



Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America (Pitt Latin American Series)

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When Americans and Latin Americans talk about democracy, are they imagining the same thing? For years, researchers have suspected that fundamental differences exist between how North Americans view and appraise the concept of democracy and how Latin Americans view the same term. These differences directly affect the evolution of democratization and political liberalization in the countries of the region, and understanding them has tremendous consequences for U.S.–Latin American relations. But until now there has been no hard data to make “the definition of democracy” visible, and thus able to be interpreted. This book, the culmination of a monumental survey project, is the first attempt to do so.

Camp headed a research team that in 1998 surveyed 1,200 citizens in three countries—three distinct cases of democratic transition. Costa Rica is alleged to be the most democratic in Latin America; Mexico is a country in transition toward democracy; Chile is returning to democracy after decades of severe repression. The survey was

carefully designed to show how the average citizen in each of these nations understands democracy.

In *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America*, ten leading scholars of the region analyze and interpret the results. Written with scholar and undergraduate in mind, the essays explore the countries individually, showing how the meaning of democracy varies among them. A key theme emerges: there is no uniform “Latin American” understanding of democracy, though the nations share important patterns. Other essays trace issues across boundaries, such as the role of ethnicity on perceptions of democracy. Several of the contributors also compare democratic norms in Latin America with those outside the region, including the United States. Concluding essays analyze the institutional and policy consequences of the data, including how attitudes toward private versus public ownership are linked to democratization.

Every essay in the collection is based on the same data set, included on a CD-ROM packaged within each book, resulting in an organically cohesive work ideally suited for use in courses introducing Latin American and Third World politics, comparative politics, democratic transition, and research methods. Scholars and students may use the software and data set on the CD-ROM for comparative research projects linked to the essays in the volume.



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