.

We openly acknowledge two potential shortcomings of this measurement. The first one is that, since the question invites respondents to think about democracy in the abstract, it might overestimate their truthful level of support (Carlin and Singer 2011, Kiewet de Jonge, 2016). While we have no theoretical reason to expect that negative partisans are more likely to overreport their support towards democracy, we try to mitigate this concern with an alternative analysis that captures democratic attitudes in a less abstract way. The second limitation is that the effect of negative partisanship on

attitudes towards democracy might partially represent the overall effect generated by affective polarization, or citizens' hostility towards opposite parties and their supporters, coupled with attachments to their own preferred party (Mason 2015; Gidron et al. 2020). The literature on American politics has shown how political polarization fuels distrust towards the opposite party and their policies, diminishes trust in government, and ultimately erodes support for democracy (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; McCoy and Somer 2019). We verify this possibility by presenting additional models that sort respondents into the four groups defined by Samuels and Zucco (2018) and described in the Introduction: hardcore, partisan-only, negative-only, and non-partisans.

Our main independent variable is *Negative partisanship*, which indicates whether a respondent can mention a specific party she dislikes. The question available in this survey is similar to previous efforts to operationalize negative partisanship (Samuels and Zucco 2018; Ridge 2020).¹⁸ Our models include a battery of sociodemographic controls (education, age, gender), as well as other variables that might impact voters' attitudes towards democracy and their party identification. Following Samuels and Zucco (2018), we expect political interest to differ between negative partisans and non-partisans, as well as to impact voters' support for democracy (Booth and Seligson, 2009). *Political interest* is a categorical variable that goes from 1 to 4, where higher values indicate a higher interest in politics. We also control for respondents' *ideological extremism*, as this has been found to affect voter partisanship across the region (Lupu, 2015), as well as voter support for democracy (Dalton, 2004; Seligson, 2008). LAPOP asks respondents to place themselves on a 10-point left-right scale. *Ideological extremism* is the absolute difference between a respondent's ideology and the ideological center. The farther that respondents

place themselves from the midpoint of the scale (5.5), the more extreme their ideology.

Table 2: Attitudes towards democracy and negative partisanship

	Chile		Ecuador	
(1)		(2)	(3)	(4)
Positive partisanship	0.066 (0.140)		0.109 (0.103)	
Negative partisanship	0.152 (0.108)		0.111 (0.097)	
Positive only		0.305 (0.211)		0.154 (0.126)
Hardcore		0.109 (0.179)		0.176 (0.147)
Negative only		0.217* (0.116)		0.151 (0.115)
Age	0.015*** (0.003)	0.015*** (0.003)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.005*** (0.002)
Female	0.008 (0.086)	0.014 (0.086)	0.021 (0.082)	0.020 (0.082)
Education	0.055*** (0.014)	0.055*** (0.014)	0.042*** (0.011)	0.042*** (0.011)
Interest in Politics	0.238*** (0.048)	0.237*** (0.048)	0.161*** (0.046)	0.161*** (0.046)
Ideological Extremism (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.006)
Constant	3.452*** (0.235)	3.431*** (0.235)	3.555*** (0.197)	3.552*** (0.197)
Observations	1,299	1,299	1,399	1,399
R ²	0.072	0.073	0.033	0.033
Adjusted R ²	0.065	0.066	0.027	0.026
Residual Std. Error	1.527 (df =1289)	1.526 (df =1288)	1.500 (df =1389)	1.500 (df =1388)
F Statistic	11.079*** (df = 9; 1289)	10.210*** (df = 10; 1288)	5.231*** (df = 9; 1389)	4.745*** (df = 10;1388)

*Standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis by country. In comparison to non-partisan respondents, negative partisans seem to present similar levels of support towards

democracy. In addition, the results do not show any significant difference between non-partisans and hard-core partisans (columns 2 and 4) in their levels of support for democracy. If anything, as column (2) shows, respondents in the negative only category appear to be *more supportive* towards democracy, but the result is only significant at the 10% level. Altogether, these findings should ease concerns about our measure of negative partisanship capturing the effect of affective polarization on support for democracy. The results for our control variables follow the conventional expectation about support for democracy. That is, democracy is more likely to be supported among older, more educated, and informed respondents (Niemi and Junn, 1998; Carlin, 2006; Salinas and Booth, 2011).

