

# Pitfalls of Power to the People: Decentralization, Local Government Performance, and System Support in Bolivia

*Jonathan T. Hiskey and Mitchell A. Seligson*

Across the developing world, many governments have implemented political reforms—heavily promoted by international donors—designed to transfer greater power to subnational levels of government and to provide a more substantial policymaking and oversight role to citizens. Although economic analyses have frequently argued that such decentralization programs improve the efficiency of public expenditures, far less is known about their political impact. Based on an analysis of two large national public-opinion surveys from Bolivia, a country that has recently implemented one of the most comprehensive decentralization reforms yet attempted in Latin America, we analyze the role decentralized local institutions are playing in shaping citizen attitudes toward their political system. Our findings support the contention that decentralization can bolster citizen levels of system support at the national level. Equally important, however, we also demonstrate that the renewed emphasis on local government can have the opposite effect of producing *more negative* views of the political system when the performance of local institutions falters.

## Introduction

Support for democracy seems to be eroding in many countries of the developing world. Larry Diamond's view is that there is a widespread process of "hollowing out" of democracy through various restrictions on civil liberties (1999: 19). Evidence for this claim emerges from the most recent Freedom

---

Jonathan T. Hiskey is assistant professor of political science at the University of California, Riverside. His most recent research focuses on subnational processes of political and economic development taking place across Latin America.

Mitchell A. Seligson is Daniel H. Wallace Professor of Political Science, research professor of international studies, and professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. His research centers on surveys of democratic values and behaviors in Latin America.

*Studies in Comparative International Development*, Winter 2003, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 64-88.

House ratings of democracy that show that while twenty-six countries around the world increased their democracy scores between 1998 and 1999, eighteen declined. Furthermore, even though the past ten years have witnessed a small increase in the percentage of countries rated by Freedom House as “free,” from 39.3 percent to 44.8 percent, the period also saw an increase in the absolute number of “partly free” and “not free” countries, from 100 in 1990 to 106 in 2000 (Karatnycky 2000: 189-190).

The trend is especially notable in Latin America, at least to judge by public opinion data. In Brazil public support for democracy dropped from an already low 50 percent in 1996 to 39 percent in 2000, while 24 percent of Brazilians agreed with the statement that “in certain situations, an authoritarian government can be preferable to democracy” (Lagos 2001: 138). In Colombia, support for democracy declined from 60 percent to 50 percent in the same period, in Mexico from 53 percent to 45 percent, and in Paraguay from 59 to 48 percent (Lagos 2001: 138).<sup>1</sup>

A perhaps even more fundamental problem than belief in democracy per se is that many citizens in Latin America are not persuaded of the legitimacy of their political systems. Surveys from a number of countries in the region, using a multi-item scale of legitimacy operationally defined in terms of system support, consistently find that the average levels of most countries are in the negative end of the continuum.<sup>2</sup> Early research by Lipset (1959; Lipset et al. 1993) and Easton (1975) on the importance of belief in the legitimacy of a political system suggested that without this belief, long-term stability will be elusive. While stability is not seriously questioned among advanced industrial democracies, governability under conditions of eroding legitimacy may be hampered (Norris 1999). The massive street protests in 2002 that served to bring down a string of presidents in Argentina and contributed to the short-lived overthrow of the president of Venezuela, preceded by similar anti-government protests in Ecuador and Peru, are recent, extreme instances of governability challenges. Diamond’s prescient remarks, written prior to these four instances of popular protests that destabilized regimes in Latin America, emphasize that system support will be a critical determinant of whether or not newly democratic regimes survive beyond the first years of the twenty-first century:

If the shallow, troubled, and recently established democracies of the world do not move forward, to strengthen their political institutions, improve their democratic functioning, and *generate more active, positive, and deeply felt commitments of support at the elite and mass levels*, they are likely to move backward, into deepening pathologies that will eventually plunge their political systems below the threshold of electoral democracy or overturn them altogether (emphasis added) (1999: 64).

From this perspective then, understanding the factors affecting system support levels becomes an essential component in the larger project of assessing the sustainability of democracy in the developing world.

Driven in part by the increasingly negative public views toward the political systems of their countries, and the widespread belief that institutional engi-

neering can yield important benefits, many governments in the region have recently implemented political reforms designed to transfer greater power to subnational levels of government and provide a more substantial policymaking and oversight role to citizens at the local level. Advocates of decentralization argue that it holds "great potential to stimulate the growth of civil society organizations . . . prevent widespread disillusionment with new policies from turning into a rejection of the entire democratic process . . . [and] boost legitimacy by making government more responsive to citizen needs" (Diamond 1999: 124-125; see also Grindle 2000). Implicit in this proposition is that local institutions, if made relevant to the daily lives of citizens, will have a positive effect on how those citizens view their larger political system (Vetter 2002).

Advocates of decentralization are not likely to mention that the process can be a double-edged sword. If, as proponents hope, the performance of enhanced local institutions matches the expectations of citizens in terms of providing greater opportunity for meaningful political participation and elite accountability, then the benefits of decentralization may emerge. If, on the other hand, newly empowered local political institutions revert to elite control, or if the goals of citizen involvement and greater accountability are not met, the result may be to undermine citizen support for the political system, perhaps leading to a new level of cynicism. While our point of reference is nations in the process of democratic transition, decentralization efforts in advanced industrial countries have at times produced unintended and quite negative consequences. New York City, for example, became a leader in decentralizing control of the public school system in hopes of making the schools more responsive to citizen demands. The results in some instances were so catastrophic that the entire process was recently reversed and control has been recentralized.

