Democracy in Spain: Legitimacy, Discontent, and Disaffection

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This article examines changes in perceptions of democracy in Spain over the last two decades. A variety of empirical indicators gleaned from numerous surveys are used to distinguish between democratic legitimacy and political discontent, as well as between this (which includes the well-known indicator of dissatisfaction with the way democracy works) and political disaffection. The article traces the different ways in which these attitudes have evolved in Spain over the last twenty years, and demonstrates that they belong to different dimensions. It also includes the results of two tests showing that these two sets of attitudes are conceptually and empirically distinct: a factor analysis confirms the distinct clustering of the indicators at the individual level, whilst cohort analysis identifies different patterns of continuity and change across generations.

This article examines the evolution of citizens' perceptions of democracy in Spain over the last twenty years. It assesses some common assumptions about political support and satisfaction with the political system as key dimensions of what Kaase and Newton (1995) have grouped under the heading of "theories of contradiction, crisis, and catastrophe." Within these theoretical and empirical approaches, we challenge the widespread notion that equates fundamental attitudes towards democracy (whether legitimacy, support, trust, or some other similar term) with specific evaluations of the performance of the democratic system. Among

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other consequences, the definition *tout court* of legitimacy as satisfaction with democracy signifies that variations in the level of the latter might be interpreted as threatening the stability of the former—a conclusion which lies behind many of the theories about the crisis of democracy. We also argue that the use made of too broad a concept of satisfaction with democracy tends to confuse perceptions relating to different levels of the political system, evaluations of many political objects, and, above all, assessments of citizens' affective orientations toward the political system.

In this article, we maintain that the distinctions between democratic legitimacy and satisfaction with democracy, and between political dissatisfaction and political disaffection, are both conceptually significant and empirically testable. We argue that these distinctions are of some relevance both for democratic theory with respect to long-established polities and for theories relating to transitions and consolidation in former authoritarian countries. We also argue that, within the framework of citizens' attitudinal orientations towards democratic systems, these three distinct families of concepts show very different empirical correlates. Furthermore, the three may evolve differently over time, and follow very distinct patterns of intergenerational transmission.

Spain has been selected as the case study for this analysis, and the empirical data we use is largely drawn from Spanish empirical surveys. The Spanish case is particularly interesting for three reasons. First, there is the question of timing. Spain, of course, belongs to that large group of European countries with consolidated democracies, but it is also one of the *third wave* democracies of the seventies (Huntington 1991; Linz and Stepan 1996). As a result, many of the theoretical approaches recently developed to explain the problems of democracy apply only partially in the Spanish case. For instance, Franco's authoritarian regime was still in power when the first works appeared on the fiscal crisis of the State (O'Connor 1973) and the problems of democratic legitimacy (Habermas 1975). The start of the transition coincided with the first analyses of overloading (King 1975) and of the crisis of democracy (Crozier et al. 1975). The process which led to the approval of a democratic constitution and the consolidation of the new political system took place at a time when scholars were beginning to discuss the problems of governability and the implicit threat posed by new politics (Rose 1980; Dalton et al. 1984). This temporal divergence makes it possible to reassess some of this literature in the light of Spaniards' perceptions and attitudes, and to carefully consider how these were formed and changed over time.

The second reason relates to variability: over the past twenty years, Spaniards have confronted a wide variety of different political experiences. These include the final stages of one of the longest authoritarian regimes in postwar Europe, the uncertainties of the political transition, the problems of consolidating a new democracy, the difficulties of constructing a new state with an entirely different territorial structure, an unstable party system, the unknown experience of governmental alternation (which brought a social democratic party to power for the first time in Spanish history just after an attempted coup), recurring economic crises against the backdrop of the highest unemployment rates in Europe, and intermittent political

crises provoked by scandals involving party funding, cases of public corruption, and revelations of illegal acts committed in the fight against terrorism in the early 1990s. Given the intensity of these experiences and the relatively short period of time in which they have occurred, it is reasonable to assume that they have had some effect on how citizens perceive the political system, evaluate its performance, and develop affective links with its various components. And the third reason consists of the availability of a huge amount of survey data, which makes the Spanish case a particularly useful laboratory for monitoring the evolution of orientations and attitudes towards the political system.

We present our argument in five parts. The first three discuss in turn the empirical indicators of democratic legitimacy, political discontent, and political disaffection. We examine the content of the different indicators, trace their evolution over the last two decades, and demonstrate that they belong to different dimensions. In the fourth section of this article we offer the results of a factor analysis that enable us to show how these three indicators cluster together at the individual level. In the final section, we present the results of a cohort analysis that has enabled us to identify the elements of change and continuity that confirm the different nature of the three indicators.

Levels of Democratic Legitimacy

In contrast to those scholars who maintain that the development of system-supporting attitudes may take decades (see, for example, Pridham 1995), a substantial majority of Spaniards have consistently supported the democratic system, especially since 1982. This is shown by both their electoral behavior and the evolution of their attitudes toward democracy as reflected in survey data. In the electoral arena, outside Euskadi (the Basque Country) there has been little support for anti-system and/or anti-democratic parties. In the 1977 parliamentary election, such parties obtained only .61 percent of the vote. In 1979, when signs of a certain *desencanto* (or disenchantment) were beginning to appear among both voters and political elites, support for extreme right-wing parties rose to around 400,000 votes (2.3 percent of those cast), yet by 1982 extremist parties had virtually disappeared from the political scene. In the parliamentary elections of 1996, anti-democratic parties (outside Euskadi) won some 17,500 votes, a mere .05 percent of the total.

Attitudinal indicators of democratic legitimacy derived from survey data are fully consistent with this pattern of electoral behaviour. We regard legitimacy as citizens' positive attitudes towards democratic institutions, which are considered to be the most appropriate form of government.[1] This is a relative concept, since no system is fully legitimate in the eyes of *all* citizens, and the *intensity* of positive support for these institutions varies from one person to another. Accordingly, legitimacy may be considered to be "the belief that, in spite of shortcomings and failures, the political institutions are better than any others that might be established" (Linz 1988, 65; 1978a, 16). This definition is also relative insofar as it refers to the belief that a democratic political system is the *least bad* of all forms of government. As

TABLE 1
Democracy as the Best System in Spain, 1978–1994

Democracy is the best system for a country like ours	%	N
1978	77	5,898
1980	69	3,132
1981	81	1,703
1982	74	5,463
1983	73	5,481
1988	87	4,548
1993	79	1,448
1994	82	2,491

Sources: Centro de Documentación de DATA, for 1978–1993, and Banco de Datos, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), for 1994.

Linz (1978b, 18) has also written, "ultimately, democratic legitimacy is based on the belief that for that particular country at that particular juncture, no other type of regime could assure a more successful pursuit of collective goals."[2] Tables 1 and 2 present two indicators that reflect basic perceptions of the legitimacy of Spanish democracy. Table 1 shows the percentages of respondents who agreed with the statement that "democracy is the best system for a country like ours," and table 2 displays the distribution of opinions among those favoring a democratic form of government under all circumstances, as opposed to those who would support an authoritarian system under certain conditions. The conclusions are unequivocal. In both cases, Spanish citizens overwhelmingly endorsed democracy: between two thirds and more than three quarters of those interviewed agreed with the statement affirming the superiority of democracy over any other political system (see table 1). The extraordinarily high level of support for democracy in 1978 probably reflects a *honeymoon* effect (whereby Spaniards gave an overwhelming vote of confidence to the democratic institutions virtually at the moment they came into being [Weil 1989]). Whilst this was followed by something of a decline in the strength of these attitudes, all polls confirm the existence of a consistently high level of democratic legitimacy since 1982. Table 2 confirms this pattern, at the same time as it reinforces our conclusion by providing evidence of the low levels of support for nondemocratic alternatives throughout this period.[3] Even among voters of the principal right-wing party, *Alianza Popular* (now *Partido Popular*), which was founded by prominent political figures from the Franco regime, supporters of democracy under any circumstances greatly outnumber those who would favor an authoritarian alternative under certain conditions (Montero 1993a; Montero and Gunther 1994). These data clearly undermine the thesis that Spanish political culture is inherently undemocratic, or that it harbors politically significant pockets of anti-democratic sentiments (as suggested, for example, by Wiarda [1989, x. and 2]).

Indeed, by the 1980s and early 1990s, the level of support for democracy in Spain was indistinguishable from that found in other West European countries.[4] A 1992

TABLE 2
The Legitimacy of Democracy in Spain, 1980–1995 (In percentages)

	1980	1984	1985	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Democracy is preferable to any other form of government	49	69	70	71	72	68	80	76	73	81	73	79
Under some circumstances, an authoritarian regime, a dictatorship, is preferable to a democratic system	10	11	10	12	10	10	7	10	12	7	8	9
For people like me, one regime is the same as another	8	11	9	11	10	10	8	8	10	7	10	8
Don't know, No answer	33	9	11	6	8	12	5	6	5	4	9	4
N	(3,457)	(2,490)	(2,498)	(2,490)	(2,488)	(3,371)	(2,382)	(2,494)	(2,497)	(2,500)	(2,491)	(2,478)

Source: Banco de Datos, CIS.

survey using the same indicator (see table 3) reveals that the levels of support for democracy in three of the four Southern European countries equalled or exceeded the average for the European Union as a whole. Only Italy deviates from this pattern, but its score of 72 percent was not very different from the EU average of 78 percent. Nonetheless, the Southern European countries differed notably in this respect. The dramatic increase in support for democracy in Portugal between 1985 and 1992 contrasts significantly with the consistently high level found in Greece throughout the period. The two Southern European countries with the lowest levels of support, Spain and Italy, are also those where preferences for authoritarian regimes are relatively high, although in both countries only a very small part of the population expresses such sentiments (Morlino and Montero 1995; Montero and Gunther 1994). Moreover, the validity of this indicator is confirmed by data from a number of Southern Cone Latin American countries. As can also be seen in table 2, far from showing the almost complete unanimity which might be expected if respondents were referring to an abstract, theoretical notion of democracy, citizens express distinct preferences in different countries. The cases of Uruguay and Argentina, where the levels of support for their respective democratic regimes are closest to those of Western Europe, contrast sharply with those of Chile and Brazil, which face very difficult situations. As in Southern Europe, these Southern Cone countries, with the exception of Chile and to a lesser extent Brazil, have experienced an increase in support for democracy.