There is a possibility that this null effect is an artifact of lumping together different types of negative partisans. In particular, it could be the case that negative partisans of incumbent parties are less supportive of democracy than other negative partisans. To check for this possibility, Table E1 in the Online Appendix separates negative partisans into two groups: those who have negative partisanship towards the incumbent party and those who have negative partisanship towards non-incumbent parties. The results show that neither type of negative partisan presents lower support for democracy than non-partisans. In fact, Chilean negative partisans of incumbent parties present more *positive* attitudes toward democracy than non-partisans.

Finally, to make sure that the null results are not a mere artifact of the survey question we used, Table E2 in the OA presents the analysis using as the dependent variable an additive index combining orientations to support a military coup, the dissolution of the Supreme Court of Justice, or the closure of the Legislative Assembly.¹⁹

Answers are coded so that support to anti-democratic events receive higher scores. The results again fail to show significant differences on democratic attitudes among partisan groups. If anything, and confirming the results from Table 2, there seems to be a negative correlation between anti-democratic attitudes for negative partisans of the incumbent party in Chile. In sum, we have no strong evidence to support the claim that negative partisans and non-partisans present significant differences in their support of democracy (Samuels and Zucco 2018).

Conclusion

For Elie Wiesel (1986), indifference is not the middle ground between love and hate, but the opposite of both of them. Echoing this idea, this manuscript proposes that not having a positive identification does not necessarily mean political apathy or disengagement towards the party system. Instead, voters can relate and identify themselves to parties by considering the party they dislike the most.

The findings of this study show that negative partisanship serves as an important notion for voters' political identification. Our experimental evidence from Argentina and Mexico shows that this type of partisanship is stronger than its positive counterpart in helping voters distinguish themselves from others. Furthermore, the analysis from two other surveys demonstrates that negative identification is independent of positive partisanship and different from anti-system attitudes.

Our study adds to the emerging literature on negative partisanship by providing more evidence about its relevance for voters. Our findings suggest that links between parties and voters in Latin America are more extensive than has been traditionally

assumed. By not taking into consideration the negative side of partisanship, we overlook an important way in which parties are relevant in the minds of voters. In particular, our study advances the idea that the low rates of positive partisanship found in most countries do not indicate an unengaged and apathetic citizenry. This concept can thus condition the claimed vulnerability and malleability of voters in the region.

The findings of this paper are limited to the attitudinal face of negative partisanship, complementing previous works suggesting their effect on vote choice, and political participation (Medeiros and Noël, 2014; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016; Mayer, 2017; Samuels and Zucco, 2018). We suggest a few of ways in which our analyses relate to important behavioral outcomes described in recent works. One of them has to do with the low levels of voters' responsiveness to vote-buying. As Greene (2021) shows, when parties distribute selective benefits, citizens consider not only the economic profits but also the symbolic value of exchanging their votes. In particular, targeted voters who initially dislike the clientelistic party ascribe malevolent motives to the benefit received and will be less likely to support it. This is a great example of how negative partisanship is important to distinguish opponents from indifferent voters and the different reactions that both groups can have.

A second implication has to do with voters' behavior when facing electoral coalitions on the ballot. Previous work has shown that electoral coalitions dilute parties' brands, weakening citizens' partisan attachments (Lupu 2016). Our findings suggest that a citizen is less likely to support the party she identifies with if it is in a coalition with a party they negatively identify with. As Gandhi and Ong (2020) demonstrate, partisans are likely to abandon an electoral coalition if its victory might result in their least preferred

policy outcome and there is a closer alternative to their policy preferences outside the coalition. In other words, negative partisanship can help us evaluate the success of a coalition by taking into account partisans' hostility towards other coalition members.

A third potential extension could explore the links between negative partisanship and satisfaction with democracy. While our research shows that negative partisans are as committed to democracy as other types of voters, they might be less satisfied with the way democracy functions where they live (Ridge 2020). This is an interesting tradeoff to explore in the future, and it opens the opportunity to test citizens' commitment to democracy when they are not satisfied with the way it works in their country.

Finally, future research could also analyze other features of negative partisanship. A potential extension of this research agenda involves explaining inter-party variation in negative identification. One way could involve understanding party-level characteristics, such as age, ideology, or incumbency status, that make parties more or less likely to have negative identifiers. A second potential extension of this research agenda could examine the strategies that political parties use to exploit negative partisanship against their rivals. This approach could be interesting in the context of multi-party competition and compulsory voting, such as in many Latin American countries. Future work could also dig deeper into the stability of negative partisanship over time as well as changes or stability in the object of this negative affection. Our findings regarding the non-existent relationship between support for democracy and negative partisanship in Chile and Ecuador could also be extended and explored in other Latin American countries.