Decentralization by itself, we argue, is not a panacea for strengthening democracy and does not provide a guarantee of increased citizen support. Rather, the performance of local institutions crucially determines, in our view, citizen reactions to decentralization and, therefore, may help influence levels of support for the political system. In this article, we examine the impact of local-level institutional performance on how people view their political system. Based on an analysis of two large national public-opinion surveys from Bolivia, a country that has recently implemented one of the most comprehensive decentralization reforms yet attempted in Latin America, we offer insight into the role local institutions play in shaping citizen attitudes toward their political system. The findings suggest that system support, rather than being solely a product of individual attributes or the performance of national-level political institutions, is in part a function of how well or poorly *local* political institutions perform. Our findings, then, support the contention that decentralization has the potential to bolster citizen levels of system support at the national level, suggesting a possibly important mechanism to overcome some of the key problems that developing democracies have been facing. Ironically, however, the findings of this study also demonstrate that the renewed emphasis on local government can have the opposite effect of producing more negative views of the political system when the performance of local institutions falters. More generally, these results point to the importance of including the local institu-

tional context in research on the determinants of citizens' views of their political system.

### **System Support in Developing Countries**

Early research on system support and citizen attitudes toward democracy treated these values as forming over very long periods of time, and therefore as being largely resistant to change in the short term. Beginning with Almond and Verba's seminal study on civic culture (1963), scholars focused on the linkages between a society's presumably deeply embedded cultural values and support for a particular political regime. The basic thesis of that research was that a country's political system over the long term will be largely congruent with the deeply embedded cultural values of its society. Proponents of this thesis argue, for example, that Latin American society is "authoritarian, hierarchical, patrimonialist, and semifeudal to its core" (Wiarda 1974: 269) and thus should generally produce authoritarian political regimes. Inglehart (1997, 1999), however, has suggested that such values can change over relatively short spans of time, reacting, in part, to changing systemic conditions. Similarly, research by Booth and Seligson (1993) has shown striking *incongruence* of political culture and regime type in Mexico. Moreover, if it were true that systems and values are congruent over the long term, what could explain the protracted period of authoritarian rule in most of Latin America, followed by the current period of widespread democratization?

In opposition to the static view of cultural attitudes and system support, a far more dynamic perspective of the determinants of democratic system support has emerged, focusing its lens on the link between government performance and citizens' views of their political system. Beginning with economic performance, there is abundant evidence that citizens at least in part base their support of the government in power on the prevailing economic conditions (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; Lewis-Beck 1985). Others carried this research one step further and linked the economic performance of an incumbent government to support for the larger political system. When the macroeconomic performance of a government declines, levels of system support have been found to decline as well (Clark, Dutt, and Kornberg 1993; Listhaug and Wiberg 1995; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Weatherford 1987). A study of South Koreans' attitudes toward their political system found that system support is also a function of the "political performance" of the system's institutions (Rose, Shin, and Munro 1999: 162). Similarly, Anderson and Tverdova find a significant relationship between levels of corruption and system support across fifteen European democracies (2000). More recently, scholars have begun to explore the thesis that the design of a system's institutions can affect citizen levels of system support. Anderson and Guillory find that the way in which a system's institutional framework treats the winners and losers in electoral politics, namely, whether the system is majoritarian or consensual, has a significant effect on how citizens evaluate their political system. They conclude that "the study of what citizens think about the political system requires the combination of information about political institutions and about individuals and their

attitudes" (1997: 77). According to this perspective, levels of system support are not solely a function of individual characteristics, cultural values, and/or economic conditions, but rather are also contingent on the institutional framework of a democratic regime.

Indeed, it is the assumption that good design can improve institutional performance that in turn can affect citizen attitudes toward their political system that seems to be driving much of the international development community's emphasis on decentralization. With this community's backing, an increasing number of developing country governments have in recent years initiated extensive institutional reforms that are intended to strengthen the role of local government. In what the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) calls "second generation reforms," political decentralization "allows people to participate more effectively in local affairs . . . [and] [l]ocal leaders can be held increasingly accountable for decisions that affect citizens' lives . . . Taken together, as local government improves, these changes can enhance the legitimacy of the democratic system" (USAID 2000: 5). To date, though, few researchers have undertaken a direct empirical test of the implicit proposition driving the decentralization trend—that the performance of local government institutions will affect the legitimacy of a country's political system. We offer a first cut at trying to identify the potential consequences of decentralization through analysis of the impact local institutions have on system support.

A central limitation of prior research on the impact of decentralization on system support has been inattention to intra-national variations in institutional performance. Arguably, in fact, the strongest test of the proposition that institutional performance affects citizen attitudes is one in which other potentially important factors are held constant and variations in system support are directly related to variations in the performance of the same institution across different areas of a given country. The multitude of cross-national variables that may affect variations in levels of system support make the identification of any direct linkage between features of an institution and levels of system support difficult. Analysis of that linkage within one country, especially one that has meaningful variation in institutional performance, allows for the control of an assortment of other possible determinants of system support and thus the ability to establish a stronger relationship between institutions and attitudes.

Our research design follows the logic outlined above. We take a single country, Bolivia, and analyze the impact of variation in the performance of local government on citizen views toward Bolivia's political system. We begin, though, with a review of Bolivia's widely publicized decentralization program and the specific institutional features of that program that will serve as the focus of our analysis.

