

Doctoral Dissertation Research: *Legitimizing the State or a Grievance?: Formal Property Rights and Political Engagement*

Overview:

When individuals gain legal rights, do they participate more in politics, or do they disengage from the state? This study seeks to answer this question by examining two related dynamics: (1) Whether the recognition of a formal right increase the state's legitimacy; and (2) whether new rights-bearers participate more in politics. Empirically, this project examines three rural land-titling programs in Colombia and Peru, including Colombia's ambitious new land restitution law which exclusively benefits victims of armed conflict. These titling policies offer a unique opportunity to study a change in legal tenure which does not significantly alter the underlying distribution of land, thereby isolating the impact of the change in legal rights.

NSF funding will specifically sponsor the qualitative data collection portion of this study's multi-method design. Fieldwork will include focus groups in eight villages and 40 to 50 individual interviews with small land-holders between both countries. These data will play a crucial role when interpreting results from statistical analyses of survey and voting data, including an original panel survey of beneficiaries of the Colombian land restitution policy. Concretely, qualitative interviews will provide powerful evidence of exactly *how* and *why* rights-recognition affects political behavior and attitudes — details that are inscrutable to standard statistical analysis.

Intellectual Merit:

This study is poised to make a meaningful contribution to political science and legal literature on the significance of legal rights and the political impact of property rights. Legal rights, and specifically property rights, are key to political theory on state legitimacy and are assumed to be powerful frames for political mobilization, promoting social change, and enforcing human rights. Yet existing literature has thus far left unexplored the relationship between rights-recognition and the development of political attitudes or behavior. When the state recognizes legal rights for individuals, do they trust and engage more with state institutions? Or do they develop more grievances and demands toward the state?

Developing theory and uncovering evidence on the link between formal rights and political behavior will inform many debates in political and legal research. While property rights play a central role in important theories on political change, institutional development, and democratization, the microfoundations of how property rights affect political behavior are not well-theorized and seldom studied empirically. This research will provide specific evidence on this interaction, and also help clarify the conditions under which legal rights incentivize political mobilization or engagement with the state. Finally, this study will provide a unique opportunity to identify the precise moment when an individual receives a legal right (often difficult to determine), and employs a mixture of methods rather than exclusively focusing on either individual case studies or broad casual impacts.

Broader Impact:

This project will produce valuable information on land titling policies and political engagement that will have broader policy implications. Many countries and international organizations are promoting land titling as a means to spark development in rural areas. However, evidence on the impact of such programs is mixed, producing weak effects in some places and no change in others. This study will help guide these efforts by providing a deeper understanding of how formal property rights affect the behavior of beneficiaries and the conditions under which a formal deed is either valuable or a worthless scrap of paper. Promoting rights and political participation for marginalized groups, such as the rural peasantry, are also important goals for consolidating democracy in Latin America and elsewhere around the world. Understanding how these processes interact and when they mutually support each other will help policymakers better reach both objectives. Finally, the broader scope of this study, which will examine land titling and land restitution policies in the context of Colombia's transitional peace and justice process, will provide valuable insight regarding the impact of land restitution and recognition of victims' rights on reconstruction and reparations efforts, both important goals for many post-conflict societies.

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I. Introduction

Can receiving a formal, legal right incentivize an individual to mobilize politically or engage more with the state? The centrality of rights in many social movements and much political discourse is highly suggestive that rights can motivate political participation. The idea of a right is also fundamental to normative theories on political legitimacy (Rawls 1999) and can serve as an important frame facilitating collective action (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). Property rights in particular, the focus of this dissertation, are central rights in liberal political theory (Locke 2014; Dworkin 1977), major factors in institutional change (North 1990), and arguably motivate participation through entitlements like social security (Romer 1996).

Yet despite the focus on rights in normative and social movement theories, two significant theoretical questions are still unresolved. First, does the legal right *itself*, as a symbolic justification of a claim, have any impact on political behavior independent of the underlying *endowment* or entitlement the right protects? In other words, is the legal promise of a right important, or just the underlying distribution of assets it represents?

Secondly, do rights incentivize participation or provoke disengagement with politics? Many skeptics doubt the power of rights-based claims to promote political mobilization (Rosenberg 2008; Glendon 2008), or engender political change (Brown 1995; Perry 2008). Indeed, if receiving a formal right increases the right-bearer's feeling of security over an interest, there may be no need to engage in "costly" political activities. Many have noticed that individuals in squatter settlements (De Soto 1989) or frontier zones (Alston, Harris, and Mueller 2012) have higher levels of community engagement specifically to compensate for weak property rights. In my preliminary fieldwork, Peruvian officials similarly noted a possible "atomizing" effect in which individuals participated less in community organizations after receiving a legal title. However, if rights are such powerful symbols, why would they incentivize mobilization in some instances while seemingly dampening participation in others?

