

DECENTRALIZATION, THE INCLUSION OF ETHNIC CITIZENS, AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

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Abstract: Decentralization has been considered a tool of democracy promotion because of its ability to improve citizen participation and increase equity by allocating resources to long-neglected populations. I examine these claims by focusing on decentralization's effects for indigenous and Afro-Latino individuals in fifteen Latin American countries. Using AmericasBarometer survey data provided by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), I first analyze how the inclusion of ethnic citizens in local government affects attitudes that are considered crucial for democratic consolidation, such as satisfaction with democratic governance. I then assess whether decentralization has increased inclusion by examining how political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization affect ethnic individuals' participation and engagement in local government. The analyses demonstrate the limits of decentralizing reforms for democratization. I find that the inclusion of marginalized citizens is not substantially enhanced by decentralization, which is especially important given the other significant result of this study: that local inclusion increases ethnic individuals' support for democracy. The results suggest that individual reserves of social capital may be most important for enhancing local inclusion, and hence support for democracy.

Starting in the 1980s, Latin American governments began adopting decentralization as a solution to various economic and political ails. In addition to its ability to improve public services and balance budgets (Tiebout 1956; Oates 1972), decentralization was considered a significant advancement toward the consolidation or deepening of democracy. For scholars and policy experts alike, decentralization had the potential to improve the quality of democracy by encouraging greater participation and enhancing representation, particularly for traditionally excluded populations (e.g., Diamond 1999; and World Bank 2000). Furthermore, by improving government access for previously neglected ethnic groups, decentralization was thought to reduce the motivations for ethnic mobilization against the state and in turn promote democratic stability (Tsebelis 1990; Kaufmann 1996; Gurr 2000). By the late 1990s, nearly every Latin American country had experimented with decentralization in one form or another, generally as part of their efforts to democratize.

Despite the promotion of decentralization as a tool for democratic consolidation, recent research on its effects calls into question how such reforms affect the

I would like to thank Ryan Carlin, Erin Cassese, Gregory Love, Jana Morgan, and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments revising this article. Any remaining errors are my responsibility. This project was supported by a Small Grant for Research on Marginalization and Democracy from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University and USAID.

Latin American Research Review, Vol. 50, No. 3. © 2015 by the Latin American Studies Association.

performance of democracy, particularly in relation to its ability to incorporate excluded populations. Echoing Prud'homme's (1995) fears about the persistence of subnational income inequalities in decentralized states, scholars have found that decentralization in certain sectors often "leads to a reinforcement of existing inequalities and power relations" (Willis and Khan 2009, 1002). Furthermore, decentralization of education "has resulted in serious inequities in funding and quality" such that poorer communities often fail to obtain higher levels of academic achievement (Meade and Gershberg 2008, 317) or perform worse because they are unprepared to handle the new responsibilities delegated to them (Galiani, Gertler, and Schargrotsky 2005). When it comes to democratic representation, scholars have found that decentralization can generate incentives that lead elected officials to betray citizen interests (Yilmaz, Beriz, and Serrano-Berthet 2010). The desire to win local elections may encourage the persistence of clientelism and corruption (Tanzi 1994) or cause political officials to enact policies that are fiscally beneficial but go against voter preferences (Eaton 2010). Finally, lower levels of government are often more vulnerable to being captured by vested interests, resulting in less protection for minorities and the poor at these levels (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2000).

These findings suggest that a further examination of the effects of decentralization is worthwhile. Although there is evidence that inequalities may be exacerbated by decentralization, little research has examined specifically how decentralization has affected Latin American ethnic or marginalized citizens' inclusion in governance. Studies of decentralization more generally confirm that it has had mixed results in its ability to enhance ethnic representation at the local level (O'Neill 2006; Van Cott 2008; Thede 2011). However, these extant analyses are primarily case studies that focus on indigenous communities in Bolivia and Ecuador. As yet, no analysis has investigated the effects of decentralization on the political engagement of both indigenous citizens and Afro-Latinos, nor has there been any systematic cross-national analysis of the effects of decentralization across Latin America. I narrow this gap in understanding by exploring whether national-level processes of decentralization shape the actions and attitudes of individual ethnic citizens across the region. Understanding how decentralization affects ethnic group inclusion has important implications for normative and practical prescriptions for improving democratic governance.

This article investigates two issues that highlight the significance of decentralization across Latin America. First, I demonstrate the relevance of the inclusion of marginalized citizens in the democratization process by analyzing how citizens' engagement with local government affects their support for democracy. I show that when marginalized citizens participate and are politically engaged in local government, they are also more likely to hold positive attitudes toward democracy. This finding stresses the need for improved inclusion and access at the local level, especially for ethnic populations. I then present two theoretical expectations with regard to decentralization and ethnic inclusion. Using cross-national survey results, I examine how variations in decentralization affect ethnic inclusion in local governance. The findings largely support a skeptical view of decentralization, demonstrating that political decentralization, in particular, does

not appear to increase the inclusion of marginalized citizens in local government. Instead, the factor that most consistently corresponds with greater local inclusion is an individual's reserves of social capital. In the final section, I discuss the conclusions and implications of these findings in more detail.

THE INCLUSION OF ETHNIC CITIZENS AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

Among the many proposed benefits of decentralization is its ability to enhance the representation of marginalized groups and ultimately better incorporate them into the political process. For the purposes of this article, I use the term "inclusion of ethnic citizens" to refer to the integration of individuals from historically marginalized ethnic groups into politics through processes of political engagement and political participation.¹ I base my conceptualization of inclusion on elements of the "Civic Volunteerism Model" (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995) and thus consider inclusion to be a multifaceted concept that comprises formal participation in politics (such as attending town meetings and seeking assistance from officials) as well as measures that indicate greater levels of political engagement (such as trust in government and positive evaluations of government services).

Why should we examine the inclusion of marginalized citizens in Latin America? Given the strength of such marginalized groups in many countries across Latin America, their attitudes toward democracy are particularly important. Ethnic groups that are dissatisfied with democratic governance can challenge the state (Inclán 2008; Yashar 2005), engage in a variety of forms of violence (Birnie 2007), or throw their support behind populist/authoritarian regimes and military coups (Holmes and Piñeres 2006). Conventional wisdom states that democracy cannot consolidate without the support of its citizens and their belief that democracy is legitimate or "the only game in town" (Di Palma 1990; Diamond 1999). Support and satisfaction with democracy among ethnic individuals is thus an important part of the consolidation process in Latin America.

Because subnational politics are often the primary means by which ethnic groups gain access to political office and obtain a voice in policy discussions, it follows that political inclusion and responsiveness at the subnational level may be one of the most important determinants of support for democracy among ethnic populations. Local governance can instruct citizens on the basic tenets of democracy, which, when understood, can encourage citizens to be supportive of democratic institutions in general (Oxhorn, Tulchin, and Selee 2004). Indeed, research on Bolivia has shown that decentralization can bolster citizens' system support at the national level, as long as local institutions perform well (Hiskey and Seligson 2003). Based on these arguments, the first hypothesis in this project is as follows:

Support for Democracy Hypothesis: Ethnic individuals who enjoy greater inclusion in local politics should have more positive perceptions of democracy than those who are excluded from local politics.