### **Decentralization in Bolivia**

In the past fifteen years, Bolivia has experienced "a silent revolution in its economic and political structures that have fundamentally transformed the country from one characterized by centralized control, personalism, and ex-

treme instability into one where democracy, the market, and, more recently, decentralization are the defining characteristics (Mayorga 1997: 142). On all three counts, Bolivia stands at the forefront of trends taking place across the developing world.

For both political and economic reforms, the watershed year for Bolivia was 1985. First, on August 5, Victor Paz Estenssoro was elected president by a congressional vote following popular elections in which no candidate gained an absolute majority.<sup>3</sup> The following day Paz Estenssoro entered office, representing the first peaceful transfer of power in twenty-five years (Mayorga 1997: 144). He then proceeded to implement a sweeping set of austerity measures and other market-based economic reforms. Sparked in large part by the widespread protests that followed these painful economic reforms, Estenssoro's National Revolutionary Movement party (MNR) and Hugo Banzer's Nationalist Democratic Action party (ADN), the other major political contender at the time, formed a governing coalition, known as the "Pact for Democracy," that allowed Paz Estenssoro the political space and capital needed to continue his reform agenda (Gamarra 1994; Lazarte Rojas 1993; Morales 1994).

With the initial successes of Paz Estenssoro's economic reforms, such as a dramatic reduction in inflation rates, and the subsequent peaceful transitions of power from Paz Estenssoro to Paz Zamora in 1989 and from Paz Zamora to Sánchez de Lozada in 1993, the path was cleared for a second wave of reforms designed to address the endemic corruption and practice of patronage that had plagued the Bolivian democratization process (Gamarra 1994; Crabtree and Whitehead 2001). The first attempt at addressing these problems came in the form of a law for the "Administration and Control of the Government" that was designed to strengthen the sanctions for corrupt behavior or other types of misconduct among political elites (Gamarra 1994: 115; Morales 1994). As Gamarra notes, though, the anti-corruption goals of this law were undermined by "continuous charges of political corruption within the ranks of the two ruling parties" (1994: 115). That is, the law was, in the end, derailed by the very issue it was explicitly designed to address.

In 1994, Sánchez de Lozada ushered in another set of reforms designed to attack corruption and strengthen accountability through the decentralization of many governmental responsibilities. The "Popular Participation Law" (PPL) began what many observers see as "Latin America's most significant and innovative effort ever to extend and complement the institutions of representative democracy through decentralization" (Mayorga 1997: 152-153). With the help of international development agencies, the PPL was designed to create a newly empowered local level of government that included several provisions explicitly designed to heighten the accountability of local government officials to citizens.

Among the more notable features of the PPL and later constitutional reforms associated with it were 1) the redistricting of municipal borders to incorporate rural communities previously excluded from local government; 2) the institutionalization of citizen oversight committees and grassroots organizations designed to have an ongoing role in local government; 3) a dramatic increase in the development responsibilities of municipal governments; 4) a

significant transfer of fiscal resources to municipal governments; and 5) efforts to enhance the accountability of municipal government by allowing the municipal town council to remove the mayor with a three-fifths majority vote in cases of misconduct.<sup>4</sup> This latter provision, included in constitutional reforms of 1995, came to be known as the "*voto constructivo de censura*" or the "constructive vote of censure." It is this key feature of Bolivia's decentralization reforms and its impact on levels of system support that serves as the focus of our analysis.

The first round of municipal elections for the 311 newly created municipalities was held in December of 1995, marking the point of departure for Sánchez de Lozada's decentralization reforms. The selection of mayors and town councils followed a proportional representation format in which officially recognized political parties presented lists of candidates to the electorate, with the mayoral candidate listed first.<sup>5</sup> If no party received an absolute majority, the selection of the mayor was decided by a municipal council vote. In the case of a tie, the vote was repeated up to three times, at which point, if the tie persisted, the candidate from the party receiving the most votes became mayor.

Given the small size of town councils in the majority of Bolivian municipalities and given the fact that there were very few municipal elections in which a party won an absolute majority of the votes, the selection of mayors in Bolivia often hinged on the vote of one or two council members.<sup>6</sup> As a result, this electoral system produced considerable "back-room bargaining" among local elites and national party officials as a means to gain control over local government. This system parallels quite closely the election of presidents in Bolivia, since no party has won a majority of votes since the restoration of democracy in that country, and therefore all presidents have been selected by the legislature. The result in both presidential and mayoral elections is that most of the winners take office with very tenuous support among both the electorate and the legislature and council. The mayors, however, were vulnerable to post-election partisan manipulation since only at that level does the *voto constructivo* procedure exist.

It is clear from patterns of mayoral selection and subsequent use of the *voto constructivo* that presidential politics played a large role in the formation of local governments during the first electoral cycle of the newly formed municipalities. First, with respect to those mayors entering office in 1996, candidates from president Sánchez de Lozada's MNR party gained control of 38 percent (118 municipalities) of Bolivia's mayoral posts, despite only receiving 21 percent of the votes cast in municipal elections. This disparity was not merely an artifact of an unequal distribution of votes, as evidenced by the fact that in over sixty of those MNR municipalities, the MNR lost the popular vote but entered office by winning the municipal council vote.