This proposal will fund dissertation field work that will use qualitative methods to understand the mobilizing power of formal rights and to explain how rights can variably spark protests at times or demobilize groups at others. My dissertation examines three land titling laws, two in Colombia and one in Peru, that formalized possession of land for rural farmers with small landholdings. I will employ mixed methods to combine quantitative analysis on existing survey and government data with in-depth qualitative analysis. These methods can provide evidence on the likely causal relation between formalized rights and the development of attitudes and political behavior. More significantly, however, the qualitative analysis funded directly by this proposal will be crucial in developing theory regarding exactly *how* legal rights influence beliefs and behavior, an area of political and legal literature that has not been well-theorized despite being central to many significant ideas in both fields.

II. Theory and Intellectual Contribution

Understanding the relationship between a formal, legal right and political participation begins from the perspective that a legal right is an outward symbol of an individual's claim to an entitlement. A right in itself is an assertion that an interest is imperative and superior to other economic and practical considerations (Dworkin 1977). The formal recognition of the right by the state, either through legislation or the judiciary, will thus increase expectations that the right-bearer's claim ought to be respected by third parties and state institutions. A right will also provide a moral justification for making public claims to defend the underlying entitlement (Scheingold 2010). This change in perception then translates into an increased willingness to participate politically in order to protect an entitlement. I refer to this effect as the "legitimacy mechanism."

However, additional factors—primarily the expectation that the right will be enforced—will determine the *form* that this participation will take. When an individual has a high expectation that a right will be effectively enforced, then the granting of a new right will reinforce the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the rights-bearer. This will then incentivize increased engagement with formal state institutions (courts, elections, police, etc.) to protect the interest. However, where the expectation of enforcement is low, due to weak capacity or the lack of a credible commitment, the formal recognition of a right will only serve to legitimize grievances. This encourages political engagement *outside* of formal institutions and possibly contentious mobilization.

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The logic behind this theory depends on the likely connection between rights-recognition and perceptions of state legitimacy. Legitimacy is crucial for engendering deference toward state authority (Weber 1978, ch 3), and compliance with formal institutions (Tyler 2006). Prior studies have identified two sets of political factors that contribute to perceptions of state legitimacy: effectiveness of state institutions and fairness of procedures (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009; Hough, Jackson, and Bradford 2013).

If expectations of future enforcement are low, receiving a formal right will negatively influence perceptions of state legitimacy along both factors. The new right will reinforce beliefs that the state is ineffective or does not fairly protect “just” claims. This may reduce trust even below previous levels as new right-bearers now have a legitimate grievance against the state. If expectations for enforcement are high, however, recognizing a formal right will signal that institutions are functioning effectively and the use of a rights-framework will reinforce notions of the objective fairness of the legal system. The new rights-bearer will then participate in the form that seems most effective for protecting his or her interest—either from within or outside of the state. This, I argue, can explain why in some cases winning a right seems to demobilize groups: rather than decreasing political activity, it instead redirects it through formal (and often less visible) channels. This leads to my principal hypotheses reproduced in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Hypotheses of the Legitimacy Mechanism

<i>Prior belief about enforcement</i>	<i>Effect of rights recognition</i>		
	Rights Claim →	State Legitimacy →	Participation
Strong Enforcement	(+) legitimate claim	(+) state legitimacy	Formal institutions
Weak Enforcement	(+) legitimate claim	(-) state legitimacy	Informal, contentious.

A. *Property Rights*

This study examines the operation of the legitimacy mechanism in the specific case of individual property rights over rural land—rights that are significant for the development of institutions and political change (Engerman and Sokoloff 2000; Paige 1978). I understand a formal property right as one that is both defined and enforced by the state as a third-party guarantor of rights, and for which the landholder has a document (usually a title) that provides a reasonable expectation that the right will be recorded in a state registry and recognized by a court of law. Land formalization policies, which both deliver legal titles and create new registries, have proliferated in the last two decades to respond to the high degree of informality in land tenure in many countries (Deininger and Feder 2009; Conroy et al. 2014). These policies grant legal title to landholders who previously have incomplete or informal land rights, either due to long term possession of state lands or informal sales or transfers. Therefore, land formalization provides a precise moment when the state recognizes a formal, *de jure* right for an individual who already has some *de facto* control over land. I argue that this creates an opportunity to observe changes in the legal status of property rights that do not alter the underlying distribution of land itself.¹

A focus specifically on formalized property rights is a convenient starting place for studying the effect of state-recognized rights on political behavior in general. Property rights are central to much political theory examining the relationship between the state and the individual, and present a very concrete, tangible right that is intricately related to cross-cultural beliefs about justice and fairness. Rural property rights in particular are an interesting case, as land is highly significant for peasant identity, economic livelihood, and political movements (Thiesenhusen 1995). In addition, rural land tenure has played a key role in contentious politics historically (Skocpol 1979; Luebbert 1987), and continues to figure prominently in recent protests on agrarian policy in Colombia and mining in Peru (e.g. Arce 2014). Finally, titling programs offer an opportunity to easily measure the precise moment when legal recognition of the right occurs.