Political Discontent: System Efficacy and Satisfaction

In contrast to the underlying continuity seen in these indicators of the legitimacy of Spanish democracy, evaluations of the performance of the political system and

TABLE 3
Democratic Legitimacy in Western Europe (1985–1995) and Some Latin American Countries (1988–1996) (In percentages)

Countries		Democracy	Authoritarianism	It's all the Same	D.K./N.A.
			Western Europe, 1992		
Denmark		92	4	2	1
Luxembourg		82	2	6	9
Germany		81	8	7	3
Netherlands		81	9	5	5
France		78	7	11	5
United Kingdom		76	6	11	6
Belgium		70	10	10	10
Ireland		63	10	21	6
			Southern Europe		
Greece	1985	87	5	6	2
	1988	90	3	4	3
	1992	91	4	3	2
Portugal	1985	61	9	7	23
	1988	84	7	9	–
	1992	83	9	4	4
Spain	1985	70	10	9	11
	1988	75	8	14	3
	1992	78	9	7	6
	1995	79	9	8	4
Italy	1985	70	13	10	7
	1988	74	13	13	–
	1992	73	14	8	7
	1995	79	9	8	4
			Latin America		
Uruguay	1988	73	10	8	9
	1995	80	8	6	6
Argentina	1988	74	13	10	3
	1995	77	11	6	6
	1996	71	15	11	3
Chile	1988	57	11	27	5
	1995	52	18	25	4
	1996	54	19	23	4
Brazil	1988	43	21	26	10
	1995	41	21	23	15
	1996	50	24	21	5

Sources: For 1985 in Southern Europe and Spain in 1995, Banco de Datos, CIS; for 1988 and 1992, *Eurobarometer*, 30, 1988, and 37, 1992. For Italy in 1994, data have been kindly provided by Paolo Segatti and the Archivio Ricerche Demoscopiche, Università di Pavia. For the Latin American countries in 1988, Moisès (1995, 160); for 1995, Linz and Stepan (1996, 222); and for 1996, Lagos (1996).

governing elites have oscillated considerably over time. The conventional wisdom on relations between these two indicators suggests that fluctuations in the degree of citizen satisfaction with democracy and/or incumbent governments are both very significant and potentially threatening for the stability of the democratic system itself, given that they are directly related to the working of the new democracy. We argue, in contrast, that democratic regimes can remain stable even in the face of high levels of dissatisfaction with the system. In short, system survival is rooted in attitudes towards legitimacy, rather than satisfaction or perceptions of system efficacy.

Before examining this point in detail, it is perhaps necessary to address two questions concerning the separability of the concepts of legitimacy and efficacy. Some scholars have questioned citizens' capacity to distinguish between these two dimensions (Muller and Jukam 1977; Loewenberg 1971). They maintain that survey responses to questions relating to the "legitimacy" of a system may be heavily influenced by respondents' assessments of the incumbents in prominent positions in the government; by their evaluation of the performance of governmental institutions; or by the gap between reality and important abstract values.[5] Other authors, whose analyses are largely based on data sets that only contain measures of dissatisfaction with democracy or the functioning of its institutions, claim that these are adequate and sufficient indicators of system support "at a relatively low level of generalization" (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995, 330), or adopt a straightforward definition of political support as satisfaction with democracy (Anderson and Guillory 1997, 70), or argue that they are equivalent to, or interchangeable with, measures of legitimacy (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995, 425; Tóka 1995, 359), or decide to equate legitimacy with a special construct of trust as a continuum running from the private to public spheres (McDonough, Barnes, and López Pina 1994, 370). We argue, first, that legitimacy and efficacy are not only conceptually, but also empirically, distinct. This distinction has been examined from a variety of perspectives with different theoretical implications,[6] and, if the appropriate indicators are available, may be demonstrated empirically. Generally speaking, system efficacy and political satisfaction can be understood as components of a wider syndrome of *political discontent*, defined as the expression of a certain frustration derived from comparing what one has with what one ought to have (Gamson 1968; López Pintor 1995).[7] *System efficacy* comprises a series of perceptions relating to a regime's effectiveness with respect to critical problems (Dahl 1971, 144); that is, the ability of a given political system to solve problems that citizens consider to be particularly important (Morlino and Montero 1995, 234). More specifically, *political dissatisfaction* (which is used more frequently than its antonym) expresses displeasure with a significant social or political object, and might thus be seen as a general rejection of anything that falls short of the citizens' wishes (Di Palma 1970, 30). Political dissatisfaction, therefore, arises from citizens' evaluations of the performance of the regime or authorities, as well as of their political outcomes (Farah, Barnes, and Heunks 1979). In this article, the two dimensions selected as indicators of political dissatisfaction are government/opposition (i.e., to what extent does sup-

port or opposition to the incumbent authority have an impact on how citizens generally assess the performance of the government) and policy dissatisfaction (i.e., to what extent do citizens evaluate the gap between their own policy preferences and actual policy outcomes).[8]

Second, we also argue that it is easier for citizens of countries that have recently experienced a transition from authoritarian rule (such as those in Southern Europe) to distinguish between legitimacy and efficacy. Direct personal experience of authoritarianism enables respondents to distinguish between authoritarian and democratic rule, and helps respondents to separate their evaluations of system performance (satisfaction) from their support for the current democratic regime (legitimacy). In short, as a result of their individual or collective memories, Southern Europeans are culturally and attitudinally better equipped to distinguish the legitimacy of a regime from perceptions of its efficacy. The capacity of Greeks, Portuguese, and Spaniards to make these distinctions certainly varies across generations, and will gradually decline as the passage of time makes the authoritarian experience less and less relevant to the collective memory of a country. In the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, however, that memory was still vivid and significant for many citizens, although much less so in Italy than in the other three cases. In contrast, it is much more difficult for respondents in long-established and stable democracies to evaluate their political systems in comparison to some hypothetical (and scarcely imaginable) non-democratic option: in these circumstances, questions about alternative political regimes are highly abstract and unreal (Morlino and Montero 1995; McDonough, Barnes, and López Pina 1986 and 1994; and Weil 1989). Accordingly, in established democracies measures of legitimacy may more easily be confounded with evaluations of efficacy or performance.[9]

Certain characteristics of the Spanish case make it easier to examine these two dimensions and determine the extent to which they are influenced by variations in economic, social, and political conditions. First, Spain's economic performance has varied considerably during the period studied here. In striking contrast to the high rates of economic growth and growing individual prosperity during the last decade and a half of General Franco's authoritarian regime, the transition to and consolidation of democracy took place amidst successive economic crises provoked by the "oil crises" of the mid- and late 1970s. As was the case in the rest of the industrialized world, the Spanish economy "bottomed out" in 1981/82, when unemployment reached 20 percent of the labor force (García Delgado 1990). During the mid- to late 1980s, in contrast, the Spanish economy expanded rapidly. While the base level of unemployment remained the highest in Western Europe, overall levels of affluence rose substantially. A second crucial economic challenge came with the sudden and severe recession that began in the early 1990s, when unemployment rose to over 23 percent. The climate of economic crisis was most acute in 1993, but the following year saw the beginning of a strong recovery from this recession.