A more telling indication of the political "horse-trading" that surrounded the selection of mayors, and the subsequent use of the *voto constructivo* to replace mayors, comes from the pattern of mayoral removals and replacements following the election of ADN candidate Hugo Banzer as president in 1997. If the *voto constructivo* were truly used only as a tool to remove corrupt or inefficient mayors (as it was designed to do according to the constitutional norm),

we should see no systematic removal of one party's mayors across Bolivia, and their replacement with individuals from another party. On the other hand, if we see that mayors of the president's party are systematically replacing mayors from opposition parties following a presidential election, then politics, rather than corruption, presents itself as the likely driving force behind this process. This latter scenario is precisely what took place following the 1997 national elections.

The party of outgoing president Sánchez de Lozada, the MNR, lost twenty-six municipalities in 1998 through use of the *voto constructivo* by municipal councils, with the mayorships in *all* twenty-six going to council members from one of the parties in the ADN coalition. The ADN, the party of incoming president Banzer, gained control of twenty-four municipal governments in 1998, and its principal coalition partner in the 1997 elections, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), increased its share of municipalities by ten. These changes in local government, keep in mind, are not "coattail effects," since the removal and replacement of mayors was divorced from the popular election. Rather, this systematic shift in party control of local government across Bolivia occurred as a result of town councils invoking the *voto constructivo*.

The *voto* provision on the surface appears very similar to the "vote of no confidence" powers granted many legislatures in parliamentary systems around the world, and indeed the intentions behind this provision were to strengthen the accountability and anti-corruption mechanisms underlying the broader decentralization reforms. The provision, however, has revealed itself as a glaring weakness in Bolivia's decentralization program. A World Bank report found that the *voto constructivo* was used to replace 30 percent of the country's mayors in 1997 and 25 percent in 1998 (World Bank 1999: 28). The effect of this widespread replacement of mayors, the Bank argues, was to make "political instability more acute as it stimulates the formation and destruction of political coalitions for purely personal-political interests. It also distances local government from the electorate [by allowing] for the substitution of elected mayors voted in the polls by a council member selected by the municipal council" (1999: 28). While much of the program produced seemingly positive changes in the ways of Bolivian politics, from increased political participation to more citizen oversight of local development projects, the *voto constructivo* has brought ceaseless and clearly politically motivated turnover in the mayor's office.

Additional evidence of the negative impact of the *voto constructivo* continues to emerge. For example, one study of Bolivia's decentralization process found the *voto constructivo* to be one of the principal

obstacles to achieving greater public accountability and better municipal performance. In practice, the censure procedure for removing "incompetent" or "corrupt" mayors [was] little more than a political tool used by local officials to win power for themselves and their parties. The procedure breeds corruption and disillusionment with the democratic process (Bland 1999: 32).

Another indication of the widespread recognition of the misuse of the *voto constructivo* provision in many municipalities comes from efforts by the Bo-



livian Senate in 2000 to draft a new Municipalities Law that sought “to correct some of the deficiencies in municipal governance, such as the excessive use of the constructive vote of censure” (USAID 2000: 13). This attempt to modify the *voto* provision through legislation was ruled unconstitutional because it involved an article of the Constitution and thus required a Constitutional amendment.

After this ruling in 2001, calls for constitutional reform came from across Bolivian society. In response, the Bolivian Congress created the Citizens’ Council for Constitutional Reform in the spring of 2001 and charged it with the creation of a document outlining the most important and pressing constitutional reforms as they emerged through a nationwide “dialogue.” The Council spent five months collecting input from Bolivians through public forums, conferences, and electronically via the internet. The Council recommended elimination of the *voto constructivo de censura*, calling its use “preponderantly political-partisan, undermining the purpose of its original conception, a fact that generated institutional instability and damaged local democracy.”<sup>7</sup>

A recent editorial by the Federation of Municipal Associations of Bolivia, a national organization representing Bolivia’s municipal governments, supported the proposed elimination of the *voto constructivo*, referring to the provision as the “*voto destructivo*” (destructive vote), and claiming that “the spirit that motivated the inclusion of the provision soon was totally spoiled by the excessive weight of partisanship in our still incipient democratic system that generated alliances to change mayors based on the interests of one or various parties.”<sup>8</sup> The move for the elimination of the *voto constructivo* was bolstered when in early 2002 it became clear that use of the *voto constructivo* had not substantially diminished in the second municipal electoral cycle. In 2001, the first year municipal councils were allowed to use the provision following the 1999 elections, 16 percent of Bolivia’s mayors were removed from office.

In short, we have a specific institutional feature of a decentralization program that was available for use in all 311 municipalities of Bolivia,<sup>9</sup> but one that likely had very different effects on the governance capacity of local political institutions depending on whether it was deployed or not. In some towns, the *voto constructivo* was not used, and the mayor was allowed to serve out his/her time in office. In others, however, the provision was employed, often times more than once. It is our task in this article to examine the impact of that removal on the perceptions of the electorate concerning their larger political system.

### The Research Question

The research question, then, involves determining whether use of the *voto constructivo* had a substantive effect on citizens’ views of not only their local government but of the larger Bolivian political system. According to World Bank reports, in cases where the town council deployed the *voto* to remove the mayor, the result was to “distance local government from the electorate” (World Bank 1999: 28). If this is indeed the case then we should find a systematic difference in system support levels across *voto* and non-*voto* towns. Citizens in

municipalities where the mayor was allowed to serve out his term in office would likely have a more favorable view of their political system than citizens living in municipalities where the local government fell victim to the partisan use of the *voto constructivo*.