B. *Alternative Explanations for Political Participation — the “Endowment Mechanism”*

¹ To avoid complications with reverse causality and endogeneity, I exclude formalization programs that respond to recent land invasions and which likely operate under different political dynamics (see Dosh 2010; Albertus 2015).

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Although formalization does not change the underlying distribution of land, a formal title could still increase land value or expected future endowment by increasing a claim's clarity and guarantee of state protection (Feder and Feeny 1991). This change in endowment could then influence political attitudes and behavior by either increasing the the marginal benefit of investing in local public goods and community engagement (Di Pasquale and Glaeser 1999) or by creating an “investor class” of property owners (De Janvry et al. 2013), an effect I refer to as the “endowment mechanism.”

The basic prediction for this mechanism is similar to the legitimacy mechanism: land formalization will tend to promote political participation. However, these two mechanisms are distinguishable as they give very different predictions regarding the conditional effect of low expectations of future enforcement. Specifically, if expectations of future enforcement are low, this would negate the added value of a formal, legal title as the new title would effectively be worthless paper without state backing. Therefore, the endowment mechanism should produce *no effect* on behavior or attitudes where future expectation of enforcement is weak:

Table 2. Distinguishing the “Legitimacy” and “Endowment” Mechanisms

<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Strong Enforcement</i>	<i>Weak Enforcement</i>
Legitimacy	(+) State legitimacy; (+) Formal participation	(-) State legitimacy; (+) Informal participation
Endowment	(+) State legitimacy; (+) Formal participation	No effect

C. *Contribution to the Literature*

Theoretically, my dissertation will have implications for several areas of political and legal research. First, while a broad body of legal and political literature argues that rights-based frames are central for collective mobilization (Tarrow 1994; Schiengold 2010), few have examined the impacts of rights on *individual* behavior and none have attempted an empirical study to distinguish this effect from the demand for an underlying benefit or redistribution. This can have implications for debates on the effect of a rights-framework on legal mobilization (Rosenberg 2008; Schiengold 2010), demand for political change (O'Brien 1996; Perry 2008), and the enforceability of international human rights (Goodman and Jinx 2004; Simmons 2009).

Grievances over rural land tenure have long been highlighted as a cause of contentious mobilization (Paige 1978; Skocpol 1979), and newer research has shown that formal rights may also provide a channel for expressing these grievances and coordinating collective action around them (Saffon Sanin 2015, ms). However, prior literature assumes that rights will either spark mobilization for social change (Schiengold 2010) or reinforce existing institutional orders (Rosenberg 2008; Lorentzen and Scoggins 2015). My study will instead provide a framework for explaining how (and the conditions under which) rights can potentially lead to either outcome. Empirically, prior rights studies have focused almost exclusively on individual case studies of social movements in which rights are already recognized or a rights-frame has already been activated. This study will provide evidence based on both quantitative and qualitative data of within country variation to empirically test the effect of rights-recognition and distinguish its impact from other factors that could influence political participation.

This project can also contribute to broader debates on the political economy of property rights and political participation. The distribution of assets and its impact on political preferences are key mechanisms underlying influential work on democratic transitions (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005) and the consequences of inequality (Alesina and Rodrik 1994). However, work on the impacts of land formalization has focused overwhelmingly on its consequences for *economic* behavior (see Deininger and Feder 2009). Far fewer studies have examined the impact of formal property rights on the *political* behavior and beliefs of individuals. Two important exceptions have shown that formal rights may have an impact on preferences for redistribution (Di Tella, Galiani, and Schargrodsky 2007) and vote share for rightist parties (De Janvry, Gonzalez-Navarro, and Sadoulet 2014). However, these studies are limited either in scope (Di Tella et al. 2007) or rely on aggregated data to explain individual behavior (De Janvry et al. 2013), and fail to explore the theory and the causal mechanisms that could explain *why* formal rights cause changes in political attitudes or behavior.

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My study could also help inform debates regarding the determinants of political participation, by showing whether benefits granted through formal rights or entitlement programs (Romer 1996), have comparable effects on voter turnout as non-entitlement, poverty reduction programs (Zucco 2013; De la O 2015). This could help increase our understanding of the factors that influence political participation beyond the standard socioeconomic status models (e.g. Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995), which have proven to have limited explanatory power in regions like Latin America (Fornos, Power, and Garand 2004; Blais 2006). Finally, this research could have policy implications by providing evidence on whether land formalization can effectively incorporate marginalized communities into the national economy as many have claimed (De Soto 1989; MTC 2015).

III. Case Selection

This study will examine subnational variation in the impacts of three large, broadly-targeted, rural land formalization policies in Colombia and Peru as separate case studies. Both countries are suitable cases as they have recently engaged in titling campaigns over a large area of the national territory, and which formalized property rights for small-holding farmers who have been in possession of land for at least 5 years (see Figure 1). In addition, both policies were implemented through centrally appointed officials and used “large sweeps” which formalized nearly all land within a given area, greatly reduced discretion for individual targeting (Conroy et al. 2014). Finally, rural land titling in both countries did not follow recent land invasions, thereby removing any impact from the redistribution of land itself.