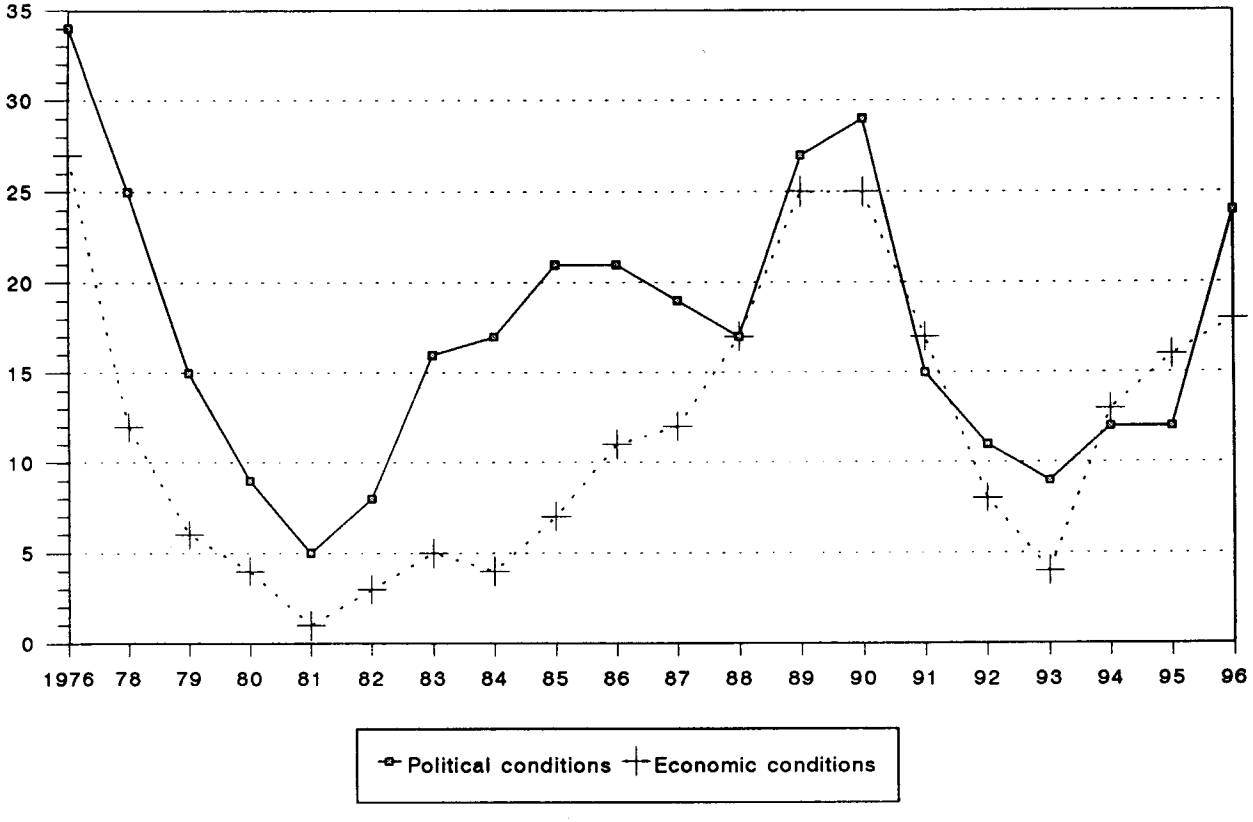
The perceived performance of Spanish governments with respect to noneconomic affairs also fluctuated considerably during this period. The *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD) government headed by Adolfo Suárez was given much of the

credit for the remarkable success of the transition to democracy. This enabled the prime minister to capitalize on the wave of satisfaction that greeted the ratification of the new constitution in December 1978 by calling early elections in March 1979. Yet, shortly afterwards, popular support for the UCD government collapsed; the weak and divided minority UCD governments were considered to be incapable of resolving the challenges posed by the economic crisis, increasing terrorist violence, and an inconsistent regional policy (Gunther 1986). It was widely feared at the time that the inefficacy of the UCD government was seriously undermining the original legitimacy accorded to the democratic system. This diagnosis was summed up in the term *desencanto* (disenchantment), which referred to the disillusionment that came in the wake of the high expectations generated earlier in the transition from authoritarianism—a phenomenon which appears to be common to all transitions to democracy (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 56; Huntington 1991, 230). It was generally asserted that this *desencanto* was threatening the consolidation of the new regime. These fears were dispelled, however, after the 1982 general elections, which brought the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) to power with a majoritarian mandate and facilitated the economic recovery. By the late 1980s, Spain had the second highest rate of economic growth in Europe, inflation had fallen significantly, and the highly stable Socialist government had achieved notable successes in both foreign and domestic affairs. The second period of discontent began in the early 1990s, and was reflected both in very negative perceptions of the economic crisis and increasingly critical opinions of the succession of political scandals involving party funding, cases of corruption involving some senior figures in the Socialist administration, and revelations of crimes committed in the course of the fight against ETA terrorism (Wert 1996). Economic recovery in the mid-1990s and the electoral victory of the conservative *Partido Popular* in 1996 was accompanied by a notable improvement in citizens' evaluations of government performance.

The empirical evidence available reflects this evolution. As can be seen in figure 1a, the level of satisfaction with the *economic* situation almost perfectly co-varies with the assessment of *political* conditions, and both closely parallel the changing circumstances outlined above.[10] As would be expected, dissatisfaction with the economic situation was strongest precisely at the worst moments of the two recessions described above. Somewhat more surprising, however, is the finding that evaluations of the political situation followed exactly the same pattern. Furthermore, the two different evaluations of system efficacy—the belief that "democracy permits the solution of the Spaniards' problems" and overall "satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Spain"—evolved in lock-step with assessments of the economic and political situation (see, figure 1b).[11]

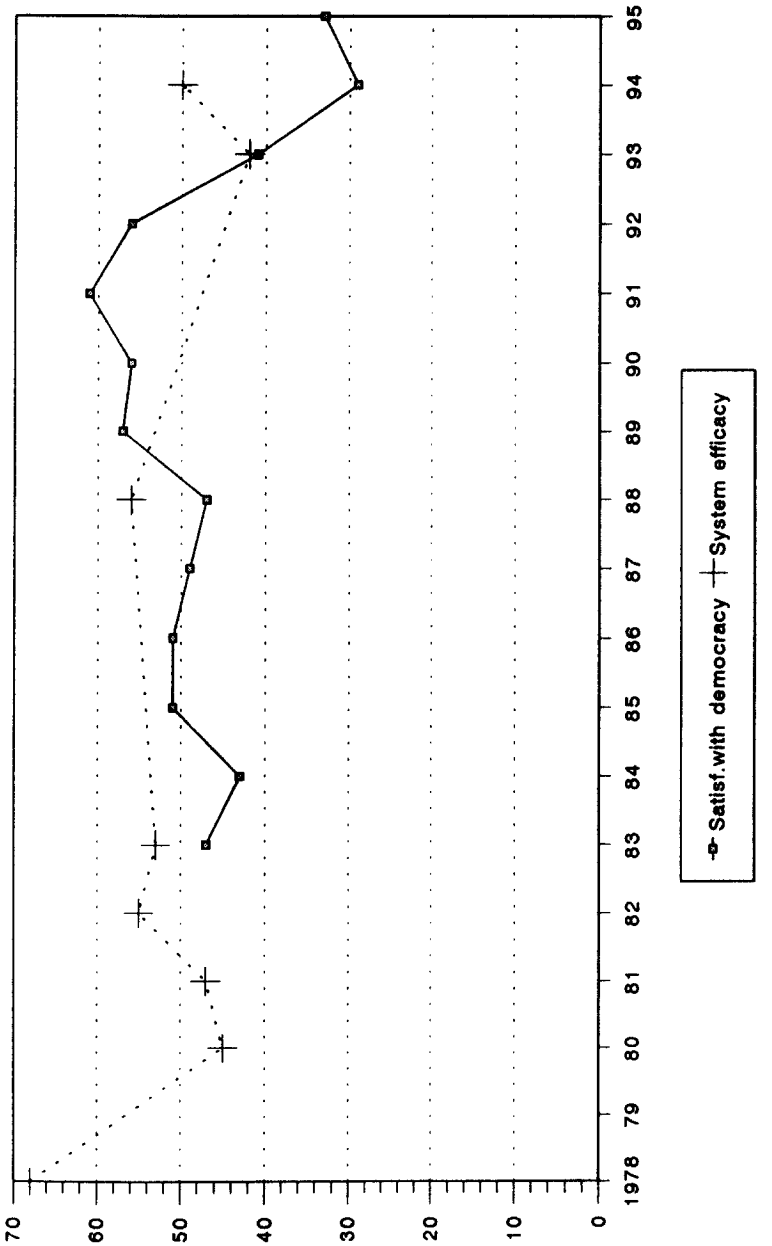
These time-series data reveal that all four of these satisfaction/system-efficacy variables co-vary together. No matter how the question is worded, these survey items appear to be tapping the same dimension. But while respondents apparently do not find it easy to distinguish between their evaluation of the incumbent government, economic conditions, and the efficacy of democracy as a problem-solver, they appear to have no difficulty in separating these assessments of satisfaction/efficacy

FIGURE 1a
Political and Economic Situations in Spain:
The Evolution of Positive Assessments, 1976–1996



Sources: Banco de Datos, CIS, and Archivo de Datos, Demoscopia.

FIGURE 1b
System Efficacy (1978–1994) and Satisfaction with Democracy (1983–1995) in Spain



Sources: For system efficacy, Centro de Documentación de DATA, for 1978–1993, and Banco de Datos, CIS, for 1994. For satisfaction, Eurobarometer, Trends 1974–94, and 43, 1995, and Banco de Datos, CIS, for 1978–1984.

from their opinion of the legitimacy of the democratic regime. As we saw above, since the consolidation of Spain's democracy some time around 1982 (see Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle 1995), the level of attitudinal support for both democracy and its authoritarian alternative has been virtually constant, and completely unaffected by the economic crises in the early 1980s or 1990s, by the widespread discontent with the UCD government before its 1982 electoral collapse, or by the scandals which beset the Socialist government in the years leading up to its electoral defeat in 1996. These findings highlight three basic points. First, that attitudes relating to satisfaction/system-efficacy include a significant element of "partisanship," and are strongly focused on the incumbent government.[12] Second, that *policy* dissatisfaction, which as we know is the other basic dimension of political dissatisfaction (Farah, Barnes, and Heunks 1979), is determined by the state of the economy.[13] The Spanish case shows that the political economy of attitudes relating to satisfaction with democratic performance has only limited effects (Clarke, Dutt, and Kornberg 1993; Linz and Stepan 1996, 76–81). Third, that the basic legitimacy of democracy is relatively autonomous, in both theoretical and empirical terms, from political discontent, that is, from perceptions of system-inefficacy and dissatisfaction with democracy; as a result, relatively high level of legitimacy may effectively insulate the regime from the negative impact that economic or political crises might otherwise have on democratic stability (Finkel, Muller, and Seligson 1989; Morlino and Montero 1995).