If, on the other hand, the local institutional performance has little effect on citizens' views of their larger political system, we should find no significant differences in system support levels among citizens in municipalities where the *voto constructivo* was employed and those where it was not. Finally, if the use of the *voto constructivo* was not merely a political move but it was in fact used primarily to remove corrupt or poorly performing mayors, then we should see a more positive view of the Bolivian system among citizens living in towns where an ineffectual and/or corrupt mayor was removed from office and replaced by one of the town council members. By having a prominent local institutional design feature that was used in some but not all of Bolivia's municipalities, we have an opportunity to examine within a single country the impact of local institutions on citizen views of their political system.

### **System Support in Bolivia**

In postulating a link between institutional performance at the municipal level of government and citizen views toward their larger political system, we demonstrate as a first step that variations in municipal government performance affect citizen attitudes toward their municipal government. As our notion (and measure) of system support purports to tap "how well the political system and political institutions conform to a person's general sense of what is right and proper and how well the system and institutions uphold basic political values of importance to citizens" (Muller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982: 241), we must first show that people are aware of local government, and their attitudes toward local government are affected by the performance of its institutions. It is unlikely that variations in local government performance would affect levels of system support if they did not first affect citizen attitudes toward municipal government.

As discussed above, we view use of the *voto constructivo* during the first three years of Bolivia's decentralization program as an indicator of poor municipal institutional performance. In our analysis of citizen attitudes, we posit more negative views of local government and lower levels of system support among citizens living in towns in which mayors have been removed from office by the council. As a stylistic device, we refer to those municipalities where the *voto constructivo* was employed as "change in mayor" towns and those municipalities that did not use the provision as "same mayor" towns.

Finally, in our analysis we are aware that there may have been cases where removal of the mayor improved the performance of the government by ridding it of a corrupt mayor. This possibility, however, only *decreases the likelihood* that citizens in "change in mayor" towns will exhibit lower levels of support for their government, making confirmation of our hypothesis more, not less, difficult.

## Data

The data sets analyzed here are drawn from two multi-stage stratified probability samples of the voting-aged population of Bolivia.<sup>10</sup> In total, 2,977 respondents were interviewed in 1998, and 3,006 respondents were interviewed in 2000, giving a national-level confidence interval of  $\pm 1.7\%$  for each sample. The country was divided into its nine departments, each department forming the primary level of stratification, such that the samples of each department were representative at that level. Within each department, the sample was further stratified by population size of the community being studied, into four clusters: 1) cities larger than 20,000; 2) cities and towns of between 2,000 and 20,000; 3) "compact rural" zones of populations from 500 to 1,999; and, finally; 4) "dispersed rural" zones of fewer than 500 people. Departmental populations vary dramatically, with some so small that the samples would have been too small to provide reliable results. Therefore, sample sizes were chosen that were identical for each department ( $N = 300$ ) except for the most populous departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz, where 400 interviews were conducted. The sample was then weighted by population size of the department to create a PPS sample. The sample covered sixty-seven of Bolivia's 107 provinces, and ninety-nine of its 311 municipalities, and 145 primary sampling units. All interviews were conducted face-to-face by trained interviewers of Encuestas y Estudios, the premier survey firm in Bolivia. Most interviews were conducted in Spanish, but separate versions of the questionnaire in Quechua and Aymara were prepared and used for monolingual speakers of those languages.

Our survey data provide several elements that allow for testing of the impact of the *voto constructivo* on citizen attitudes toward the political system. First, the data are drawn from two nationally representative surveys carried out in 1998 and 2000. This allows for an assessment of whether the effects of the use of the *voto constructivo* between 1997 and 1998 (if any) persist over time or are relatively short-lived. We can test this because under the law that governs the *voto constructivo*, its use is prohibited in both the first and last years of a given electoral cycle. This means that with the second round of municipal elections held in December 1999, use of the *voto constructivo* was prohibited in both 1999 (the last year of the first electoral cycle) and 2000 (the first year of the second cycle). Thus we can see if the use of the provision in 1997 or 1998 still had an impact as late as 2000 when our second survey was carried out.

Second, the municipalities included in the samples for both years provide a fairly even split between those where the *voto constructivo* was used (forty-six municipalities in 1998 and forty-five in 2000) and those where the elected mayor was able to remain in office between 1996 and 1998 (forty-one in 1998 and forty-three in 2000). We also have a roughly equal split of respondents living in "change in mayor" and "same mayor" towns. In the 1998 survey, 1,911 respondents lived in "change in mayor" towns and 1,563 lived in "same mayor" towns. For the 2000 sample, 2,037 respondents lived in municipalities where at least one mayor had been removed from office between 1996 and

1998, while 1,868 respondents lived in municipalities where the elected mayor was allowed to serve those three years.