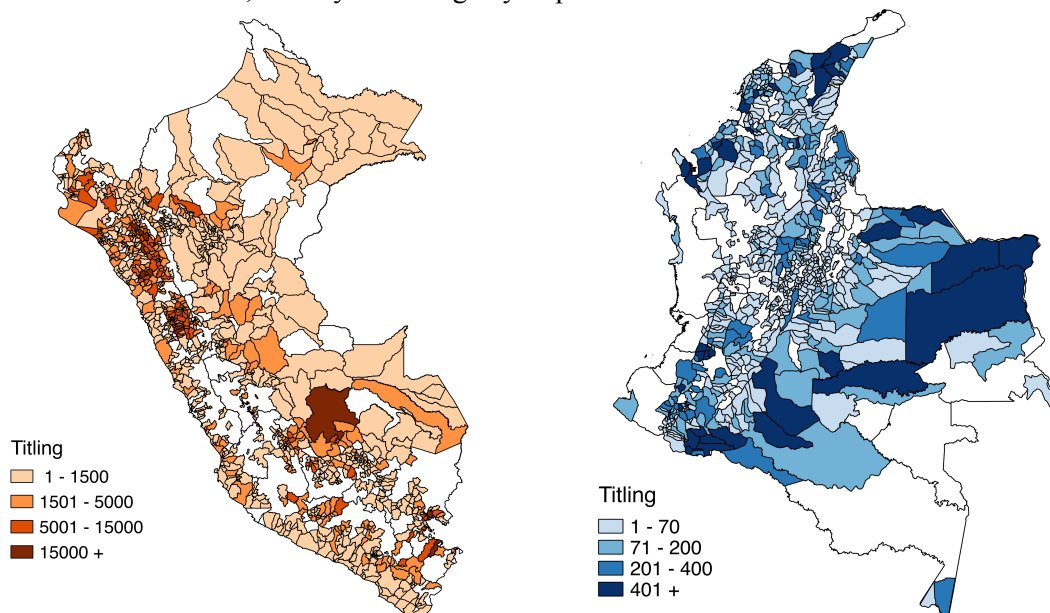


Figure 1. Extent of Land Titling Programs for Peru (1996-2007) [left] and Colombia (2009-2015) [right], excluding Colombia’s land restitution process.

Peru was the first country to carry out widespread land formalization programs, and from 1996-2007 titled nearly 2 million rural households in the coastal and highland regions. Colombia offers a unique opportunity to study the impact of two different titling programs. The first is a traditional land formalization policy that used similar to the Peruvian policy but was more limited titling just over 64,000 properties since 2009. The second titling policy in Colombia is a land restitution process through the 2011 “Victims Law,” an ambitious transitional justice policy that formalizes land claims of displaced communities within a relatively short time frame (6-8 months). As of October 2015, the restitution process had been implemented in over 475 communities in 17 departments, and had resulted in over 1,300 judicial sentences granting land titles.

Including the Colombian Victims Law as an additional comparison in this study is beneficial as it provides the opportunity to conduct a longitudinal survey comparing “pre-” and “post-treatment” states. In addition, the land restitution policy allows a comparison of a case in which rights are granted in the

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context of active mobilization for victims rights—which has been shown to influence some land reform policies (Albertus 2015)—with a case of pure land formalization, which is more of a top-down, government effort. While not specifically a formalization of land rights, the restitution process is similar in that it grants a formal, state-recognized right to claimants. In order to ensure comparability, this study will only include communities benefiting from restitution that are currently in possession of land.

IV. Scope Conditions

The setting of land formalization efforts in both countries—that of a rural frontier in the aftermath of armed conflict—may limit external validity. Therefore, the study will be less informative for newly recognized rights in stable, highly formalized legal systems. However, this is a relatively minor limitation given that states with recent political transitions and high levels of informality are more likely to engage in land formalization, and are also contexts in which granting new rights may be the most effective at mobilizing voters. Finally, my theory views rights as powerful legitimizing frames, which may only apply to a certain subset of fundamental rights (property, political freedoms, etc.) and not weaker legal claims. Similarly, it may not be applicable in different historical periods or in countries where “rights” and the Rule of Law are not commonly understood as a source of legitimacy (*cf* Rosenfeld 2001).

V. Research Design

In the following two sections, I briefly outline the research design for my dissertation and detail the portion of field work that will be funded by this NSF proposal. I am requesting funds specifically to cover 8 focus groups and 40 to 50 structured and semi-structured qualitative interviews in villages benefited by land formalization in both Colombia and Peru. This field work represents the final segment of a broader research design, which includes preparatory work through two previous research trips to Colombia and Peru (Summer 2015 and Spring 2016), during which I conducted 108 preliminary interviews with government officials, experts, and civil society organizations involved in land titling.