These conclusions are of some significance for those analyses that have suggested that political and economic difficulties (above all in new democracies) are very likely to have an immediate negative impact on support for the regime. In contrast to deterministic conceptions of the relationship between support for democracy and system efficacy or satisfaction, we contend that this relationship is rather more complex. In common with Linz and Stepan (1996, 229) and Maravall (1995, 276), we reject the claim that indicators of legitimacy are always tightly linked and closely related to satisfaction with the state of the economy. These findings also have broader implications for those studies (e.g., Fuchs and Klingemann 1995, 440) that argue that the legitimacy of Western democracies in general is increasingly dependent on their economic performance. In the case of Spain, complaints of system inefficacy or dissatisfaction with the working of democracy clearly reflect partisan and/or ideological disagreement with the incumbent government (Montero and Gunther 1994), but democratic legitimacy has not been inevitably undermined by economic discontent, political pessimism, political scandals, or other unpopular aspects of a government's performance. These factors may indeed have fuelled partisan dealignment and electoral defeat for the incumbent government, but the degeneration of party politics did not significantly increase support for anti-democratic alternatives (see also Maravall and Santamaría 1989).

Another factor weakening the linkages between economic performance and support for democracy is that the latter may be seriously affected by other aspects of government performance, such as respect for fundamental liberties and the legal system (Diamond and Lipset 1995; Fuchs 1992). The passage of time also favors

the institutionalization of democratic legitimacy, since it helps to insulate regime support from short-term problems of economic performance, and even economic crises, as well as from political scandals. Furthermore, the public may realize that governments have only a limited capacity in terms of what they are able to deliver, treat their promises with scepticism, and so be prepared for their failures (Kaase and Newton 1995, 75). Citizens' pragmatic awareness that some societal problems may simply be intractable, or beyond the capacity of any political leader to resolve, may also limit the extent to which dissatisfaction with system performance undermines fundamental attitudinal support for democracy. Finally, the basic characteristic of democracy as government *pro tempore* may play a decisive role in facilitating escape from problematic situations: new elections, and potentially the arrival of a new party in power, may have positive consequences for evaluations of democracy.

Political Disaffection

We have argued so far that dissatisfaction (with a wide variety of political and economic objects) and perceptions of system inefficacy fall within a single domain of *political discontent*, which is distinct from that of *democratic legitimacy*. We now turn to another attitudinal dimension, relating to negative political orientations or attitudes which appear to be both deeply rooted in political cultures and extraordinarily important. In accordance with the distinction drawn by Di Palma (1970, 30), these attitudes may form part of a phenomenon of *disaffection*—that is, a certain estrangement, or detachment of the members of the polity. *Political disaffection* is a concept that is as increasingly widely used as it is variously defined. If political disaffection is considered to be some kind of syndrome, then its *symptoms* can probably be situated on a continuum that runs from a positive pole of the fully integrated citizen who feels very close to his/her polity, passes through intermediate points characterized by a certain detachment from significant, but nonetheless specific aspects of the regime, to a negative pole of complete hostility to, and estrangement from, the political system. The most important of these symptoms would include disinterest, inefficacy, unresponsiveness, cynicism, distrust, distance, separation, estrangement, powerlessness, frustration, rejection, hostility, alienation. This is, therefore, a family of concepts which captures basic orientations towards the political system whose common characteristic is the "aversive direction of their affective component" (Citrin 1972, 92; see also Citrin and Elkins, 1975; Di Palma 1970; and Abramson 1983). The term generally associated with disaffection is alienation, although they are rather different concepts: whilst the latter refers to an enduring sense of estrangement from existing political institutions, values, and leaders as a result of which citizens feel themselves to be outsiders, the former alludes to a much more diffuse set of feelings as a result of which political affairs are seen as distant, unimportant, or meaningless (Citrin et al. 1975, 2–3).

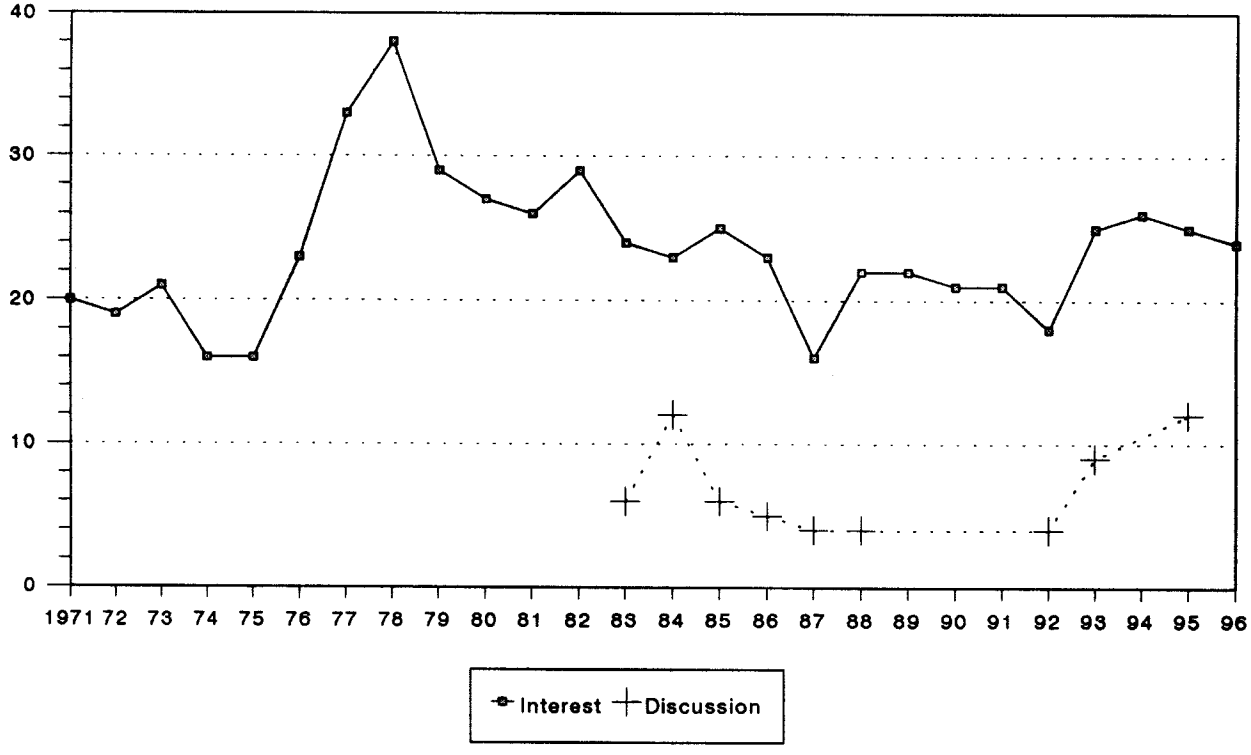
On the other hand, we should also distinguish between political disaffection and political discontent or dissatisfaction. Our hypothesis is that political disaffection consists of a series of basic attitudes towards the political system which are different

from those of political dissatisfaction and democratic legitimacy. In the same way as Pye (1971, 157) linked alienation and socialization, political dissatisfaction may be considered to be the result of the divergence between generally positive values towards the political system, and the negative perceptions of the way it actually functions; in contrast, political disaffection would reflect the content of a distrusting and suspicious vision of all human relations acquired at an early stage of the socialization process, with mixed perceptions of the political realm.[14] Therefore, political disaffection, in contrast to dissatisfaction, tends to be more resistant to change as well as to have potentially more lasting consequences for democratic politics. Amongst the many existing dimensions and concepts of political dissatisfaction in Spain, in this section we will analyze just two: citizens' psychological involvement in politics and their sense of political efficacy.

As is well known, psychological involvement in politics indicates the extent to which citizens express an interest in, or concern with, politics and public affairs. The usual indicators of this dimension are subjective political interest (defined by the degree to which politics arouse a citizen's curiosity) (Van Deth 1990; 281ff.) and frequency of political discussion (symbolized by behavioral expression of interest which crystallizes in informal political participation) (Almond and Verba 1963, 78ff.; Topf 1995). Both indicators provide a basic picture of attitudes of affection, perceptions of proximity and positive sentiments towards politics. In both cases, the Spanish data suggest the existence of clear disaffection which, moreover, has remained relatively stable over time. In general, Spaniards differ little from other Western citizens in terms of the secondary role which politics plays in their lives (Van Deth 1990). In contrast, however, they do stand out for their much greater lack of interest in politics and the corresponding infrequency with which they discuss politics. As can be seen in figure 2a, levels of political interest and frequency of political discussion have been extremely low in Spain, despite the enormous political and institutional changes witnessed over the last two decades.[15] The only relative increase took place during the first two years of the transition; since the early 1980s around 40 percent of Spaniards declare that they have absolutely no interest in politics, between 70 and 80 percent stating that they have little or no interest in politics. Equally, despite some temporary fluctuations, the indicator of discussion has also remained very low. As would be expected, this lack of interest is higher than in other Western European countries (Gabriel and Van Deth 1995). Both indicators of noninvolvement in politics accord with other related aspects of political behavior: only 5 percent of Spaniards polled in our 1993 post-election survey,[16] for example, claimed that they had paid "much attention" to the campaign.