1. According to Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) political participation is defined as voluntary activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action, whereas political engagement is citizens' psychological predispositions toward politics.

DECENTRALIZATION AND THE INCLUSION OF ETHNIC CITIZENS IN LATIN AMERICA

If local inclusion is an important predictor of support for democracy among marginalized groups in Latin America, then it is worth investigating what leads to such inclusion. Within the public management literature, decentralization is hailed as one of the primary means for incorporating greater segments of the population into governance (see Jütting, Corsi, and Stockmayer 2005). Although decentralization can take a variety of forms, the principal ways in which it has occurred in Latin America are politically, through the election of subnational authorities, and fiscally or administratively, through the transfer of fiscal resources, budgetary control, and service provision to subnational administrations (Montero and Samuels 2004). All of these processes have the potential to affect the inclusion of marginalized citizens in Latin America, though perhaps not in the way that donor agencies anticipated.

There are a number of causal mechanisms driving the relationship between decentralization and more extensive political inclusion of all citizens in politics, not just members of marginalized groups. Powerful local political institutions can facilitate the expression of local grievances and are more capable of articulating immediate responses to collective local needs (Hirschmann 1970; Oates 1972). Other purported benefits of decentralization are its ability to increase political participation and transparency while also reducing corruption and bringing voters closer to government (UNDP 1997, World Bank 2000). Thus all citizens, and not just marginalized individuals, experience a greater opportunity to participate in governance in decentralized systems and may feel more engaged, given the likelihood that their involvement has meaningful consequences.

Certainly, if all citizens may experience greater inclusion as a result of decentralization, then marginalized individuals can as well. However, there are reasons why decentralization should enhance the inclusion of marginalized groups specifically. When it comes to political decentralization, local institutions allow for the election of ethnic representatives in ways that would be impossible at higher ranks of government, especially when minorities are geographically concentrated (Diamond and Tsalik 1999; Birnir 2004). Indeed, decentralization has already resulted in the election of greater numbers of indigenous officials across Latin America (Van Cott 2005). The formal incorporation of ethnic individuals into positions of power is a direct way in which decentralization encourages inclusion, but representation also indirectly boosts inclusion in other sites of governance. For example, the descriptive representation of traditionally underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities and women, boosts those individuals' sense of political efficacy, leading them to be more involved in politics generally (Phillips 1998). When traditionally excluded groups finally achieve representation, it increases those groups' trust in political institutions (Dovi 2007, 308) and access to those institutions. Studies in the United States have demonstrated that black citizens are more likely to contact black representatives (Gay 2002). Descriptive representation is therefore one mechanism through which political decentralization should lead to increased ethnic inclusion, in a multitude of ways.

All processes of decentralization should also boost ethnic inclusion because

they allow ethnic groups increased autonomy over local governance. For example, decentralization has been instrumental in allowing for the creation of alternative forms of political institutions—such as communal governance and indigenous forms of justice—that were demanded by indigenous groups in countries like Bolivia and Ecuador (Van Cott 2008).² The implementation of such alternative institutions allows indigenous communities the ability to pursue “inclusion and autonomy simultaneously,” such that by providing groups with greater autonomy, it also facilitates their inclusion in the state (Yashar 1999, 96). Traditional forms of governance that are more accessible to ethnic individuals should encourage them to utilize government services at higher rates and view those services more favorably. These expectations lead to the following hypothesis:

Ethnic Inclusion Hypothesis: Ethnic individuals living in decentralized states should enjoy greater inclusion—in the form of political participation and engagement—in local politics when compared to ethnic individuals living in more centralized states.

Yet there is a growing literature that calls into question the democratizing effects of decentralization across the developing world. Studies of Latin American cases highlight a number of obstacles that prevent decentralization from fully incorporating historically neglected groups—such as indigenous citizens, Afro-Latinos, and women—into governance. For example, in her study of Bolivia, Nancy Thede (2011, 220) finds that even when indigenous leaders gain office, they “quickly turn into bureaucrats, appearing to take their lead from the community, while actually playing by the liberal political rules often denounced by the [indigenous party].” More evidence from Bolivia shows that when indigenous groups are given a voice through the creation of new local institutions—such as oversight committees composed of territorially based communities—these groups often lack the training and resources to perform their jobs effectively (Yashar 2006, 270). Thus the formal political opportunities that accompany decentralization can be a mixed blessing for historically neglected populations: on the one hand, they provide them with the opportunity for the representation they desire and deserve, but on the other, they can lead to divisions within the community, difficulty in policy making, and disillusionment among the population.

Of course, given the historical foundations of power relationships in Latin America, decentralization often does not result in increased representation for ethnic groups. In her study of the Andes, Kathleen O’Neill (2006) finds that localizing politics has often meant greater opportunities for nonethnic elites to assert control over local regions, to the continued exclusion of indigenous or Afro-Latino individuals. Local party bosses exploit the increased political and fiscal opportunities provided by decentralization reforms, using them as a means to perpetuate

2. In fact, many of the institutional innovations that indigenous groups demanded and received during the decentralization process were for communal, rather than individual, forms of democratic representation, such as participatory-deliberative forums for budget development and policy making (see Van Cott 2008). Although assessing whether a community as a whole has experienced greater inclusion is beyond the scope of this project, individual perceptions of inclusion could be a result of greater community inclusion.

their domination (Gibson 2005).³ This may be especially true when local elites form a highly cohesive group, or voters are ignorant of local politics (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2000). Because “most Latin American parties still fail to represent the poorest, especially the rural poor and indigenous peoples,” these groups are particularly subject to control by local authoritarian forces (Fox 1994, 107). The result is that decentralization reforms may have little, if any, effect on ethnic inclusion in local governance. Taken together, these arguments within the literature lead to my final hypothesis:

Alternative Inclusion Hypothesis: Ethnic individuals living in decentralized states do not enjoy significantly greater inclusion in local politics when compared to ethnic individuals living in more centralized states.

DATA AND VARIABLES

In order to test the above hypotheses, I use individual-level survey data to capture citizens’ support for democracy as well as their perceptions of inclusion in subnational politics. The AmericasBarometer surveys conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) provide a wealth of data that can be used to measure these concepts. LAPOP has conducted surveys assessing attitudes in twenty-six countries in Latin America, in some cases covering a time span of over thirty years. The benefit of these surveys is that many of the same questions have been asked in every country, allowing for cross-national comparisons of citizen attitudes. Cross-national comparison is essential for analyzing how country-level factors, such as decentralization, impact public opinion. In this section, I outline how I complement AmericasBarometer survey data with data on decentralization to compile measures of key independent and dependent variables that can then be used to evaluate all three of my hypotheses.