My full research design contemplates a multi-method structure that will utilize a new round of qualitative data to better understand results from a statistical analysis of (1) the first round of an original panel survey on land restitution in Colombia; (2) and existing survey and municipal-level data from both Colombia and Peru. The original panel survey related to the Colombia Land Restitution policy and Victims Law will be conducted through a collaboration with Dr. Maria Paula Saffon Sanin, and for which we are seeking funds through a separate grant.² In addition, Dr. Saffon Sanin and I have conducted a pilot survey of beneficiaries of the Colombian land restitution policy in March 2016. My statistical analysis of the existing survey and municipal-level data on the remaining two land titling policies is currently underway and will be completed during the summer 2016.

It is important to note that although the qualitative research is the final stage of fieldwork for my dissertation, it plays a necessary and central role to the interpretation and contribution of my results. First, I will attempt to utilize several estimation strategies that can provide evidence of the causal impact of land formalization policies on political attitudes and behavior (see summary of quantitative methods below). However, the impracticality of researcher-controlled, random assignment of rights means that perfect causal identification will not be possible. Therefore, it is necessary to triangulate evidence of a causal *impact* with evidence of the causal *mechanisms* underlying the relationship between legal rights and political behavior, a task for which qualitative interviews are ideally suited (Gerring 2004; Bernard 2011).

In addition, evidence on these causal mechanisms (i.e. the explanation for *how* a legal right influences individual attitudes and behavior) is necessary for further developing an empirically grounded theory on the significance of legal rights for political mobilization. If my quantitative analysis confirms my theoretical predictions, then I will rely on this qualitative field work to support and strengthen my theory. Conversely, if I find no effect of legal rights on political behavior, then my qualitative work will be equally crucial for explaining this interesting finding. Such a result would contradict assumptions in much political and legal literature. It would also contradict initial evidence from the March 2016 pilot survey, in which 95 out of 100 beneficiaries of land restitution in Colombia reported that formal title was

² Funding for the Colombian Panel Survey has been submitted for NSF funding through a PD 98-1371 grant under the SES Political Science and Law and Social Sciences units. The proposal (Number 1627704) was submitted by Dr. Maria Paula Saffon Sanin through Princeton University on Jan. 15th, 2016.

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very important for their livelihoods. With either result, this qualitative stage of field research will be crucial for informing my conclusions and finalizing my research.

A. *Quantitative Methodology*

1. *Key Variables and Hypotheses*

Land formalization. My primary independent variable will be the receipt of a formal land title through either a land formalization policy (Peru and Colombia) or the land restitution process in Colombia. For individual-level data I will use an indicator for receipt of a formal legal title, while for municipal-level data I will use the percent of total land affected by the policy.

Perceptions of state legitimacy. The first prediction of my theory is that receipt of a formal right will affect perceptions of state legitimacy, contingent on expectations of enforcement. I measure legitimacy principally through self-reported perceptions of trust, effectiveness, and fairness of state institutions both in general and specifically in protecting private property.

Participation. I also predict that receiving a formal property right will incentivize political participation, either before formal institutions or through informal or contentious channels. By “formal participation,” I refer to the use of official state institutions to participate in political decisions, protect interests, or make claims. To measure formal political participation, I will examine survey and municipal data on voter turnout, participation before local development committees, and use of state institutions for protecting property such courts or justices of the peace. For “informal participation,” I will measure any behavior meant to protect property interests outside of formal state institutions, including participation in protests or community defense groups such as “*rondas campesinas*” in Peru.

Expectations of Future Enforcement (Interaction Effect). My theory claims that the ultimate effect of rights on perceptions of legitimacy and political participation is contingent upon the expectation of future enforcement. When determining the effectiveness of property rights, scholars have noted two main concerns for rights-bearers: (1) state expropriation and (2) protection against third party claimants (Firmin-Sellers 1995). I focus on the latter as third-party encroachment is likely to reflect the most pressing concerns of small-holding farmers in both Peru and Colombia. Therefore, I will use an objective measure of within-country variation on the effectiveness of local state institutions as a proxy for expectations of future enforcement.³ Specifically, I will utilize the overall effectiveness of local courts and the justice system, which I propose measuring using the distance to the nearest judicial officer, the backlog of unresolved cases, and the rate of successful sentencing in homicide cases, which have been used in prior studies in Colombia (García Villegas and Espinosa 2013).

2. *Identification Strategy and Estimation Techniques*

As the assignment of formalization policies to new areas is not a randomized process, selection bias and unobserved heterogeneity will inhibit perfect causal identification. However, I propose using a difference-in-differences estimator and a design that can select comparable “control” and “treatment” groups through either a “quasi-experimental” approach or by either recreating the selection process for communities in the program.