Of course, one of the main limitations that scholars of the topic find nowadays is the lack of a systematic measurement for negative partisanship over time and across

countries. We hope that this paper serves as an invitation to pollsters and scholars for expanding their measurements of partisan attitudes besides positive identification.

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Notes

¹ Other works (Zhong et al., 2008) elaborate on the concept of *negational identity*, which centers on the rejection of the characteristic of an out-group.

² The surveys were fielded using an online panel of respondents from Survey Sampling International (SSI) between July 16th and August 16th in Argentina, and between July 30th and August 30th in Mexico. Participants were recruited to achieve a nationally representative sample based on age and gender quotas (see Tables B2 and B3 in OA for information on how the quotas compare to the final sample of respondents). After

checking and eliminating invalid responses, a total of 1,078 respondents completed the survey in Argentina and a total of 1,105 completed it in Mexico. As expected from online samples, respondents skewed urban, belonged to a higher socio-economic status and expressed higher levels of interest and attention to politics as well as political knowledge in both countries (see Figures A1 through and A4 in OA).

³ This measurement follows previous works operationalizing negative partisanship in the same way (Rose and Mishler, 1998; Caruana, McGregor, and Stephenson, 2015; Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). In the pilot surveys, we also examined an alternative wording of the question, which asked whether there was a party with which the respondent “identifies the least.” We randomized a subset of respondents to answer this question format and another subset to answer if there was a party for which they “would never vote for.” We decided on this second question format given that we found no difference in the performance of both question wordings. The question is also similar with what used in previous studies in both the American and the comparative literature.

⁴ Asking respondents about their positive and negative party identification before the conjoint experiment might have primed them by raising the saliency of these identifications. Further testing would be required to evaluate whether and how this flaw in our design affects the robustness of our initial findings. We thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this issue to our attention.

⁵ Section B in the OA describes the conjoint experiment in more detail and Figure B1 shows a screenshot of what the task looked like for respondents.

⁶ Our experimental design is robust to the range of diagnostic checks laid out in Hainmueller et al. (2013). Results from these tests can be found in the Online Appendix

(Figures B2 through B7). We find neither significant profile order, attribute order, or carryover effects.

⁷ The levels of this attribute were selected to show the most relevant parties in each country based on data from the most recent wave of the Americas Barometer at the time of the experiment (2016/2017).

⁸ Ethnicity was included as an attribute in the Mexican survey given that it is a relevant social cleavage (e.g., Aguilar et al. 2019) and could thus impact how Mexicans view or perceive others with respect to themselves.

⁹ Following Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2013), the order of the attributes was randomized at the respondent level and kept fixed across all pairings for each respondent to minimize primacy and recency effects.

¹⁰ Another attribute that could impact our main dependent variable is the ideology of a hypothetical citizen. We decided against its inclusion given that the survey already included an exercise tapping into respondents' ideology and policy positions before this experiment. Respondents would already have been primed to think about this issue, which could have affected the validity of our findings.

¹¹ All our results have the following baseline attribute values: none (for party identification), loved by everyone (for perceived likeability), men (for gender), unemployed (for occupation), city of Mexico or city of Buenos Aires (for region), none (for religion), and white (for ethnicity in the case of Mexico).

¹² These parties are: Front for Victory (FPV), Republican Proposal (PRO), and Citizen Unity in Argentina, and National Action Party (PAN), Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) in Mexico. The other

alternatives in our survey got fewer than 5% of the preferences in the positive partisanship question.

¹³ These results are not driven by unrealistic combinations of attributes (see Figure B12 in the OA)

¹⁴ The only exception to this is found for ideological rightists in Argentina, where the party attribute has a negative albeit statistically insignificant effect.

¹⁵ The first wave was in the field between March and April 2002 and the last wave was in the field in October 2006.

¹⁶ Information about the operationalization of control variables can be found in Table A6 in the OA.

¹⁷ Fieldwork for the Ecuador survey was conducted between January 22nd and March 29th of 2019, and between January 19th and March 28th for the Chile survey.

¹⁸ Table A7 in the Online Appendix provides more information about the questions used and the codification of the main independent and control variables.

¹⁹ The questions used for this index are the following: (q1) “Some people say that under some circumstances it would be justified for the military of this country to take power by a coup d'état (military coup). In your opinion would a military coup be justified under the following circumstances?” (q1a) “When there is a lot of crime” (q1b) “When there is a lot of corruption”; (q2) Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president of the country to close the Assembly and govern without the Assembly?”; (q3) “Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the president/prime minister of the country to dissolve the Supreme Court of Justice and govern without the Supreme Court of Justice?”

Respondents randomly answered either q1a or q1b and either q2 or q3.