All three hypotheses suggest that ethnic individuals’ views should be conditioned by other factors. For the purposes of this study, ethnic individuals are those who self-identify as belonging to a historically disadvantaged group in Latin America—primarily indigenous, Afro-Latino (black), or mulatto identities. Because most survey sample populations include only limited numbers of ethnic individuals, I use a binary variable to indicate whether or not an individual identified themselves with any one of these groups.⁴ Those who considered themselves white or mestizo were coded as 0, while those who identified as indigenous, black, or mulatto were coded as 1.⁵ Those who self-identified as “other” were dropped from the analysis, since “other” is a category that can encapsulate

3. See the growing literature on subnational authoritarianism, some of which is summarized in Gibson (2010), for further explanation of the mechanisms of oppression at work in local governments.

4. For example, in the 2010 round of surveys, the largest sample of indigenous individuals was in Guatemala, where 492 out of 1,410 (35 percent) identified as indigenous, and the largest sample Afro-Latinos was in Colombia, where 100 out of 1,423 (7 percent) identified as black. Across countries in 2010, on average the samples consisted of 6 percent indigenous and 4.7 percent black and mulatto individuals.

5. In Bolivia, *cholos* were coded as mestizos and *originarios* were coded as indigenous. In Brazil, *pardo* (brown) is coded as a white/mestizo group, so only *preto* (black) and *indígena* (indigenous) are coded as

traditionally privileged individuals, such as those of European decent. Please see the appendix for the survey question used to create this variable and all of the survey-based variables outlined hereafter.

To test the support for democracy hypothesis, it is necessary to conceptualize citizens' perceptions of democracy (the dependent variable). I rely on two measures standard within the literature on democratization. The first is *Democracy Support*, based on a question that asks the extent to which citizens agree that democracy is better than other forms of government. This variable is equal to 1 when citizens were in strong and very strong agreement with that statement, and 0 otherwise. The second is *Satisfaction with Democracy*, based on a question that asks how satisfied individuals are with democracy in their country. This variable is assigned 1 when citizens were satisfied or very satisfied, 0 otherwise. In the sample, 53.82 percent of the citizens indicate they are satisfied or very satisfied with democracy.

In order to test the support for democracy hypothesis, there must be a measure of inclusion—political engagement and participation—in local governments (the key independent variable). Four elements of the survey instruments allow me to develop measures of political engagement and participation at the local level. First, there is *Local Assistance*, based on a question that asks whether individuals have requested help from a local official (mayor, municipal council, etc.). A negative response is coded 0; an affirmative response is coded 1 and should indicate that individuals experience greater engagement in local level politics. The second variable is *Town Meetings*, based on a question about whether an individual has attended town meetings, coded again as a binary variable where an affirmative response is 1 and indicates participation in subnational politics. Third is *Local Trust*, based on a question about the amount of trust a citizen has in local government. Responses are coded on an ordinal scale, where 0 represents when individuals have no trust, and 6 indicates when individuals have the highest level of trust. I recoded the variable to capture the highest levels of trust in local government, where 1 equals levels 2 and 3, 2 equals levels 4–6, and 0 all other scores. The final indicator is *Local Services*, another ordinal scale where 0 indicates the worst evaluation of services provided to citizens by municipal government, and 4 indicates the best. I recoded the variable to indicate when citizens have a favorable view of services, such that 1 equals 3 and 4 on the scale, 0 the rest. In sum, inclusion is measured by investigating how individuals view their own participation and engagement with local governments.⁶

There are an additional number of variables that the literature suggests may affect perceptions of democracy, which I control for in the analysis. Support for democracy is often largely determined by individuals' trust in and support for formal political institutions, such as the courts, the electoral council, and the Congress (Norris 1999; Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2003). I create an index of

ethnic groups. Though these designations are not perfect, they are the best approximations and allowed those observations to be retained for the analysis.

6. I created an index of local inclusion from these four variables using principal components factor analysis, but the items did not load together well, resulting in two factors with eigenvalues over 1, and a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.33. I therefore decided to analyze them separately.

Institutional Support from four questions regarding the credibility of the justice system, trust in all political institutions, trust in the electoral council, and trust in Congress.⁷ Evaluations of economic performance influence political behavior (e.g. Lewis-Beck 1988), including satisfaction with and support of democracy (Bishin, Barr, and Lebo 2006). The *Economy* variable is a measure of individuals' evaluations of the state of their country's economy, ranging from 0 (very bad) to 4 (very good). The average ranking is a 1.56, and 86.86 percent of the sample evaluated their country's economy at a 2 (neither good nor bad, regular) or below. Finally, overall *Life Satisfaction* may color a citizen's view of their political system. About 3.46 percent of the sample said they were very unsatisfied (ranking of 0) with their lives, versus 37.83 percent who claimed to be very satisfied with their lives (ranking of 4). The average ranking was 2.18 (between satisfied and very satisfied). I also control for the size of the ethnic population in each country, based on estimates of indigenous and Afro-Latino populations from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.⁸ The smallest ethnic population is in El Salvador (1 percent), the largest is in Bolivia (55 percent), and the average is 25.75 percent.

I turn now to variables necessary to test the ethnic inclusion hypotheses: the key explanatory variables are measures of decentralization itself. Here, political decentralization is measured by a binary variable indicating whether or not state legislatures and executives are directly elected. Data for this measure was obtained from the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001) and was compiled and updated by Harbers (2010).⁹ In order to measure fiscal decentralization, I follow Schneider (2003) and Harbers (2010) and use a scale composed of four items: subnational revenue (the sum of local and state revenues) as a percentage of gross domestic product, subnational expenditure (the sum of local and state expenditures) as a percentage of gross domestic product, subnational revenue as a percentage of total government revenue, and subnational expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure. Taken together, these figures indicate the extent to which subnational governments have access to resources. These data are available from the government finance statistics shared by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and were compiled for around eleven Latin American countries by Harbers (2010). Data were updated to include more recent years using government finance statistics compiled in *CEPALSTAT*, the statistical database maintained by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). In addition, ECLAC's

7. This index was created using principal components factor analysis. The items used to compile it have a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.73.

8. *CIA World Factbook 2012*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/download/download-2012/index.html>.

9. Decentralization at the intermediate (state/department/provincial) level should have an effect on feelings of local inclusion because state-level politicians play an important role in local politics, especially in federal states. In Mexico, for example, state-level deputies form alliances with local leaders by "acting as brokers between community leaders and government officials" and "distributing scarce public resources in a selective manner to local notables and voters before the election" (see Langston and Morgenstern 2009, 166). Elections at the intermediate level also open the opportunity for ethnic representation. My analysis therefore assesses how the creation of these directly elected (potential) intermediaries affects citizens' sense of local politics.

Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean (2008, 2009) provided key information on government revenues and expenditures. The fiscal decentralization scale was constructed as a moving average of three years (two years prior to the survey and the year of the survey itself) in order to account for the influence of changes in decentralization over time. The scale ranges from 1.19 in El Salvador to 45.52 in Argentina, with an average of 18.98 and standard deviation of 11.42.

Finally, I also include a measure of administrative decentralization to account for the transfer of responsibilities of service provision to local governments. Administrative decentralization includes the transfer of responsibilities for services like education and health care, which are provisions for which ethnic populations are likely to seek access based on their distinct cultural practices and preferences.¹⁰ The World Bank has compiled qualitative decentralization indicators that describe “which government levels are responsible for the different functions (setting the amount, determining the structure, executing and supervising) relating to the services that the government delivers (housing, nutrition programs, primary and preschool education etc.)” (World Bank 2001). Using these qualitative indicators, I created a quantitative measure that codes for the percentage of services provided at more localized levels. The scale ranges from 5 percent of services that are localized (in El Salvador and Costa Rica) to 51.22 percent (in Bolivia). The average is 24.82 with a standard deviation of 15.28.

The literature on political participation indicates that a number of control variables should be considered when assessing such behavior (e.g., Tate 1991; Barreto, Segura, and Woods 2004). Higher values of demographic variables, such as education, age, and income, should all lead to higher levels of political involvement. In addition, social capital, or membership in civic associations, may increase both trust in government and political participation (Putnam 2000; van Londen, Phalet, and Hagendoorn 2007). I combined four indicators of civic participation (attendance at the meetings of religious organizations, parent/teacher associations, community improvement committees, and professional organizations) to generate a *Social Capital Index*.¹¹ Individuals with greater political knowledge are often more inclined to be aware of political opportunities and take advantage of them. I use two general-knowledge questions focused on domestic politics (how many districts/departments are in a country, and how long the presidential term is within a country) to create a *Political Knowledge Index*.¹² On average, about 50.65 percent of the sample knew the correct answers to both of these questions. I also control for residency in an urban (coded as 1) versus rural (coded as 0) environment, a factor that could influence local government access (Bledsoe et al. 1995). On average, about 28.46 percent of the sample lived in rural areas.

Figure 1 displays the variation exhibited for one measure of local inclusion: average trust in local government. This figure illustrates two things of interest. First,

10. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for making this point.

11. I generated the index using principal component factor analysis. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.47.

12. I generated the index using principal component factor analysis. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.50.

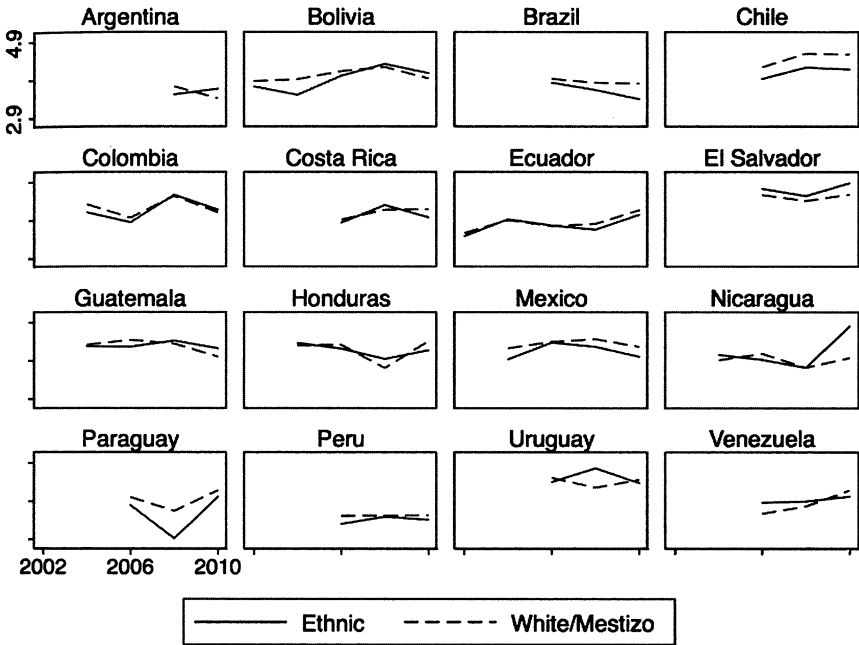


Figure 1 Average trust in local government over time for ethnic versus white/mestizo individuals. Source: LAPOP (2010), elaboration by the author.

ethnic and white/mestizo populations often exhibit different levels of trust in local government. In some countries, average trust is higher among ethnic groups (i.e., El Salvador and Uruguay) whereas in most countries, average trust is higher among the white and mestizo populations. Second, average trust varies substantially by country. Some cases exhibit very low levels of trust in local government, such as Peru, while others have rather high levels of trust in local government, such as Chile. The current analysis should help elucidate just how much of this variation, both between ethnic and white/mestizo groups, as well as between countries over time, is attributed to the decentralization process.

There are sixteen Latin American countries where values on at least one of the decentralization measures are available to be tested against AmericasBarometer data: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. See table 1 for a summary of the survey years and number of observations included in the analysis for each country.

METHODS AND RESULTS

The structure of the data presents a number of statistical challenges. The unit of observation in the data set is the individual, nested in countries, across years.

Table 1 Number of observations in AmericasBarometer survey years that include the necessary data on ethnic identity

Country	Survey years				
	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Argentina	—	—	—	1,411	1,352
Bolivia	2,934	2,681	2,842	2,846	2,899
Brazil	—	—	1,149	1,427	2,340
Chile	—	—	1,494	1,474	1,942
Colombia	—	1,476	1,458	1,433	1,423
Costa Rica	—	—	1,412	2,848	1,395
Ecuador	4,456	2,925	2,887	2,946	2,964
El Salvador	—	—	1,481	1,434	1,312
Guatemala	—	1,582	1,462	1,479	1,410
Honduras	—	1,423	1,573	1,477	1,594
Mexico	—	1,482	1,443	1,419	1,427
Nicaragua	—	1,435	1,762	1,446	1,505
Paraguay	—	—	1,134	1,044	1,309
Peru	—	—	1,437	1,423	1,449
Uruguay	—	—	1,166	1,448	1,443
Venezuela	—	—	1,442	1,459	1,352

Because individuals are randomly sampled each year, there is little chance of serial correlation between individuals across years. There is the chance, however, for the errors within each country to be correlated, regardless of year. This is especially true since variation between countries is more than twice as large as variation within countries over time. For each model, then, I use estimation techniques that account for the nonindependence of the error terms at the country level. I describe these in more detail below.