Municipal-level Data on Voting and Participation. For both Colombia and Peru I am currently finishing collection on voting participation rates, “blank” or “null” voting (often protest votes), use of local courts and justices of the peace, and protest data. To analyze this data I will take advantage of a “quasi-experimental” design that leverages the method in which land formalization was implemented in both countries. Officials working from centralized, national offices utilized a “sweep” method covering all eligible land in a broad geographic area, such as a mountain valley. Since all eligible households in each valley were eventually benefited, the difference between “early” formalizers and “later” formalizers is likely near-random. This strategy has been successful employed in other studies on formalization (Field 2005; Zegarra, Escobal, and Aldana 2008).

³ Although my theory states that each individual’s subjective expectations of enforcement will ultimately determine how that person responds to the formalization policy, I prefer to use a subjective measure of enforcement to avoid concerns with endogeneity between the formalization policy itself and an individual’s reported expectation of enforcement. However, this is also an assumption that I can verify through qualitative interviews.

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Existing Survey Data. In addition to analyzing municipal-level data, there are existing annual surveys in both Colombia (ELCA, the Los Andes Colombian Longitudinal Survey) and Peru (ENAH, the National Household Survey) which include questions regarding land formalization and political attitudes and behavior. As these surveys were sampled from the broader population, I shall employ weaker identification strategies including controlling for covariates and matching designs such as a coarsened exact matching (Iacus, King, and Porro, 2011) or inverse propensity weighting (Glynn and Quinn 2010) to select appropriate control and treatment groups.

Colombia Panel Survey. The Colombia panel survey (not included in this present funding proposal) will measure the impact of the land restitution process. Since the second round of panel data from the survey will not be available before the conclusion of this dissertation, I will compare the first round of the panel data in communities before land restitution is implemented with respondents from comparable communities that have already received restitution. The government is gradually implementing this policy in new communities through a selection process based on three objective criteria: prior history of displacement, density of land claims, and security. Working with government officials, I will attempt to recreate the selection process and calculate the probability of treatment for non-selected communities in the same municipality, a process that has been successfully employed in at least one other study (Barron et al. 2009).

B. Qualitative Design

The qualitative portion of my research design contemplates two primary activities: (1) eight focus groups in villages benefited by land formalization (four groups in each country); and (2) 40 to 50 in-depth, individual interviews (half in each country). Both the focus groups and the individual interviews will be conducted in Spanish and with the aid of small survey firms with experience in rural Peru and Colombia. The local knowledge and experience of these firms will help ensure the suitability of questions and methodology for each country. I will participate in and directly supervise both focus groups and interviews to guide the data collection team and adapt methodology as needed. My fluency in Spanish and over 8 years of experience working in professional and rural contexts within Latin America (including 4 years in Colombia and several months in Peru), will allow me to identify subtleties in the responses that can be useful in directing focus group discussions or interviews.

All discussion guides and interview instruments will be designed to elicit responses under four main subjects areas that are relevant for my proposed theoretical mechanism: (1) the importance of formal title; (2) political participation in both informal and formal settings; (3) mechanisms for dispute resolution for land conflicts; and (4) perceptions of the state and the effectiveness of state institutions. Successful focus groups and individual interviews will produce thoughtful, lengthy responses that provide sufficient information to understand a respondent's perceptions on all four of these categories.

1. Site Selection

I will randomly select four municipalities from within the departments that have most benefited from land formalization in Peru (Ancash, Cajamarca, La Libertad, Piura) and Colombia (Bolívar, Cauca, Nariño, Putumayo). In order to increase the probability of finding participants that have benefited from land titling, I will also limit selection to the highest quintile of municipalities in terms of density of land tilting. Finally, I will stratify this subset of municipalities based on institutional strength, and select two with high indicators for institutional strength and two with low scores to obtain variation along this variable that is important for my theory.

After site selection, the interview team and I will spend approximately one week in each village. Upon arrival, we will meet with local leaders to explain the purpose of the study and obtain their approval. We will then conduct a trans-sectional walk through the village guided by a local leader, such as a school teacher who will likely have an impartial perspective on topics of interest. Through the trans-sectional walk, we will obtain information about the distribution of land tenure in the village, type of agricultural activity, potential participants for the study, and also unexpected features of the village that may be relevant to the study.

2. Focus Groups

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Following the trans-sectional walk, we will conduct a focus group of approximately 10-15 participants. The purpose of conducting the focus groups will be to obtain information on abstract concepts and questions, such as the importance of a legal title, for which individual respondents might not have clear or readily available responses. In such cases, individual interviews or structured surveys might produce a high-degree of non-responses or measurement error. Focus groups, however, will allow participants to discuss and challenge each other's ideas to reach a more informed consensus (Morgan 1996). Group discussion will also be helpful for engaging in collective recall about specific events, such as property disputes or the land titling itself, that occur within the village but did not directly involve participants.