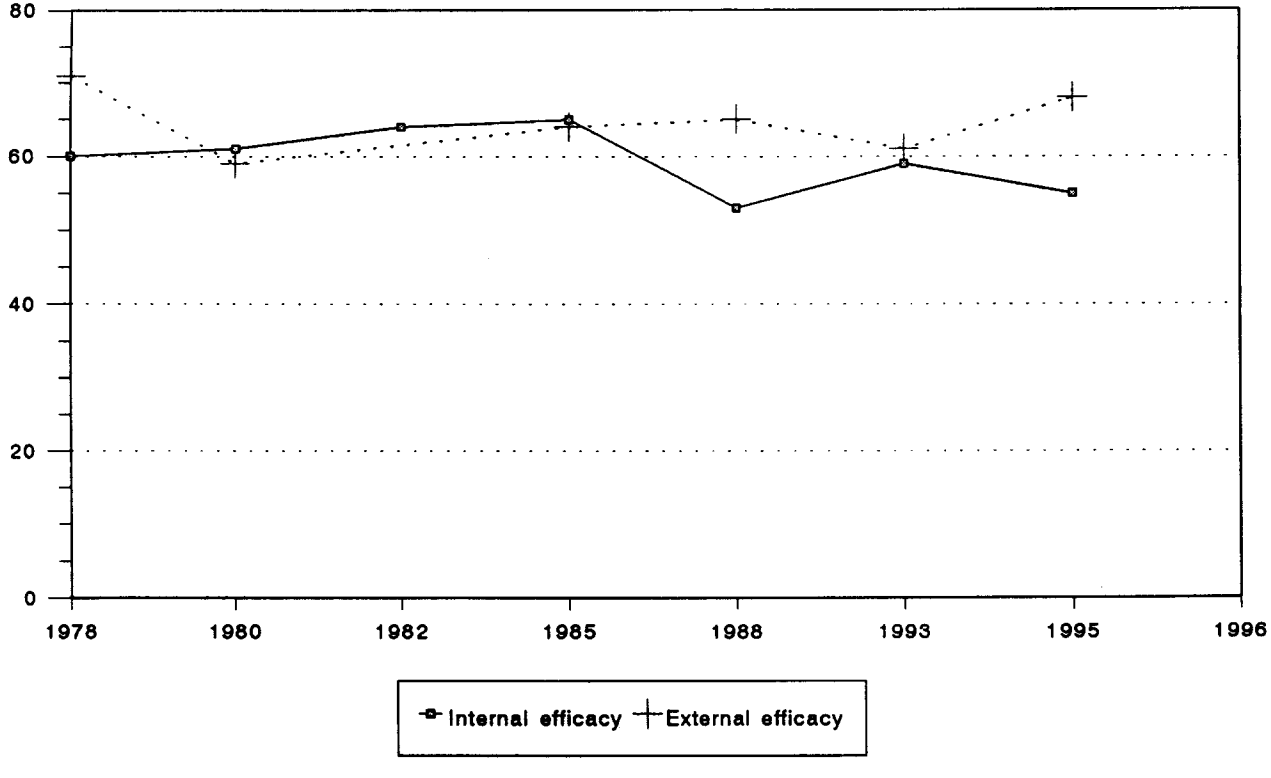
In general, political disinterest is closely linked to feelings of powerlessness and confusion with respect to politics (Gunther 1992, 15). These feelings are channelled through a second facet of disaffection, the citizen's sense of political efficacy. It is also well known that this concept refers to a series of basic attitudes relating to an individual's perceptions of him/herself and of the political system. For some time, it has been possible to break down the empirical operationalization of the concept into its *internal* dimension which refers to beliefs about citizen's own *(political) compe-*

FIGURE 2a
Political Disaffection in Spain: Interest in Politics (1971–1996) and Frequency of Political Discussions (1983–1995)



Sources: Monzón (1988, 109) for 1971–1977; Montero and Torcal (1990, 132) for 1978–1989, Banco de Datos, CIS, and 1993 DATA survey.

FIGURE 2b
Political Disaffection in Spain: Internal and External Political Inefficacy (1978–1995)*



* Percentages of those who agree with the respective statements.
Sources: For 1978, 1985, and 1988, Banco de Datos, CIS, for 1979, 1982, and 1993, DATA surveys; and for 1995 survey by Centro do Investigaciones sobre la Realidad Social (CIRES).

tence to understand and ultimately to participate in politics, and its *external* dimension, which refers to beliefs about the *(political) responsiveness* of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens' demands (Almond and Verba 1963, 136ff.; Balch 1974; Craig, Niemi, and Silver 1990; and Gabriel 1995). Although both dimensions of political efficacy are usually seen as subdimensions of the wider concept of political dissatisfaction (Farah, Barnes, and Heunks 1979, 431–2), we will treat the former as specific indicators of disaffection. The Spanish data for each of these two items are shown in figure 2b.[17] The data seem to indicate that Spaniards have a low sense of personal efficacy. Despite the traditional lack of comparative data on these indicators, the little evidence available suggests that the Spanish levels are lower than those in more established democracies (Maravall 1995, 291; Torcal 1995, 150ff.; and Gabriel 1995).[18] Between one-half and two-thirds of respondents in these surveys agreed with the statements denoting a sense of inefficacy. Our 1993 panel study included another indicator of external efficacy, as respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "People like me have no influence on what the government does." This, too, suggests that most Spaniards feel politically ineffective: 64 percent of those interviewed agreed with the statement, while only 24 percent disagreed. It might be thought that the high levels of inefficacy reflected in these figures are a consequence of the newness of the democratic system, and that these manifestations of disaffection would change over time as citizens begin to appreciate the way in which mechanisms of responsiveness and accountability function in the political system. This, however, has not been the case. The level of agreement with the statement "politicians do not care" has hardly changed in the various surveys carried out since 1978, while there has been only a slight reduction in the proportion of affirmative responses to the statement "politics is too complicated" since data first became available.[19]

These orientations appear to be a stable, if not permanent, feature of Spain's political culture.[20] They are reflected in a large number of other indicators capturing different aspects of this affective estrangement. A global analysis of different attitudes towards politics confirms the strength of this disaffection. As can be seen in table 4, only around a third of Spaniards select positive sentiments; and whilst only a minority express negative sentiments, since the 1990s the majority have expressed their relationship to politics in terms of diffidence, boredom, and indifference. Although these orientations are by no means exclusive to Spain, it seems likely that they are particularly widespread and intense in the new Southern European democracies (Morlino and Montero 1995, 251–252; Sani 1992).

It should be emphasized that the evolution of responses to these survey items does not match the pattern we saw with respect to political discontent, nor with that of democratic legitimacy. Unlike the indicators of dissatisfaction, these measures of disaffection have not fluctuated in parallel with general social, economic, or political conditions. Rather, they have remained stable despite the development of the media since the late 1970s, and the increase in educational levels in the 1980s. They were not even affected by the *desencanto* of 1980–81, or by the more euphoric climate existing during the transition to democracy and the economic boom of the

TABLE 4
Feelings towards Politics, 1980–1995*

Feelings	1980	1985	1989	1991	1993	1995
Positive						
Passion	1	1	–	**	**	**
Enthusiasm	**	2	4	2	6	7
Commitment	**	2	2	3	12	**
Interest	24	24	19	18	26	26
Negative						
Irritation	4	6	9	16	21	25
Disgust	**	4	–	**	**	**
Disaffected						
Indifference	41	22	19	22	33	27
Boredom	12	21	28	21	30	30
Diffidence	11	12	12	15	40	51
(N)	(3,457)	(2,498)	(3,371)	(2,471)	(2,500)	(3,983)

* From 1980 to 1991, figures are the first of the two possible answers allowed to respondents; from 1993, multiple response. Columns may not add up to one hundred because nonanswers have not been included.
** Not asked this year.
Source: Banco de Datos, CIS.

late 1980s. Nor did they respond to changes in the partisan composition of the national government, or the decentralization of power brought about by the creation of the new *Estado de las autonomías.* And unlike support for democracy per se (which increased during the course of the transition and reached a plateau at the time of democratic consolidation around 1982), the level of disaffection has stayed virtually constant throughout the two decades of Spanish democracy. Not only do Spaniards have a weak sense of political efficacy, but this has shown no sign of rising in recent years.

Legitimacy, Discontent, and Disaffection: Three Distinct Dimensions

Largely on the basis of the different tendencies seen during the last two decades, we have hypothesized that democratic legitimacy, political discontent and political disaffection are conceptually and empirically distinct from each other. Let us now test this hypothesis. We begin by examining the extent to which they do or do not cluster together at the individual level, before going on to examine the way in which the distribution of these attitudes varies among different generations of Spaniards. Our 1993 pre- and post-election panel survey included one indicator of democratic legitimacy (*Legitim*, as it figures in the two following tables, which expresses the belief that "Democracy is the best political system for a country like ours,")[21] as well as a number of items from our hypothesized cluster of indicators of discontent: evaluations of the economic (*EconSat*) and the political situation (*PolitSat*); the level of satisfaction with "the way democracy is functioning in Spain" (*DemSat*),

and a general assessment of the performance of the government (*GovPerf*, which, in the questionnaire, was followed by a battery of questions relating to satisfaction with policies on unemployment, education, drugs, law and order, road building, and economic development, as well as foreign and regional affairs). This survey also included four indicators of disaffection: one referring to involvement in politics, the respondent's self-reported level of interest in politics (*Interest*); another to internal efficacy, the belief that "politics is so complicated" that the respondent cannot understand what is going on (*PolComp*); the remaining two questions consisted of indicators of external efficacy, the beliefs that "politicians do not care" about the preferences of citizens (*DontCare*), and that people like the respondent "have no influence on what the government does" (*NoInflu*). This survey also included three behavioral or quasi-behavioral indicators that are related with these attitudes: a vote for or against the incumbent in the recent election (*Vote93*), the frequency with which the respondent discusses politics (*Discuss*), and the respondent's score on a disguised political-information test (*InfoTest*).