The support for democracy hypothesis focuses on the effect that local inclusion has for attitudes toward democracy. Specifically, the hypothesis suggests that an ethnic individual's perception of democracy is conditional upon the extent to which they feel included in governance at the local level. In other words, higher levels of local inclusion should correspond with greater support for democracy especially for ethnic citizens. This conditional relationship between ethnic identity and local inclusion can be modeled using an interaction term between the ethnic indicator variable and the measures of local inclusion that I outline above. Based on the support for democracy hypothesis, the value of the interaction term should always be positive; that is, as local inclusion increases, so too should the likelihood that ethnic individuals have support and satisfaction with democracy.¹³

The two measures that I use to assess perceptions of democracy—*Democracy*

13. Of course, the causal relationship could be that greater support and/or satisfaction with democracy leads citizens to become more involved and engaged in local politics. The use of a random effects model to estimate the relationship between inclusion and support/satisfaction with democracy helps reduce the effects of this endogeneity by taking into account how country-level factors, such as functioning democratic institutions, may affect individual behavior.

Support and Satisfaction with Democracy—are both binary, therefore I estimate logit models with random effects at the country level. A random effects model is appropriate since the results demonstrate that a significant proportion of the variance in each model is attributable to the country level (i.e., the estimated variance of the country-level intercepts is significant). The results of these models are provided in table 2 (*Democracy Support*) and table 3 (*Satisfaction with Democracy*).

With regard to the independent variables of interest—ethnic self-identification, the measures of local inclusion, and the interaction between the two—there is one consistent finding across the models: local inclusion universally has a positive effect on support for democracy. In addition, the interaction terms between ethnic identity and local inclusion measures are always positive. However, in order to evaluate whether local inclusion has a conditioning effect for white/mestizo citizens versus ethnic individuals (i.e., the effect of the interaction term between *Ethnic* and the various measures of local inclusion), I must examine the marginal effects of these variables, since the coefficients and their significance alone do not accurately indicate the significance of the interaction effects (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006, 70). The estimates of the marginal effects of measures of local inclusion on support for democracy for white/mestizo and ethnic citizens are provided in table 4.

There are two important findings summarized in table 4. First, almost every measure of local inclusion has a significant and positive marginal effect on the likelihood that both white/mestizo and ethnic citizens support democracy. There are only two instances where the marginal effects of these measures are not significant: asking for local assistance does not seem to increase support for democracy for ethnic individuals, and attending town meetings does not seem to increase satisfaction with democracy for ethnic individuals. For both of these instances, there may be a selection effect at work that leads to insignificant results. Perhaps ethnic individuals who are less supportive of democracy are also those who are most likely to look for assistance. The same mechanism could be at work with town meetings: ethnic individuals who are dissatisfied with democracy attend town meetings to try and resolve their issues of concern. Overall, however, these two findings are the exception to the relationship demonstrated by all other results: ethnic individuals who experience local inclusion—especially via political engagement measures, such as local trust—are more likely to also be supportive of democracy. The second important finding is that the impact of local inclusion is universally of a greater magnitude for ethnic individuals. In other words, the experience of local inclusion has a greater effect on indigenous and Afro-Latino support for democracy than it does for white or mestizo individuals. The results in table 4 thus provide strong evidence in favor of the support for democracy hypothesis.

Moving to the next hypotheses, I highlight two ways in which decentralization could affect ethnic inclusion: positively (as donor agencies expect) or not at all (as might be expected given historical power relations in Latin America). I use a variety of measures to conceptualize inclusion in local politics: requesting assistance from local government, attending town meetings, trust in local government, and evaluation of local government services. Three of these variables

Table 2 The effect of local inclusion on support for democracy

	1	2	3	4
<i>Ethnic</i>	-0.009 (0.030)	-0.033 (0.030)	-0.104** (0.050)	-0.041 (0.032)
<i>Local Assistance</i>	0.128*** (0.025)			
<i>Ethnic × Local Assistance</i>	-0.085 (0.065)			
<i>Town Meetings</i>		0.121*** (0.029)		
<i>Ethnic × Town Meetings</i>		0.026 (0.072)		
<i>Local Trust</i>			0.078*** (0.013)	
<i>Ethnic × Local Trust</i>			0.063* (0.034)	
<i>Local Services</i>				0.115*** (0.020)
<i>Ethnic × Local Services</i>				0.049 (0.057)
<i>Ethnic Population</i>	-0.011* (0.006)	-0.011* (0.007)	-0.011* (0.006)	-0.011* (0.006)
<i>Institutional Support Index</i>	0.153*** (0.006)	0.154*** (0.006)	0.135*** (0.007)	0.149*** (0.006)
<i>Economy</i>	0.011 (0.010)	0.017* (0.010)	0.005 (0.010)	0.00202 (0.00992)
<i>Urban</i>	-0.035* (0.021)	-0.051** (0.021)	-0.059*** (0.020)	-0.0625*** (0.0206)
<i>Education</i>	0.028*** (0.002)	0.027*** (0.002)	0.027*** (0.002)	0.0271*** (0.00231)
<i>Age</i>	0.014*** (0.001)	0.014*** (0.001)	0.014*** (0.001)	0.0141*** (0.000591)
<i>Income</i>	0.059*** (0.004)	0.059*** (0.004)	0.056*** (0.004)	0.0574*** (0.00445)
<i>Life Satisfaction</i>	0.072*** (0.011)	0.068*** (0.011)	0.069*** (0.011)	0.0667*** (0.0112)
Constant	-0.939*** (0.180)	-0.898*** (0.194)	-0.959*** (0.184)	-0.912*** (0.181)
Country-level variance	-1.628*** (0.369)	-1.475*** (0.369)	-1.586*** (0.369)	-1.618*** (0.369)
Observations	61,594	62,005	63,604	61,940
Number of countries	15	15	15	15

Standard errors are in parentheses.

*significant at 10 percent; **significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent.

Table 3 The effect of local inclusion on satisfaction with democracy

	5	6	7	8
<i>Ethnic</i>	-0.053* (0.032)	-0.001 (0.031)	-0.003 (0.051)	-0.009 (0.033)
<i>Local Assistance</i>	0.070*** (0.026)			
<i>Ethnic × Local Assistance</i>	0.152** (0.069)			
<i>Town Meetings</i>		0.115*** (0.030)		
<i>Ethnic × Town Meetings</i>		-0.031 (0.075)		
<i>Local Trust</i>			0.173*** (0.013)	
<i>Ethnic × Local Trust</i>			0.005 (0.035)	
<i>Local Services</i>				0.328*** (0.021)
<i>Ethnic × Local Services</i>				0.035 (0.061)
<i>Ethnic Population</i>	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)
<i>Institutional Support Index</i>	0.344*** (0.007)	0.353*** (0.007)	0.309*** (0.007)	0.339*** (0.007)
<i>Economy</i>	0.440*** (0.011)	0.463*** (0.011)	0.445*** (0.011)	0.434*** (0.011)
<i>Urban</i>	-0.076*** (0.022)	-0.085*** (0.022)	-0.098*** (0.0213)	-0.108*** (0.022)
<i>Education</i>	-0.021*** (0.002)	-0.023*** (0.002)	-0.021*** (0.002)	-0.022*** (0.002)
<i>Age</i>	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.004*** (0.001)
<i>Income</i>	-0.032*** (0.005)	-0.031*** (0.005)	-0.034*** (0.004)	-0.034*** (0.005)
<i>Life Satisfaction</i>	0.295*** (0.012)	0.287*** (0.012)	0.284*** (0.012)	0.277*** (0.012)
Constant	-0.813*** (0.141)	-0.815*** (0.141)	-0.977*** (0.145)	-0.840*** (0.141)
Country-level variance	-2.186*** (0.371)	-2.173*** (0.371)	-2.128*** (0.371)	-2.175*** (0.371)
Observations	61,683	62,063	63,660	62,034
Number of countries	15	15	15	15

Standard errors are in parentheses.