Participant selection for both the focus groups and the individual interviews will be made with purposeful selection criteria, and not through randomization. The reason for a non-random selection is due to the small sample size and the need to select participants who are most likely to give informative or relevant responses (Morse 1998). The majority of focus group participants will be selected from families that have benefited from land titling. However, we will also include at least 2-3 participants who were unable to benefit from titling and only have informal possession. In both Peru and Colombia, men have traditionally dominated decision-making regarding land within each household, a trend which continues despite recent efforts to include women when titling property (Wiig 2013). In order to include a diversity of perspective, we will include at least 2-3 women who are either heads of households or active community members. We will attempt to include 1-2 participants who have recently had a property dispute within the last year. The remainder of the participants will be selected for their likelihood of contributing to the group discussion (e.g. active community members) or through selection during the trans-sectional walk.

3. In-depth, Individual Interviews

A second component of qualitative data collection consists of one-on-one interviews. These in-depth interviews will allow for greater exploration of the perceptions and experience of each respondent than what would be allowable in a focus group setting. Individual interviews will also avoid potential problems with bias due to group-think or particularly opinionated participants in the focus group discussions. Thus, following the focus groups, the interview team and I will conduct 5-7 qualitative interviews with residents selected from the same village, for a total of 20 to 25 interviews per country. The final number of respondents, however, will depend on reaching theoretical saturation within each of the four subject areas. We will select different respondents than those who participated in the focus groups in order to increase coverage in each village. The only exception will be for individuals who held views contrary to those shared in the focus groups, but who may not have had full opportunity to express these views due to group dynamics. The selection criteria will similarly be purposeful and based on households. We will attempt to select at least one female-headed household, and 1-2 households that currently do not have formal title. We will also select one household that has recently had a property dispute. The remaining households will be selected among active village members or randomly through the trans-sectional walk. From each household, we will select the respondent who appears the most knowledgeable regarding the legal status of the property.

These interviews will be divided into two segments, a structured and a semi-structured interview. The structured interview will ask standardized questions on basic demographic information, trust in state institutions, the importance of legal title, and current and past levels of political participation. These questions will be based on questions I developed for the pilot survey conducted in Colombia in March 2016, all of which presented high response rates and analytically meaningful variability in responses.

The second segment of the interviews will be a semi-structured, in-depth interview. Here, through open-ended questions and flexibility in pursuing different lines of questioning according to participants' responses, I will ask about the history of their land possession, when they acquired their land, investments they have made, and any property disputes. I will also request a brief tour of their property and its boundaries, asking questions along the way about disputes and how boundaries were established, a technique which can supply physical landmarks to increase accuracy of responses (Bernard 2011). I will also ask about involvement with local government, community organizations, and methods for resolving property disputes. The structured and semi-structured segments of the interviews will complement each

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other well, as the former will yield data that can be systematically analyzed across all informants, while the latter will allow us to tap into themes that we have not previously anticipated.

Finally, in order to obtain contextual information that will be crucial for interpreting my data, I will also conduct semi-structured interviews with local officials and politicians in the municipality seat and in the village. These key informant interviews will include the local mayor, judges or justices of the peace, police, and local ombudsmen. I will ask each official about the history of land titling in the area, the most common types of property disputes, and different spaces for political participation. I will also attempt to collect basic data on the functioning of institutions and the handling of conflicts dealing with land. This data will then allow me to more precisely interpret the qualitative interviews with small land holders and verify that the objective indicators I use for institutional strength match the actual strength of state institutions in each municipality.

4. Analysis

The interview team will audio record both the focus groups and the individual interviews, and will transcribe these recordings in Spanish shortly after fieldwork visits. In addition, the team and I will take extensive field notes during the interviews and focus groups regarding non-verbal, contextual information that may be relevant for interpreting participants' statements. The initial results of the focus groups will also be used to tailor the interview questions to the village-specific context or incorporate events that may be helpful in soliciting information from respondents.

Analysis of the focus group and interview transcripts will involve a combination of deductive and inductive methods. For the deductive segment, I shall use two principal methodologies for my analysis. First, I will code transcripts for information relevant to the four principal themes mentioned above using qualitative data coding software (MAXQDA). This will help organize information thematically and systematically when conducting my analysis. Second, I will also write a short memo for each transcript, which summarizes the findings and relevant information. Both of these methods will provide evidence for my proposed causal mechanism, help interpret findings of my quantitative methods, and provide additional evidence as to why (or why not) legal rights affect political attitudes and behavior. Finally, through additional analytic memo-writing, I will engage in inductive analysis of focus group and interview transcripts, which will allow me to explore new or unexpected information and incorporate it into my final conclusions.