We also need to be certain that differences in the “change in mayor” and “same mayor” municipalities in terms of their socio-economic and demographic composition are not responsible for any differences in system support that we might attribute to use of the *voto constructivo*. A comparison of the economic and social characteristics of respondents living in “change in mayor” and “same mayor” municipalities reveals few significant differences. For the 1998 survey, the mean level of years of education for respondents in “change in mayor” towns was 9.1 while it was 9.0 for respondents in “same mayor” towns. Likewise for family income, the differences in the means for the two groups of respondents were insignificant.<sup>11</sup>

Three potentially meaningful differences do exist between the two groups in the 1998 sample. First, the average ideology self-rating of the “change in mayor” respondents was significantly more to the right than their “same mayor” counterparts (5.49 v. 5.17 on a 1-10 left-right scale). A second significant difference was the ethnic composition of the two groups. In the “change in mayor” group, 18 percent of the respondents classified themselves as white, 65 percent as mestizo, and 14 percent as indigenous. In contrast, the composition of the “same mayor” group in the 1998 survey was 26 percent white, 56 percent mestizo, and 15 percent indigenous. By identifying these differences, we can take steps to control for these factors in the subsequent multivariate models. Finally, there is a significant difference between our two categories of respondents with respect to the number of basic services they reported receiving. In the 1998 survey, the mean number of basic services received by respondents in “change in mayor” towns was 2.3 (of the three basic municipal services of potable water, sewerage, and electricity), while the mean basic service level for respondents in “same mayor” towns was 2.1. This difference in service provision levels between the two groups of respondents is significant at  $p < .01$  and emerges in the 2000 survey as well, thus providing us with another potentially significant determinant of system support levels that we will control for in our subsequent models.

While it is important to be aware of the potential for these differences to have some systematic effect on the attitudes of respondents toward their political system, and we control for these variables in subsequent analyses, the groups for both years are so similar as to justify as a first step a straightforward “difference of means” analysis of their attitudes toward the political system in order to determine if living in a “change in mayor” town had any effect on those attitudes.

### **Citizen Views in “Change in Mayor” and “Same Mayor” Municipalities**

We begin with a look at the differences in mean levels of support for municipal government among citizens living in municipalities where the mayor was removed and those living in towns where the elected mayor was allowed to serve out his/her term. Four items in the survey tap respondent attitudes toward the municipal government and the “citizen institutions” created by the country’s decentralization law, and read as follows:

1. To what extent do you have confidence in the municipal government?
2. To what extent do you have confidence in the indigenous authority?
3. To what extent do you have confidence in the municipal oversight committee?
4. To what extent do you have confidence in the Territorial Base Organizations (OTBs)?<sup>12</sup>

The scale for each of these items was 0-100, with 100 representing the most positive view of municipal government institutions.<sup>13</sup> The impact of the *voto constructivo* on citizen attitudes towards these institutions should provide some indication of how widespread any possible effects of the provision were on citizen views toward the larger decentralization program. The null hypothesis is that the removal of mayors had no effect on the perception of the municipal government itself, or any other institutions related to the municipality. If those effects were present, but relatively constrained, then there should be a difference in how people view their municipal government in “change in mayor” and “same mayor” towns, but not in how they view the grassroots community groups (OTBs), the oversight committees, or the indigenous authority. If, however, use of the *voto* affected how people viewed the entire decentralization package, then we should find significant differences in the means of all four items.

We also include an item that asked respondents to assess the quality of services they received from their municipal government. The item is worded as follows:

Would you say that the services the municipal government is providing to the people are excellent, good, fair, poor, or very poor?

This scale for this item was also 0 (very bad) to 100 (excellent) to match the other items discussed above. If respondents in “change in mayor” towns had a much more negative view of the actual services they received from their municipal government than those individuals living in “same mayor” towns, this may be the source of lower levels of support for local government in “change in mayor” towns, and may also have played a role in the use of the *voto* provision, thus bringing into question the underlying assumption of our analysis—that the use of the *voto* was a *cause, not a consequence*, of poor local government performance. However, if no substantively significant difference exists between respondent views of local government services in *voto* and non-*voto* towns, we have further evidence for our position that there exists no underlying difference between the two groups of respondents that may explain both the use of the *voto* and lower levels of system support.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the mean response levels for those citizens living in municipalities where the *voto* was used at least once and those living in municipalities where the elected mayor was allowed to serve the entire term.

What the comparison of means in Table 1 suggests is that the turmoil that use of the *voto constructivo* seems to have brought to the operations of municipal government did indeed have an impact on citizen attitudes toward municipi-

**Table 1**  
**Municipal-Level Institutions and the *Voto Constructivo***

Municipal Institutions	1998 sample				2000 sample			
	Same mayor, 1996-98	N	Change in mayor, 1996-98	N	Same mayor, 1996-98	N	Change in mayor, 1996-98	N
Mean Confidence in Municipal Government	48.1	1,594	42.5	1,741	45.5	1,917	43.8	1,898
Mean Confidence in Indigenous Councils	51.9	1,420	46.5	1,567	50.0	1,752	48.4	1,743
Mean Confidence in Oversight Committees	46.8	1,465	42.7	1,563	43.9	1,741	43.6	1,757
Mean Confidence in Community Organizations	47.5	1,371	43.3	1,403	46.9	1,592	44.8	1,624
Mean Perceptions of Quality of Local Government Services	47.8	1,597	45.6	1,755	47.9	1,863	47.5	1,838

All differences in means for 1998 significant at  $p < .01$ . For 2000, differences for "Government" and "Community Organizations" significant at  $p < .05$ . Scale for all variables is 0-100.

pal-level institutions. First among those institutions was the municipal government itself where there was a five-point difference in the level of support between citizens living in "change in mayor" towns and "same mayor" towns. Moreover, the negative consequences of use of the *voto* on citizen attitudes appear to have touched all institutions affiliated with the Bolivian decentralization program. It seems that the utilization of a highly visible provision in a highly visible set of reforms can have widespread effects on citizen views of the institutions that emerge from those reforms. Before we affirm this conclusion, however, we will need to subject it to a number of tests, as shown below.