Two different techniques have been used to analyse the dimensional structures underpinning the clustering of these attitudes and behaviour: (1) a factor analysis, and (2) an examination of correlations (Pearson's r) between all the variables. Although these techniques have rarely been used to analyse attitudes towards the political system, the results obtained in our case show that they can be highly revealing.[23] The clearest of these sets of findings can be seen in table 5, which gives, above the dotted line, the correlations between all the items in the first cluster (which clearly involve *political discontent*), and the factor loadings on the first factor which emerged from that analysis (Varimax rotation).[24] All the other items are shown below the dotted line, along with their correlations with the items of political discontent, and their factor loadings on the first factor. As can be seen from these figures, all the political discontent variables discussed above belong to the same cluster: both factor loadings and inter-item correlations are quite strong. This clustering occurs with the different facets of the political discontent dimension. First, the level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Spain and assessments of the economic and the political situation are related. Second, and as hypothesized, the sense of satisfaction (with whatever) is highly partisan in character, and is very clearly associated with assessments of the performance of the incumbent government. Third, and also as hypothesized above, the principal behavioral correlate of these indicators of satisfaction is the tendency to vote against the incumbent party.

On the other hand, it is also quite obvious that the democratic legitimacy item (*Legitim*) does not belong to this cluster of political discontent, nor is it strongly or consistently correlated with any of the items in the cluster: this confirms both the separability and the relative autonomy of these two dimensions of citizens' attitudes towards the political system.[25] It is also obvious that the various indicators of disaffection belong to a different dimension: this confirms both their separability and distinctiveness with respect to the principal facets of political discontent. The only partial exception to this pattern is external efficacy (*DontCare*), which is a

TABLE 5
The Political Discontent Cluster:
Factor Analysis and Correlations among All Items

	EconSit	PolitSit	DemSat	Vote93	GovPerf	Factor Loading
EconSit	—					.685
PolitSit	.49	—				.706
DemSat	.31	.36	—			.670
Vote93	.30	.32	.30	—		.678
GovPerf	.45	.46	.50	.57	—	.827
Legitim	**.05**	**.11**	**.13**	**–.03**	**.11**	**.113**
NoInflu	–.06	–.06	–.08	–.10	–.08	–.201
DontCare	–.16	–.15	–.22	–.17	–.20	–.381
Interest	–.03	.04	.07	–.09	–.04	–.005
PolComp	.00	–.01	–.05	.04	.01	.046
InfoTest	.06	–.01	–.05	.14	.08	.074
Discuss	.07	–.05	.00	–.12	–.09	–.104

Source: 1993 DATA survey.

little more closely associated with the items of political dissatisfaction than the others (including the internal efficacy items). This is not very surprising, since it reflects the tendency for incumbent authorities to be evaluated in terms of whether the political process is considered open, and the political system responsive.[26] One would, therefore, expect that respondents who are dissatisfied with economic and/or political conditions might both blame the incumbent government (by negatively evaluating its performance and eventually voting against the incumbents) and ultimately associate that poor performance with the belief that politicians do not care what people think. Thus, we conclude that there seems no justification for equating system satisfaction with legitimacy, or for treating dissatisfaction and disaffection as if they were one and the same thing.

The data presented in table 6 provides evidence for the existence of a well-defined cluster of *political disaffection* items, although this is rather less clear. Indeed, as was to be expected, the factor loadings for the two variables expressing psychological involvement in politics (*Interest* and *Discuss*) are among the highest. And much the same is true of the beliefs about the complication and incomprehensibility of politics (*PolComp*), the variable which expresses the internal efficacy dimension. The clustering of all of these variables rightly highlights the elements of detachment, estrangement, and diffidence that form part of the more general concept of political disaffection. In contrast, the factor loadings for the external-efficacy items (*DontCare* and *NoInflu*) are lower than those for the other items. Nonetheless, it appears that they are generally associated with the other disaffection items, and in the expected direction. For instance, internal efficacy has much stronger negative

TABLE 6
The Political Disaffection Cluster:
Factor Analysis and Correlations among All Items

	Interest	PolComp	InfoTest	Discuss	NoInflu	DontCare	Factor Loading
Interest	—						−.799
PolComp	−.36	—					.635
InfoTest	−.38	−.26	—				.639
Discuss	.58	−.29	.34	—			−.750
NoInflu	−.10	.17	.09	−.08	—		.298
DontCare	−.17	.25	.06	−.12	.28	—	.375
Legitim	**.09**	**.02**	**−.14**	**.08**	**.04**	**.11**	**−.125**
EconSit	−.03	.00	.06	.07	−.06	−.16	.056
PolitSit	.04	−.01	−.01	−.05	−.06	−.15	−.019
DemSat	.07	−.05	−.05	.00	−.08	−.22	−.113
Vote93	−.09	.04	.14	−.12	−.10	−.17	.158
GovPerf	−.04	.01	.08	−.09	−.08	−.20	.076

Source: 1993 DATA survey.

coefficients with the variables of psychological involvement in politics than external efficacy; and both internal and external efficacy items show some significant positive correlations, probably denoting the way in which citizens' assessments of their political efficacy shape their vision of the role they can play in politics or the responsiveness of the political system to their demands.[27] More importantly, neither democratic legitimacy nor political discontent seem to be significantly associated with the cluster of political disaffection items. Again, this finding challenges the assumption that disaffection dimensions can be treated as if they were indicators of system inefficacy or political dissatisfaction. Apart from the evidence for the different evolution of these attitudes over time presented above, this factor analysis tends to confirm our argument that these attitudes of legitimacy, discontent, and disaffection are clearly distinct from one another in both conceptual and empirical terms.[28]

Patterns of Intergenerational Continuity and Change

Finally, the distinctiveness of democratic legitimacy, political discontent, and political disaffection may be tested by examining their respective patterns of change and continuity in different age cohorts. Moreover, if we compare these patterns in different generations, we can advance some hypotheses about the origins of these orientations, as well as about the factors that affect them over the course of citizens' lives. Here, data on these attitudes will be used in a longitudinal analysis (through repeated cross-sectional survey data) to reveal the existence of distinct Spanish *political generations.* The concept of political generations involves much more than just biology, in that it is based on the notion that major historical events mark

different generations, endowing them with a distinctive and lasting pattern of political attitudes and political behaviour (Mannheim 1952, 276 ff.). As is the case in some other country studies,[29] our rather basic assumption is that each generation of Spaniards has been marked by the social and political events that took place during the most significant stage of its socialization, and that these have continued to influence its attitudes and behavior over the course of its lifetime. More sophisticated analyses have shown (Schuman and Scott 1989) that the real impact of a historical event on a generation does not come from the personal experiences of those who actually live the event, but rather from the way this is reconstructed and interpreted in collective memory.

As is well known, a longitudinal cohort design can detect three different effects that explain attitudinal change and stability. First, there is the *cohort* effect: some attitudes show consistent and lasting generational differences and are scarcely changed by specific political events. Second, there is the *period* effect: some attitudes vary in all generations in consequence of an event that affects all of them, without following any clear or consistent pattern. The third is the *life cycle* effect: some attitudes change simply as a function of aging. We have carried out a cohort analysis of these attitudes of legitimacy, discontent, and disaffection, examining how they have changed over the last fifteen years in six generations of Spaniards.[30] Below it will be seen that legitimacy and disaffection show a clear and consistent cohort effect; that is, they have remained stable through aging, and the only differences between them are their distinct patterns of continuity in different generations of Spaniards. In contrast, attitudes relating to the evaluation of the economic and political situation display period effects, and are, hence, unstable.