C. Work Plan

Schedule of Activities. Prior to beginning the fieldwork and data collection set forth in this proposal, I will finalize collection of municipal-level, quantitative data on land formalization policies in Peru and Colombia and conduct preliminary analyses of the data using the estimation techniques outlined above. Upon completion of this initial analysis, I will use the results to finalize the questionnaire and interview instruments for the focus groups and individual interviews. The collection of qualitative data will begin starting Spring 2017 and continue until the Summer 2017 or until all focus groups and individual interviews are conducted in the eight selected villages. I estimate that each data gathering trip will require approximately two months per country, for a total of four months. The data collection efforts for this proposal will be coterminous with the execution of the first round of the panel survey with beneficiaries of the Colombian land restitution policy, the results of which should be available by the end of Spring 2017. Following collection of all data, I will then update my theoretical arguments and conduct additional quantitative analysis if necessary.

Potential Partners. To facilitate the organization of the focus groups and the identification of participants for the individual interviews, I will contract survey firms that have experience in conducting focus groups and in-depth interviews in rural settings and familiarity with the local context in each country. I will train the interview teams of 2-3 enumerators in the use of the interview instruments and be present during the focus groups and individual interviews together with the interview team. This collaboration will ensure that the interviews are conducted by a trained interviewer with native Spanish fluency and familiarity of the local context present, but allow me to personally direct the interviews.

I have already identified a potential partner to contract for the Colombian study, Economics Professor Leonardo García Orbezo from Los Andes University in Bogotá, whose survey team conducted a recent focus group and pilot survey for the panel survey. I was present for the focus group

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and personally conducted the training of the survey team in the pilot survey instrument, and can attest to the enumerators' high quality and professionalism. I have not yet identified a survey firm in Peru, but have contacts with researchers at the Catholic University of Peru and at GRADE, a Peruvian think tank, who have offered to recommend experienced survey teams.

VI. Broader Impact

In addition to contributing much needed empirical evidence and deeper theorizing to political science and legal literature on the impact of formal rights, this study will have important policy implications for rural development and transitional justice in Latin America and other regions. First, land titling programs continue to be a centerpiece in rural development policies in countries throughout the world (Conroy et al. 2014). Both Colombia and Peru are also currently planning to expand existing formalization policies as part of efforts to increase participation of rural communities in the national economy and local development decision-making, among other goals (MTC 2015). In addition, Benin, Ecuador, Kenya, Panama, South Africa, and Zimbabwe are all either implementing or recently have implemented similar policies in an effort to spark rural development and increase fluidity in land markets.

Despite renewed interest in land formalization policies, the economic impact of such policies is still highly contested and existing studies often produce contradictory evidence on whether formal titles actually increase access to credit or increase tenure security (Fort 2007; Zegarra et al. 2008; Bromley 2009; Lipton 2009; Goldstein et al. 2015). While much research has attempted to isolate the causal impact of titling on economic behavior, very few have sought to understand the significance of a legal title from the perspective of beneficiaries (often small-holding, peasant farmers) or examine the diverse factors that determine when a formal title is meaningful, or when it is worth no more than the paper it is written on. This study attempts to accomplish both these task, and thus will be important for understanding the conditions under which titling policies may have the greatest (and weakest) impact.

Although most land formalization efforts are motivated by economic development goals, many have also promoted land formalization as a quick fix for incorporating marginalized communities into the national economy (De Soto 1989), or increasing participation of rural peasants on the agricultural frontier (MTC 2015). Much recent research has also highlighted increased participation in local politics and decision-making for its potential to both reduce corruption and increase the effectiveness of policy implementation (Besley, Pande, and Rao 2005; Svensson and Bjorkman 2009). As this study will examine one potential method to increase citizen participation in rural communities — through the formal recognition of rights — it will also contribute to debates on how to improve local governance.

This study will also have important implications for the ongoing transitional justice and peace process in Colombia and other countries that are currently undergoing, or will soon initiate a transitional period. The distribution of land and reparations for victims of armed conflict is frequently at the heart of many controversies surrounding transitional justice (Hall 2010; Elster 2012). Despite the centrality of land to these debates, there is yet very little empirical work on the possible impact of policies that seek to repair and reestablish land rights to displaced victims. This study will combine rigorous quantitative methodology with in-depth qualitative research to provide much needed evidence for these policy debates. Specifically, it will be able to address questions on whether Colombia's land restitution process can reincorporate victims of conflict into the broader polity and rebuild rural communities.

Finally, increasing participation of historically marginalized communities and access to formal institutions is a pending task for many democracies throughout Latin America and the world. The recognition of legal rights and their effective enforcement is also a primary goal of many international organizations, NGOs, and civil society groups. While these are laudable goals in themselves, little is yet known about how to increase political participation effectively, or whether the recognition of new rights for minority groups has any impact on political engagement or mobilization. Given the centrality of both political participation and the respect for legal rights for modern constitutional democracies (Dahl 1973; Schumpeter 1942), understanding how these two factors mutually influence each other is essential for consolidating and strengthening democracy. This is especially significant in the current era, where many commentators are noting a worrisome trend of regimes sliding back into more autocratic versions of electoral politics (Levitsky and Way 2010). This study has the potential to set a new direction in both policy and academic debates, as it represents an important first step to answering these questions and to providing a deeper understanding of the political impact of formal rights.