With respect to respondents' views of the quality of municipal government services, there is a statistically significant difference between the "change in mayor" and "same mayor" respondents in 1998, with respondents in towns in which the mayors were removed having a slightly more negative view of local services than in the towns in which mayors served out their terms. The substantive difference between the two groups on this item, however, is small with only two points on a 100 point scale separating them while for the other items in Table 1, the differences are four and five points.

An examination of the frequencies of responses to this item for the two groups reveals that the different mean values for the "change in mayor" and "same mayor" groups on the quality of government services item comes in

large part from differences in the frequency of respondents choosing the categories of "good" and "fair." Sixty percent of "change in mayor" respondents characterized local government services as "fair" while 57 percent of "same mayor" respondents viewed their government services as "fair." Conversely, close to 14 percent of "change in mayor" respondents viewed government service provision as "good" compared to 18 percent of "same mayor" respondents. The frequency of responses for the other options—"excellent," "bad," and "very bad"—on the other hand were nearly identical across the two groups of respondents.

In contrast, the differences in means for the other items in Table 1 are meaningful not only in a statistical sense, but in substantive terms as well. For example, with the "confidence in municipal government" item, 48 percent of respondents in both the "change in mayor" and "same mayor" groups chose one of the two midpoints on the seven-point response scale. The five-point difference in the mean levels of confidence in municipal government between the two groups stems from the much greater percentage of "change in mayor" respondents expressing little or no confidence in local government when compared with the "same mayor" respondents. What these differences in frequencies suggest is that a significant portion of citizens in "change in mayor" towns had very negative views of local government, despite being relatively satisfied with the services provided by their local government. In fact, for "change in mayor" respondents, the correlation between satisfaction with local services and confidence in local government is .27, while for "same mayor" respondents the Pearson correlation coefficient is .39, indicating that the latter group was more inclined to link their confidence in government with actual government performance. Thus the principal source of the dissatisfaction with local government expressed by "change in mayor" respondents appears to be the political deadlock and instability caused by use of the *voto constructivo* rather than dissatisfaction with the services provided by government. Nonetheless, we still will include in our multivariate analysis citizen views of local service provision to account for this possibility.

The results from the 2000 survey in Table 1 indicate that the effects of use of the *voto* provision may have been somewhat short-lived. Given the fact that 1998 was the last year of the electoral cycle in which the *voto constructivo* could be employed, we can surmise that the decline in significant differences between citizen views of local government institutions in towns in which the mayors were removed versus those in which they were not was in part a function of the absence of the *voto* provision from local politics in 1999. For every item displayed in Table 1, the support levels among citizens in "change in mayor" towns increased, suggesting that the inability of local politicians to use the *voto* provision in the year prior to the 2000 survey made those 2000 respondents living in "change in mayor" towns more similar to their "same mayor" counterparts.

The next step is to look at whether the negative views of municipal institutions held by citizens living in towns in which mayors were removed extended to Bolivia's political system as a whole. While debates regarding the measurement and use of system support remain (Norris 1999), our approach to assess-

ing levels of system support in Bolivia relies on a well-established and researched set of survey items that taps respondents' views toward their larger political system (Seligson and Muller 1987; Muller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982). The support variable, as shown below, is based on a five-item index, with each item using a 1-7 scale. For interpretive purposes these were rescaled to create a 0-100 scale. The five items included in the index are as follows:

1. To what extent do you believe that the courts in Bolivia guarantee a fair trial?
2. To what extent do you have respect for the political institutions of Bolivia?
3. To what extent do you think that the basic rights of citizens are well protected by the Bolivian political system?
4. To what extent do you feel proud to live under the political system of Bolivia?
5. To what extent do you feel that one ought to support the political system of Bolivia?

These five items, when combined as an index, in our view provide a good picture of the degree of system support Bolivians have for their political system (Muller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982; Seligson 2000; Seligson and Muller 1987; Seligson, Muller, and Finkel 1989).

If the *voto constructivo* were used more as a political weapon than as a means to evict extremely corrupt and/or inefficient mayors, and citizens viewed this institutional deficiency as representative of their larger political system,

**Table 2**  
**System Support and Use of the *Voto Constructivo***

System Support Items	1998 sample				2000 sample			
	Same mayor, 1996-98	N	Change in mayor, 1996-98	N	Same mayor, 1996-98	N	Change in mayor, 1996-98	N
Mean Confidence in Courts	41.7	1,538	36.8	1,697	39.2	1,825	36.2	1,812
Mean Confidence in Political Institutions	54.4	1,573	48.4	1,712	55.3	1,888	51.2	1,841
Mean View on Protection of Basic Rights	45.1	1,552	40.5	1,700	42.0	1,841	40.2	1,817
Mean Level of System Pride	51.9	1,571	44.4	1,700	47.2	1,867	44.2	1,831
Mean Level of System Support	54.1	1,541	45.7	1,666	50.9	1,844	48.0	1,806
Mean Score on System Support Index	49.6	1,575	43.3	1,720	47.0	1,893	44.0	1,842

All differences in means significant at  $p < .01$  except "Basic rights, 2000" where  $p < .02$ . Scale for all variables is 0-100.



we should see significant differences in the levels of system support among individuals living in municipalities where the *voto* was used to remove mayors and those in which it was not. Such differences would then suggest the impact that specific institutional design features of the decentralization agenda can have on citizen levels of system support.