*significant at 10 percent; **significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent.

Table 4 The marginal effect of measures of local inclusion on attitudes toward democracy for white/mestizo and ethnic citizens

Local inclusion	DV: Democracy support		DV: Satisfaction with democracy	
	White/mestizo	Ethnic	White/mestizo	Ethnic
Local assistance	0.128*** (0.025)	0.043 (0.060)	0.070*** (0.026)	0.222*** (0.063)
Town meetings	0.121*** (0.029)	0.147** (0.066)	0.115*** (0.030)	0.084 (0.069)
Local trust	0.090*** (0.026)	0.206*** (0.065)	0.328*** (0.027)	0.344*** (0.068)
Local services	0.115*** (0.020)	0.164*** (0.054)	0.328*** (0.021)	0.363*** (0.057)

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

are binary variables—*Local Assistance*, *Town Meetings*, and *Local Services*—while one, *Local Trust*, is ordinal. For the three binary dependent variables, I once again utilize logit estimation with random effects to control for country-level variation. For the ordinal dependent variable, I use ordered logit and report robust standard errors clustered by country. For ease of interpretation, I estimate separate models to assess the impact of each form of decentralization. The results of the models with political decentralization are presented in table 5, fiscal decentralization in table 6, and administrative decentralization in table 7.

Starting with the results for political decentralization (table 5), the obvious trend is the negative sign on the interaction term between ethnic identity and decentralization, which suggests that when ethnic individuals experience political decentralization, local inclusion decreases. This finding suggests some initial support for the alternative inclusion hypothesis, or the skeptical view of the positive effects of decentralization. Turning to fiscal (table 6) and administrative (table 7) decentralization, the effects are less obvious. For both processes of decentralization, the interaction term between ethnic identity and decentralization alternates signs for the different measures of local inclusion. As summarized above, in order to truly identify the effect and significance of the interaction terms, we must estimate the marginal effects for those terms in the models (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006). These are presented in table 8.

For all measures of local inclusion, the overall trend in the marginal effects for political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization is that none have consistently significant repercussions for ethnic individuals' local inclusion. In fact, in general, the measures of decentralization are significant for ethnic individuals on only two measures of local inclusion: *Local Trust* and *Local Services*. These findings help illuminate some of the dynamics that might be at work under decentralization. The first significant finding is that political decentralization has a negative effect on ethnic individuals' trust of local government. This finding goes beyond the alternative inclusion hypothesis, which expects decentralization to have no effect

Table 5 The effect of political decentralization on local inclusion

	<i>Dependent variables: Measures of local inclusion</i>			
	Local assistance	Town meetings	Local services	Local trust
<i>Ethnic</i>	0.286*** (0.040)	0.350*** (0.045)	-0.034 (0.035)	-0.002 (0.052)
<i>Political Decentralization</i>	0.061 (0.147)	-0.111 (0.122)	0.143 (0.176)	-0.185 (0.118)
<i>Ethnic × Political Decentralization</i>	-0.191*** (0.073)	-0.034 (0.082)	-0.009 (0.060)	-0.077 (0.088)
<i>Ethnic Population</i>	-0.003 (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.005* (0.003)
<i>Social Capital Index</i>	0.419*** (0.008)	0.561*** (0.009)	0.027*** (0.007)	0.049*** (0.009)
<i>General Information Index</i>	-0.002 (0.012)	0.011 (0.013)	0.035*** (0.009)	0.029 (0.025)
<i>Urban</i>	-0.230*** (0.028)	-0.271*** (0.032)	0.143*** (0.022)	-0.030 (0.079)
<i>Education</i>	0.009*** (0.003)	0.028*** (0.004)	0.003 (0.002)	-0.007 (0.005)
<i>Age</i>	0.004*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)
<i>Income</i>	-0.061*** (0.006)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.039*** (0.005)	0.016 (0.015)
Constant	-1.627*** (0.137)	-2.679*** (0.120)	-0.949*** (0.160)	
Cut 1				-1.538*** (0.171)
Cut 2				0.091 (0.138)
Country-level variance	-2.572*** (0.376)	-2.982*** (0.394)	-2.185*** (0.371)	
Observations	62,788	62,903	62,659	64,202
Number of countries	15	15	15	15

Standard errors are in parentheses.

*significant at 10 percent; **significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent.

on local inclusion, and shows that the election of subnational officials actually decreases ethnic citizens’ trust in local government.

The second significant finding is that fiscal decentralization has a positive effect on both white/mestizo and ethnic citizens’ assessment of local services. In other words, under fiscal decentralization, where greater percentages of economic resources are transferred to subnational governments, all individuals are more likely to view local services as being “good” or “very good.” However, as the results show, fiscal decentralization has less of an effect on ethnic citizens than on white/mestizo citizens (0.032 versus 0.038, respectively). The final significant effects are that administrative decentralization decreases ethnic citizens’ evaluation

Table 6 The effect of fiscal decentralization on local inclusion

	<i>Dependent variables: Measures of local inclusion</i>			
	Local assistance	Town meetings	Local services	Local trust
<i>Ethnic</i>	0.197** (0.093)	0.260** (0.111)	0.044 (0.077)	-0.270** (0.132)
<i>Fiscal Decentralization</i>	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.024** (0.012)	0.038*** (0.008)	0.000 (0.001)
<i>Ethnic × Fiscal Decentralization</i>	-9.93e-05 (0.004)	0.005 (0.005)	-0.006* (0.003)	0.009 (0.006)
<i>Ethnic Population</i>	-0.003 (0.006)	0.009 (0.006)	-0.016* (0.009)	-0.005 (0.006)
<i>Social Capital Index</i>	0.423*** (0.010)	0.535*** (0.012)	0.015* (0.008)	0.056*** (0.011)
<i>General Information Index</i>	-0.007 (0.015)	0.018 (0.019)	0.020 (0.012)	-0.010 (0.033)
<i>Urban</i>	-0.255*** (0.035)	-0.356*** (0.042)	0.199*** (0.028)	-0.006 (0.125)
<i>Education</i>	0.013*** (0.004)	0.036*** (0.004)	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.006 (0.007)
<i>Age</i>	0.004*** (0.001)	0.008*** (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	0.001 (0.003)
<i>Income</i>	-0.062*** (0.008)	-0.003 (0.009)	0.055*** (0.006)	0.019 (0.015)
Constant	-1.401*** (0.187)	-2.606*** (0.239)	-1.478*** (0.287)	
Cut 1				-1.454*** (0.145)
Cut 2				0.228 (0.145)
Country-level variance	-2.181*** (0.458)	-2.078** (0.833)	-1.128** (0.514)	
Observations	42,393	44,107	43,148	44,096
Number of countries	11	11	11	11

Standard errors are in parentheses.