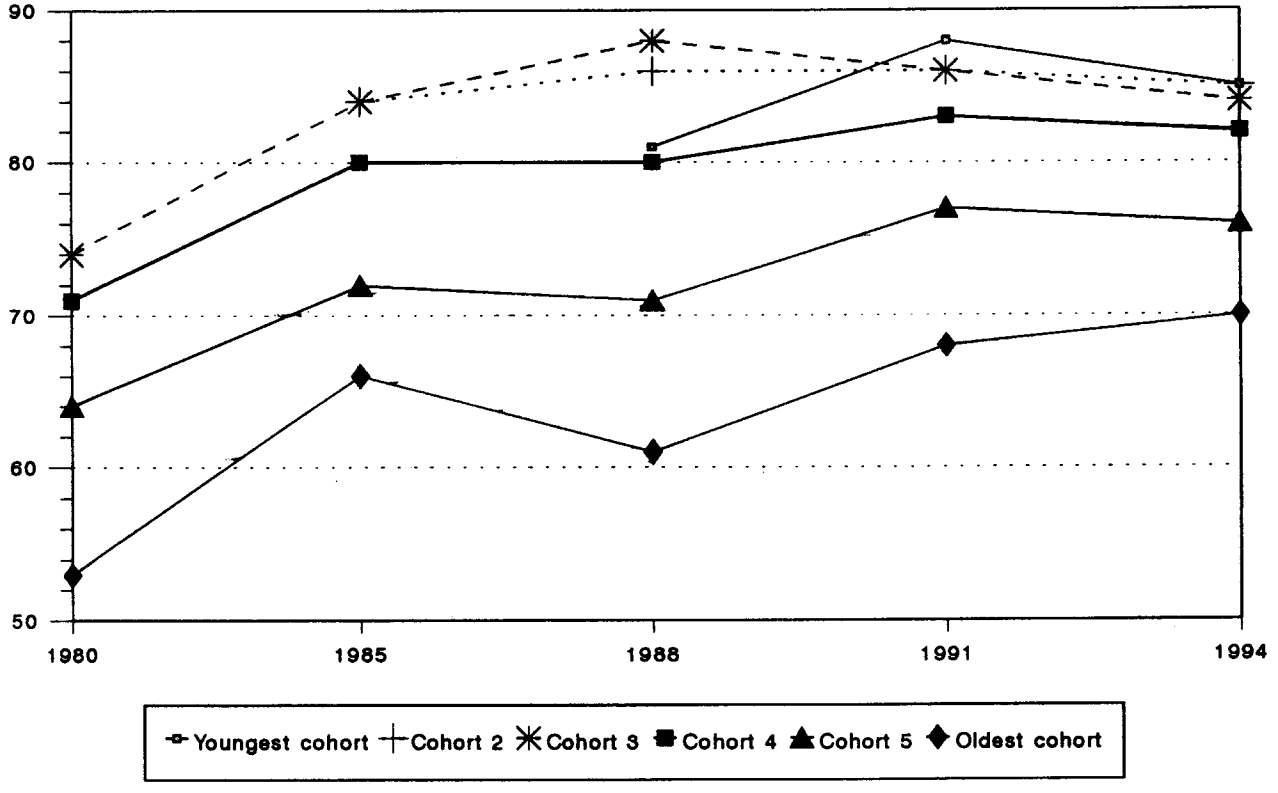
A generation-by-generation comparison of preferences for a democratic regime reveals a clear cohort effect.[31] As can be seen in figure 3, the differences in unconditional support for democracy in each generation are stable and considerable; this is even the case between the third cohort (born between 1953 and 1962, which came of age during the years immediately before the transition to democracy) and the fourth (born between 1938–1952, which experienced the most rapid period of economic growth during its formative years). The younger the cohort, the greater the support for democracy, although the two youngest cohorts do not differ in this respect.[32] It should also be noted that we find an intergenerational change in the level of support for the new democratic regime between the third and fourth generations, who matured during the years of economic and social modernization and the subsequent liberalization and expansion of education during the 1960s and 1970s, but also between the older fourth and the fifth generations. These data reveal the consequences of the very different circumstances in which these generations of Spaniards were socialized and acquired their basic political attitudes. The data also reflect the existence of different collective memories of the breakdown of the democratic Second Republic and Civil War during the 1930s, and the distinct phases of the forty years of authoritarian rule. As Aguilar (1995) has shown, these memories were "recreated" during Francoism by different generations of Spaniards, giving rise to a diffuse commitment not to repeat the still recent collective tragedy of the

war, chronic conflict, and intolerance. Thus, and in spite of some generational differences, considerable support for democracy already existed in the early 1970s, reflecting the existence of a series of attitudes favorable to democracy even before the start of the democratic transition (Montero and Gunther 1994; Maravall 1995, 275). These attitudes were later reinforced by the highly successful democratic transition, generating a clear *honeymoon* effect in the first years of the new political system (Linz and Stepan 1996, 101).

Despite the predominance of intergenerational differences, two other aspects of figure 3 should be highlighted. The first is the important period effect seen in the increase in legitimacy between 1980 and 1985, which has remained stable ever since. The second is the progressive convergence between the older and younger generations in terms of their degree of support for the regime, as seen in the smaller differences between the generations in 1994. These two findings appear to reflect processes of adult attitudinal re-socialization and/or of political learning (Bermeo 1992, 274; Aguilar 1995, 355 ff). Period effects indicate that as the new regime became consolidated between 1980 and 1985, all Spaniards underwent some degree of further attitudinal change which had positive consequences for their attitude towards democracy (López Pintor 1987, 1006–07; Maravall 1995, 263). This is revealed by the increase in the legitimacy conferred on the new regime since 1980, which, despite the continued differences between the various cohorts, affected them all equally. Likewise, the slight, but progressive convergence of all of the lines in successive years reveals that once attitudes in support of the regime stabilized, acceptance of the new regime has slowly risen among the older generations. This suggests that the democratic *ethos* has been clearly gaining ground among those generations who were almost entirely socialized under the authoritarian regime, and were hence relatively slow to accept the new democratic regime. Even though the cohort effect continues to predominate, this period effect confirms that the passing of time does also generate a slow process of habituation and socialization that favors support for democracy over any alternative regime. In this way, the Spanish case confirms the findings of comparative studies that have emphasized the positive effects for the achievement of high levels of legitimacy of a combination of two factors: a rise in support for democracy after a short period of functioning of the new regime; and above all, the presence of favorable attitudes towards democracy prior to regime change, resulting not from the process of modernization but from each generation's historical comparison of the regimes it has lived under, as well as of the experience of other countries that have enjoyed democratic regimes, which serve as "reference groups" (Weil 1993, 198).

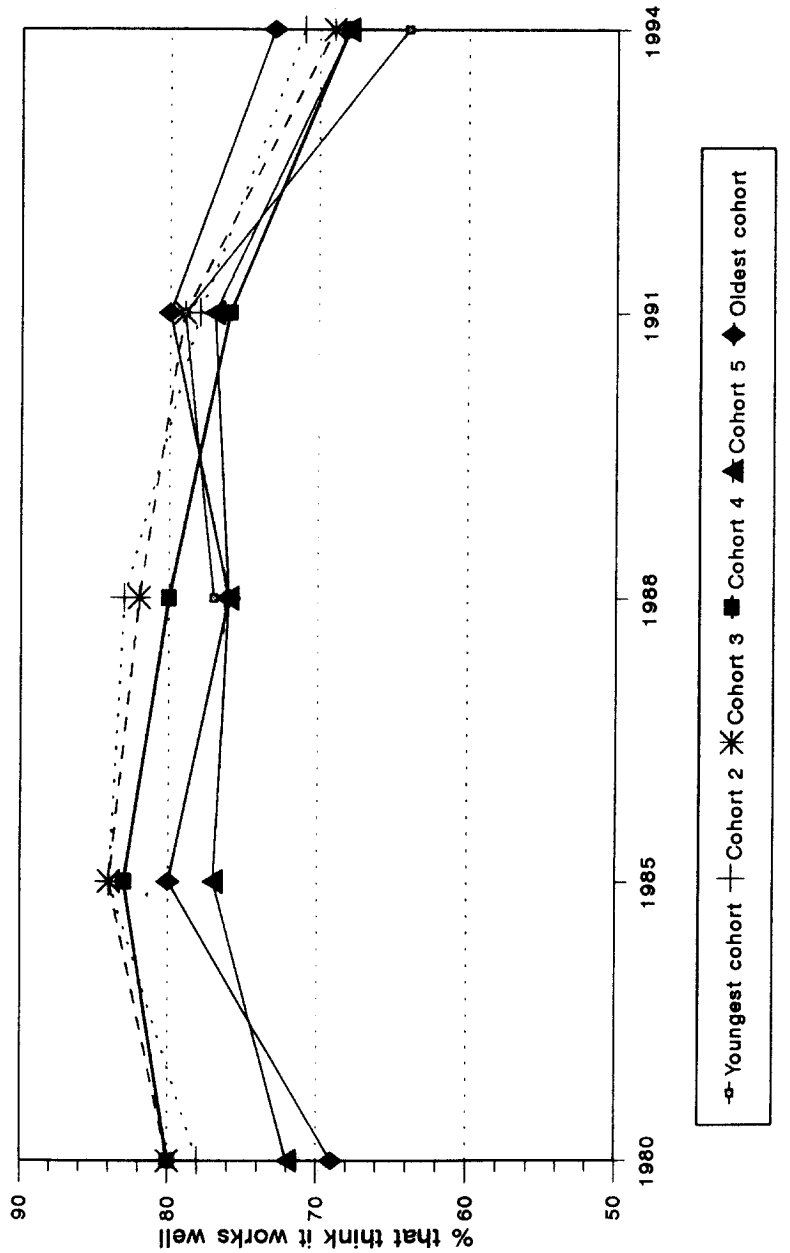
A cohort analysis of Spaniards' level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy shows a very different pattern, however. Figure 4, which includes the percentages of citizens in each cohort who state that "democracy works well" or "reasonably well" reveals the absence of a cohort effect: there are scarcely any differences between generations, and when differences do appear, the lines intersect, that is, they oscillate from year to year without following any identifiable common pattern. There is also a clear period effect between 1991 and 1994, coin-

FIGURE 3
Legitimacy by Cohorts, 1980–1994
(Percentage of those who declare that democracy is preferable to any other form of government)



Source: Banco de Datos, CIS.