*significant at 10 percent; **significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent.

of local services, while very slightly increasing ethnic individuals' trust in local government. Thus administrative decentralization seems to confirm both sets of hypotheses about the effects of decentralization on inclusion: while it increases ethnic citizens' sense of trust in local government, it negatively affects their evaluation of local services. I discuss the implications of these findings below.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This analysis is a first step in assessing the effects and importance of national-level decentralization. As such, the measures of key variables—such as local

Table 7 The effect of administrative decentralization on local inclusion

	<i>Dependent variables: Measures of local inclusion</i>			
	Local assistance	Town meetings	Local services	Local trust
<i>Ethnic</i>	0.196*** (0.063)	0.191*** (0.074)	0.073 (0.053)	0.026 (0.058)
<i>Administrative Decentralization</i>	0.002 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.003)
<i>Ethnic × Admin Decentralization</i>	0.001 (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
<i>Social Capital Index</i>	0.419*** (0.008)	0.558*** (0.010)	0.026*** (0.007)	0.045*** (0.017)
<i>General Information Index</i>	0.011 (0.012)	0.003 (0.014)	0.033*** (0.009)	0.031 (0.027)
<i>Urban</i>	-0.235*** (0.029)	-0.287*** (0.033)	0.136*** (0.023)	-0.050 (0.088)
<i>Education</i>	0.008*** (0.003)	0.029*** (0.004)	0.003 (0.003)	-0.010** (0.005)
<i>Age</i>	0.005*** (0.001)	0.008*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.003)
<i>Income</i>	-0.064*** (0.006)	-0.013* (0.007)	0.037*** (0.005)	0.004 (0.012)
Constant	-1.706*** (0.147)	-2.568*** (0.138)	-0.858*** (0.177)	
Cut 1				-1.512*** (0.152)
Cut 2				0.138 (0.146)
Country-level variance	-2.562*** (0.375)	-2.796*** (0.390)	-2.111*** (0.370)	
Observations	60,731	60,999	60,388	62,168
Number of countries	15	15	15	16

Standard errors are in parentheses.

*significant at 10 percent; **significant at 5 percent; ***significant at 1 percent.

inclusion, ethnicity, and decentralization—occasionally lack nuance, and in many cases the results raise more questions than they answer. While I have shown that there are few, small relationships between national-level decentralization and ethnic inclusion, I have provided little evidence for why these relationships do (or do not) exist. Nevertheless, there are a few key results that merit attention, and I turn to those here.

As numerous scholars of decentralization have suspected (e.g., Prud'homme 1995; Eaton 2010), the process of allocating power and resources to subnational governments appears to have mixed results and some unintended consequences, particularly when dealing with population inequalities. In theory, decentralization should lead to more inclusive representation and access to government services for groups that have previously been neglected at higher levels of governance

Table 8 *The marginal effect of political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization on measures of local inclusion for white/mestizo and ethnic citizens*

	<i>Dependent variables: Measures of local inclusion</i>			
	Local assistance	Town meetings	Local services	Local trust
Political decentralization				
White/mestizo	-0.061 (0.147)	-0.111 (0.122)	0.143 (0.176)	-0.045 (0.029)
Ethnic	-0.130 (0.160)	-0.145 (0.142)	0.135 (0.184)	-0.064* (0.036)
Fiscal decentralization				
White/mestizo	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.024** (0.012)	0.038*** (0.008)	0.000 (0.002)
Ethnic	-0.007 (0.007)	-0.019 (0.012)	0.032*** (0.008)	0.002 (0.002)
Administrative decentralization				
White/mestizo	0.002 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.006)	0.000 (0.000)
Ethnic	0.003 (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	-0.013** (0.006)	0.001* (0.000)

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

(Hayek 1945; Hirschmann 1970; Diamond 1999). These expectations formed the foundation of the ethnic inclusion hypothesis outlined above, which posited that higher levels of decentralization should lead to greater access to local government for indigenous, Afro-Latino, and mulatto individuals.

However, a growing literature on decentralization is skeptical of the process as a panacea for all of democracy's ailments. The alternative inclusion hypothesis captures this skeptical view and expects decentralization to have no significant effect on ethnic citizens' participation and engagement in local governance. Analyses of survey results from sixteen countries across eight years of decentralization reforms in Latin America indicate that decentralization has generally had a null effect. Transfers of political power, fiscal resources, and administrative responsibilities rarely had a significant influence on ethnic individuals' sense of inclusion in local governance. However, there were three important exceptions to this null finding. First, administrative decentralization appears to very slightly increase ethnic citizens' inclusion with regard to trust in local government. This confirms the speculation by scholars of indigenous politics (Yashar 1999; Van Cott 2008) that ethnic groups are most interested in and positively affected by administrative autonomy. When ethnic individuals have the ability to tailor local services to suit their needs, they are more likely to trust local government, which in turn can increase their support for all facets of democracy. However, administrative decentralization is also negatively related to ethnic citizens' perception of local services, though again this relationship is quite small. One possible explanation for this finding is that when services are more decentralized, their administration

falls into the hands of inexperienced bureaucrats, which may affect the quality of the service. As with all of the findings in this article, this relationship merits further investigation.

The second exception to this trend was that political decentralization, or the opportunity to elect local officials, had a negative effect on ethnic citizens' trust in government (see table 8). In order to understand this finding, attention must be given to the historical foundations of power relationships that exist across Latin America. Even when systems were highly centralized, political elites frequently focused on maintaining their authority by creating local strongholds of support, usually through the exchange of patronage. Transferring power to the local level does nothing to alter the existing power structure; it only opens up more opportunities for old elites and their cronies to hold office. As scholars have noted, the effect that decentralization has on democratization and equity is complicated by a number of factors, including the motivations of key actors, the structure of institutions, and state-society relations (Oxhorn, Tulchin, and Selee 2004).¹⁴ All told, the optimistic view of decentralization as a process that "provides additional channels of access to power for historically marginalized groups . . . thus improv[ing] the representativeness of democracy" (Diamond and Tsalik 1999, 121–122) does not appear to coincide with ethnic individuals' participation and engagement with local government in decentralized systems.

This finding is particularly important given the evidence demonstrated here in favor of the support for democracy hypothesis. Greater support for democracy as "better than other forms of government" and a higher satisfaction with democracy are both more likely when individuals have favorable experiences with local-level governments. And although ethnic individuals tend to have less favorable evaluations of democracy in general, inclusion in local governance can reduce that tendency, improving the likelihood that ethnic individuals have greater satisfaction with democracy.

Combining these two results—the confirmation of the alternative inclusion and support for democracy hypotheses—has some important implications for the configuration of democratic governance in the region. First, it suggests that whatever decentralization has accomplished thus far, it has only slightly improved inclusion in or trust of local government institutions, and particularly not among historically disadvantaged groups. Importantly, the form of decentralization that comes closest to improving ethnic perceptions of inclusion is the administrative

14. I do not directly test these hypotheses because the focus of my analysis is to determine whether national decentralization processes have positive effects on the behavior of ethnic citizens. I leave the analysis of subnational factors, such as the quality of state or local institutions, for future research. However, I do include some variables in my analysis that may help take into account differences in local institutions, such as whether individuals live in an urban or rural area. Though this is a crude measure, it may at least capture the penetration of government institutions. With regard to support/satisfaction with democracy, I find that living in an urban area corresponds with more negative attitudes toward democracy. With regard to local inclusion, urban residents are less likely to ask for assistance and attend town meetings but are more likely to have a positive evaluation of government services. These findings suggest that differences in the local-level institutional context may affect individuals' attitudes toward democracy and sense of inclusion, giving further support to the idea that local-level institutional diversity may be an important factor shaping individual behavior.

decentralization of government services. Closer examinations of the decentralization process and its effects are needed to discover why transfers of power and resources to the local level do little to ease the marginalization of indigenous, Afro-Latino, and mulatto individuals. Second, analyses of local inclusion seem to indicate that one measure consistently improves individuals' willingness to access, participate in, and trust in local government: social capital. Citizens' participation in a variety of civic organizations not only increases the likelihood that they attend town meetings, but it also increases the chance that they ask for assistance from local officials and have greater trust in local governments, as well. Providing an environment where civic organizations can thrive is therefore crucial for increasing local inclusion and ultimately enhancing individuals' respect for and satisfaction with democracy.

The results presented here serve as a reminder that ethnic groups' inclusion in local politics should not be ignored, given that it may reduce disadvantaged populations' dissatisfaction with democracy. Disenfranchisement at any level, coupled with dissatisfaction toward regime type, has been shown to have serious effects on the adoption of democratic norms among ethnic individuals, not to mention that it may also encourage ethnic group mobilization and ethnic-based violence (see Birnir 2007). If decentralization in its current form is not increasing ethnic inclusion in local politics, as this study suggests, then it is worthwhile to consider what does encourage ethnic access and trust in local politics. Future research should investigate further how other factors such as social capital, for example, affect ethnic group inclusion. In sum, the decentralization process as it has occurred thus far is doing little to improve ethnic perceptions of local government, a finding that should be of interest to both politicians and policy analysts alike.

APPENDIX: LAPOP SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following are the most common codes and phrasings of the questions from the AmericasBarometer surveys used to generate measures of the key independent and dependent variables for the current study. I have included the Spanish version of the questions; for the Brazilian surveys, the question is similarly worded in Portuguese. Question codes are not always consistent across countries and years (for example on the Bolivia 2004 questionnaire, the Local Trust question was coded B22 rather than B32). I have provided here the codes that were most common.

Table A1 Variables and corresponding AmericasBarometer question codes and wording

Variable	Question code	Question wording
<i>Ethnic</i>	ETID	¿Usted se considera una persona blanca, mestiza, indígena, negra o Afro-(país), mulata u otra?
<i>Local Assistance</i>	CP4A	¿Para poder resolver sus problemas alguna vez ha pedido usted ayuda o cooperación a alguna autoridad local como el alcalde, municipalidad/corporación municipal concejal, alcalde auxiliar?

Variable	Question code	Question wording
<i>Town Meetings</i>	NP1	¿Ha asistido a un cabildo abierto o una sesión municipal durante los últimos 12 meses?
<i>Local Trust</i>	B32	¿Hasta qué punto tiene usted confianza en su municipalidad?
<i>Local Services</i>	SGL1	¿Diría usted que los servicios que la municipalidad está dando a la gente son: (1) Muy buenos (2) Buenos (3) Ni buenos ni malos (regulares) (4) Malos (5) Muy malos (pésimos)?
<i>Education</i>	ED	¿Cuál fue el último año de educación que usted completó o aprobó?
<i>Age</i>	Q2	¿Cuál es su edad en años cumplidos?
<i>Income</i>	Q10	¿En cuál de los siguientes rangos se encuentran los ingresos familiares mensuales de este hogar, incluyendo las remesas del exterior y el ingreso de todos los adultos e hijos que trabajan?
<i>Social Capital Index</i>	CP6, CP7, CP8, CP9, CP13	Por favor, dígame si asiste a las reuniones de estas organizaciones: una vez a la semana, una o dos veces al mes, una o dos veces al año, o nunca. ¿Reuniones de alguna organización religiosa? ¿Reuniones de una asociación de padres de familia de la escuela o colegio? ¿Reuniones de un comité o junta de mejoras para la comunidad? ¿Reuniones de una asociación de profesionales, comerciantes, productores, y/u organizaciones campesinas? ¿Reuniones de un partido o movimiento político?
<i>Political Knowledge Index</i>	GI3, GI4	¿Cuántos departamentos tiene (país)? ¿Cuánto tiempo dura el período presidencial en (país)?
<i>Democracy Support</i>	ING4	Puede que la democracia tenga problemas, pero es mejor que cualquier otra forma de gobierno. ¿Hasta qué punto está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con esta frase?
<i>Satisfaction with Democracy</i>	PN4	En general, ¿usted diría que está muy satisfecho(a), satisfecho(a), insatisfecho(a) o muy insatisfecho(a) con la forma en que la democracia funciona en (país)? (1) Muy satisfecho(a) (2) Satisfecho(a) (3) Insatisfecho(a) (4) Muy insatisfecho.
<i>Institutional Support</i>	B1, B2, B11, B13	¿Hasta qué punto cree usted que los tribunales de justicia de (país) garantizan un juicio justo? ¿Hasta qué punto tiene usted respeto por las instituciones políticas de (país)? ¿Hasta qué punto usted tiene confianza en el Tribunal Supremo Electoral? ¿Hasta qué punto tiene usted confianza en el Congreso?
<i>Economy</i>	SOCT1	Ahora, hablando de la economía . . . ¿Cómo calificaría la situación económica del (país)? ¿Diría usted que es muy buena, buena, ni buena ni mala, mala o muy mala?
<i>Life Satisfaction</i>	LS3	Para comenzar, ¿en general, qué tan satisfecho está con su vida? ¿Usted diría que se encuentra: (1) Muy satisfecho(a) (2) Algo satisfecho(a) (3) Algo insatisfecho(a) o (4) Muy insatisfecho(a)?

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