FIGURE 4
Efficacy by Cohorts, 1985–1994 (Percentage of those who declare that democracy works well, or that it has many defects, but it works reasonably well)



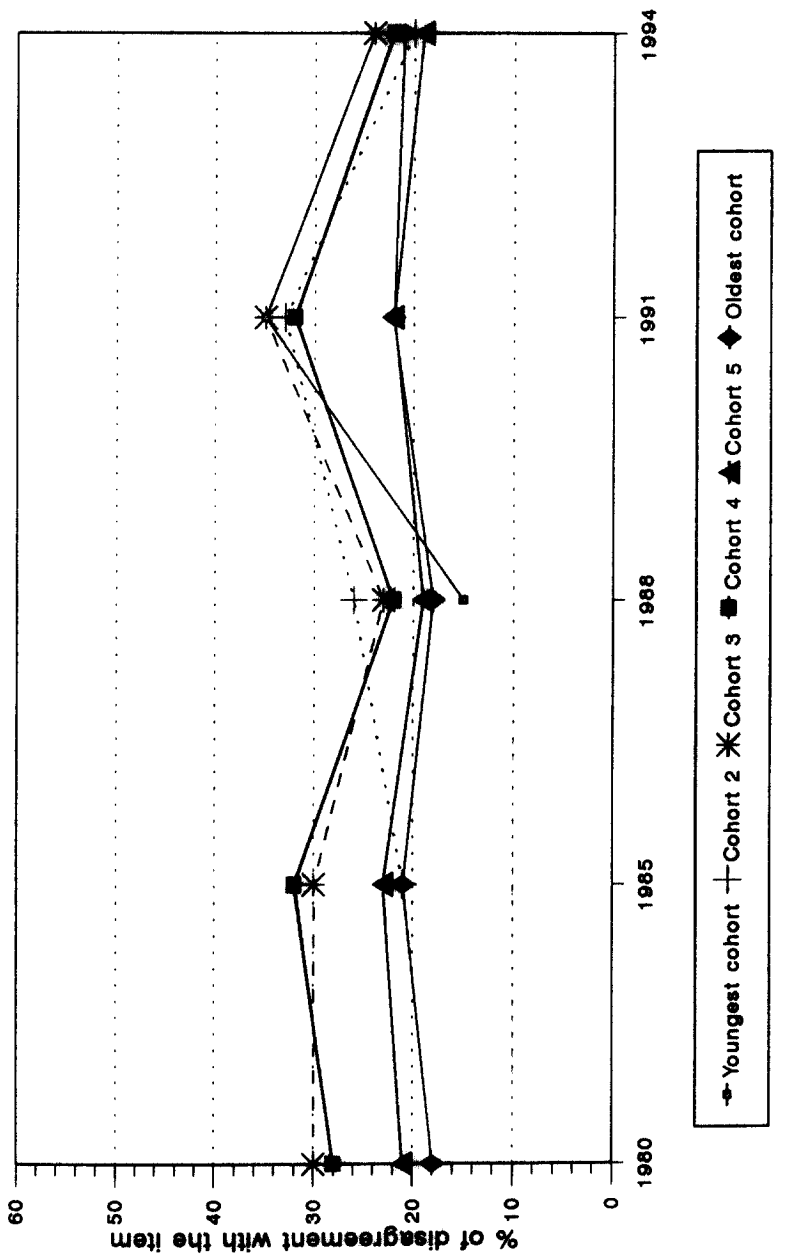
Source: Banco de Datos, CIS.

ciding with the wave of corruption and political scandals, as can be seen in the decline in satisfaction with the functioning of democracy among all cohorts. This period effect, of course, affects all citizens equally, regardless of the generation they belong to, leading to a drastic drop in their satisfaction with the performance of democracy.[33] These data not only reflect the attitudinal autonomy of legitimacy and efficacy, but also point to their distinct nature. Whereas levels of legitimacy tend to remain stable throughout an individual's life cycle and differ in each generation, satisfaction with the performance of democracy is unstable and much more dependent on the outputs of governments. The Spaniards' rather unconditional support for democracy has not been affected by the severe economic conditions of recession and unemployment, the difficulties created by complex political situations, or the negative impact of the cases of corruption or political scandals.

Measures of disaffection tend to show a generational effect. However, in contrast to what we have observed in the case of legitimacy, these indicators reveal few intergenerational differences. In other words, attitudes relating to disaffection seem to be transmitted from one generation to another virtually unchanged; this transmissional continuity is quite remarkable given the social and economic changes witnessed over the last thirty years, and the political changes of the last twenty. We have selected external political efficacy from the indicators of political disaffection discussed above to illustrate this point. Figure 5 shows the evolution by cohorts of the proportion of Spaniards who disagree with the statement "Politicians don't care much what people like me think." It can be seen that the differences between the generations are extremely small. Perceptions of external efficacy do not change in function of the life cycle. In other words, they do not rise as a result of aging: note that there is no progressive increase in any of the lines. At the same time, it hardly increases from one generation to the next: the distances between the lines are very small. There are some period effects, but since these amount to only a few percentage points, they are scarcely significant. Therefore, it seems that social, political, and economic change does not have a major impact on the assessment of external efficacy made by the different generations of Spaniards over the last fifteen years. These results confirm the hypothesis that external efficacy and other attitudes of disaffection are the result of a long standing process of "cultural accumulation" (Almond and Verba 1963, 213 ff., and 279; Putnam 1993, 152–62). Consequently, they remain stable across generations, regardless of systemic change, and can be altered only with great difficulty. Those data also verify a point made in the comparative literature: sentiments of political efficacy are characterized by notable intergenerational continuity.[34]

These different patterns have a number of important implications. First, attitudes that gauge political disaffection show considerable persistence across generations, which contrasts with the extraordinary intergenerational differences observed in the indicators measuring modernization, education, and religiosity (Torcal 1995). Second, political discontent does not display any cohort effect: it varies across political generations without apparently following any definite pattern. Third, and in contrast to what we have seen with respect to political disaffection, democratic legitimacy

FIGURE 5
External Political Efficacy by Cohorts, 1980–1995
(Percentage of those who disagree with the statement, "Politicians don't care much what people like me think")



Source: Banco de Datos, CIS.

has undergone important intergenerational changes. But the increases in this, which have been similar across all generations, are not mere byproducts of the process of modernization. If this were the case, the differences in support for the regime would have been more pronounced among those generations most directly affected by the economic and social changes of the 1960s. Since differences are consistent across all generations, this does not appear to be the case. The modernization that took place in the 1960s and 1970s did not, therefore, change per se Spaniards' attitudinal patterns with respect to democracy. At most, it may have fostered the creation of a common ground for certain attitudinal changes that took place in all generations once the transition to democracy began. But the similarities and differences resulting from pre-adult experiences have remained equally pronounced. Attitudinal change, when it does occur, appears to be the product of the presence of different collective memories which are *reinterpreted* differently by different political generations, and condition the interpretation of the present.

Concluding Remarks

Political culture is a multidimensional phenomenon. However, the link between its different dimensions must be reexamined. Most of the studies on the subject, following Almond and Verba (1963), have maintained that different sets of attitudes should follow coherent and consistent patterns. This assumption has had particularly important consequences for our understanding of attitudes towards the political system. The literature on the political culture of the old democracies, for example, includes numerous cases in which any sign of dissatisfaction with democracy is explicitly or implicitly considered to be conducive to a crisis of democratic legitimacy. Equally, the alleged consistency between perceptions of democratic support and evaluations of system performance has been attributed to the different dimensions of the concept of satisfaction with democracy, thereby ignoring the differences between citizens' basic orientations, as well as the distinct character of the political objects included in the concept. The evidence presented here on attitudes towards democracy in Spain suggests that the relationships are rather more complex. The analysis of the evolution of democratic legitimacy, political discontent, and political disaffection among the Spaniards over the last twenty years has produced several theoretically significant conclusions.

First, despite the only recent establishment of a democratic regime, by the 1980s support for democracy was as widespread in Spain as in other Western European countries. Furthermore, notwithstanding the difficult and sometimes turbulent circumstances that surrounded the Spanish transition (including extraordinarily high levels of political violence associated with Basque separatism, an attempted coup, and successive economic crises that took unemployment to over 20 percent of the labor force), support for democracy in Spain has remained solid throughout the two decades of the regime's existence.

Second, by using a variety of different empirical indicators, we have also been able to distinguish between democratic legitimacy, on the one hand, and system

efficacy and satisfaction with the working of democracy, on the other. In contrast to most European countries, where we lack the questionnaire data required to distinguish between these two dimensions (see Kaase and Newton 1995, 168), Spanish survey data allow us to analyze the relations between them and their evolution under what were sometimes dramatic conditions, the result of a combination of the uncertainty of the transition process, the difficult economic situation in the early 1990s, in Spain as in most Western democracies, and the particular problem of cases of corruption and political scandals. While both waves of dissatisfaction did have important political consequences (most dramatically for the electoral support of the governing parties and the restructuring of the party system), they have not led to any significant or persistent decline in support for democracy, or in any increase in electoral support for anti-system parties.

Third, political disaffection, measured through psychological involvement in politics and external and internal political efficacy, also seems to be a separate attitudinal dimension. There is a very high level of political disaffection among Spaniards, which has remained stable over time despite the very different political climates that existed during the transition and democratic consolidation, and the extraordinary social and economic changes which have taken place over the last twenty years. Furthermore, contrary to what some scholars (Muller and Seligson 1994) have recently asserted with respect to the causality of civic attitudes and democracy, the Spanish case clearly suggests that political disaffection does not simply decline with the mere passage of time under democratic rule. Political disaffection seems to be a cultural phenomenon that shows remarkable stability.

Finally, while factor analysis provided additional evidence for the affirmation that attitudes of democratic legitimacy, political discontent, and political disaffection are clearly distinct from each other, both conceptually and empirically, cohort analysis enabled us to verify their different levels of generational change and continuity. Once again, the results highlight the distinct nature of each of these attitudes, and confirm their different dimensionality. What is more, the pattern of intergenerational transmission varies across different political generations: whilst legitimacy shows a pattern of intergenerational change, and disaffection one of intergenerational continuity, dissatisfaction essentially reveals the existence of a period effect, and hence the absence of cohort effects. This picture puts Spain in a rather unusual position in comparative terms. After the consolidation of democracy in the early 1980s, in the mid-1990s Spain is facing similar challenges to those being experienced by other Western European polities. Nevertheless, it seems that Spanish democracy displays a peculiar combination of a high level of legitimacy, which has remained stable and immune to fluctuations in the negative perceptions that citizens have of the functioning of democracy, and equally high levels of political disaffection, which is also characterized by its stability.