Table 2 displays the mean scores of the “change in mayor” and “same mayor” respondents for the system support items. As is clear from the significant differences in means, those respondents living in municipalities where the mayor served the entire term had consistently more positive views of their political system than those living in towns in which the mayors had been removed.

As with Table 1, we again see a lessening of the differences between the mean scores of the two groups in the 2000 survey, supporting the contention that when use of the *voto* provision was no longer allowed (in 1999 and 2000) its negative effect on citizens’ views of their system faded. The similarity of this pattern with the one that emerges in Table 1 serves to reinforce the notion that the use of the *voto* to remove mayors had a significant impact on citizen attitudes toward their political system. Our next step is to determine whether these apparent negative consequences of Bolivia’s decentralization program will hold up to a more rigorous multivariate analysis of system support levels among Bolivians.

### Modeling Citizen Levels of System Support

In this section we construct a multivariate model that incorporates a wide range of factors that can potentially affect levels of citizen support for the political system. The focus of the model, however, will be on whether the bivariate relationship between use of the *voto constructivo* and levels of system support remains significant when controlling for other possible determinants of system support.

Beginning with standard socio-economic controls, we include the respondent’s years of education, income level, age, and a gender dummy variable. Recalling the significant differences in the ethnic make-up of the “change in mayor” and “same mayor” groups in the 1998 sample, we also include a series of dummy variables that incorporate a respondent’s ethnicity into the model, dividing the respondents into three ethnic groups—white, mestizo, and Indian (with mestizo as the base group)

Next we include two political variables that may affect respondent views toward the political system. A respondent’s self-rating on a ten-point ideology scale is used to determine whether the particular ideological leanings of respondents affect their views of the system. Second, a dummy variable is used to determine whether the respondent was a “winner” or “loser” in the 1997 presidential elections, defined in terms of whether the individual voted for one of the parties of the winning coalition or not in the 1997 presidential elections. Both of these variables should help control for any possible overlap between citizen views of the government in power at the time of the survey and views of the larger political system, as well as accounting for the significant differences in ideology among the two groups of respondents that emerged in the 1998 sample.

We also include in the model a respondent's views of Bolivia's current economic situation and the performance of the Banzer (i.e., incumbent) government. As with the political variables, these items allow us to control for the theoretically important effect of citizen attitudes toward the government in power and its management of the economy on views towards the larger political system. By including these controls, any effect that we find from the "*voto*" variable (described below) on system support will be all the more substantively significant given that it emerged after controlling for such variables as respondents' assessments of the economy and current government. Unfortunately, the item that tapped respondents' views of the economic situation was only included in the 2000 sample, so we were not able to include such a measure for the 1998 model.

We use two variables designed to tap respondent views of local government performance—one survey item that directly asks respondents to assess the quality of local government services (as discussed in the previous section) and a dummy variable that assigns a value of one to those respondents receiving all three basic services, and a value of zero to all others. The intent here is to provide as strict a test as possible for our position that use of the *voto* affected how citizens viewed the Bolivian political system by including other potentially critical local-level determinants of system support such as the quantity and quality of basic service provision.

In order to assess the impact that use of the *voto constructivo* may have had on system support levels, we use a dummy variable, assigning a value of one to those respondents living in "same mayor" towns—those municipalities where the mayor that entered office in 1996 was allowed to remain in office through the end of his/her term—and a value of zero to respondents living in "change in mayor" towns. The difference in means analysis presented above suggests that the simple fact that an elected mayor was allowed to serve out his/her term had a considerable impact on system support. The multivariate analysis will allow us to determine whether the strength of this institutional effect holds up when controlling for other factors.

Table 3 displays the results of three models—column one provides the results from the 1998 sample, column two the 2000 sample, and column three displays the regression results from the two samples combined. Most notable in all three models is the consistently strong contribution of the *voto* dummy variable in explaining variance in levels of system support. As suggested by the difference in means analysis, the effect of the *voto* was particularly strong for the 1998 sample. What the partial coefficients for this variable in the three models indicate is that respondents living in municipalities where the *voto constructivo* was not used had system support levels close to three points higher than those respondents living in "change in mayor" towns. Given the fact that the model takes into account the powerful effects on system support of respondent views of the economy, the current government, local government performance, as well as individuals' socio-economic characteristics, this effect of a single institutional feature of the country's decentralization program is all the more striking.

Among the control variable coefficients, the most notable are the highly significant effects on system support of respondent views of the Banzer gov-

**Table 3**  
**A Model of System Support in Bolivia**

Variables	1998		2000		1998-2000	
	B (std.error)	Beta	B (std.error)	Beta	B (std.error)	Beta
Constant	49.03 (2.82)		54.91 (3.10)		48.83 (2.0)	
Age	-.02 (.03)	-.02	-.01 (.03)	-.01	-.04 (.02)	-.03
Education	-.10 (.10)	-.03	-.08 (.10)	-.02	-.23** (.07)	-.06
Income	.39 (.33)	.03	.46 (.33)	.03	1.15** (.24)	.08
Gender (Male=1; Female=0)	1.65* (.75)	.04	1.65* (.75)	.05	1.13* (.54)	.03
Ethnic dummy (White=1; Mestizo and Indian=0)	-1.20 (.86)	.03	-1.05 (.86)	-.03	-.36 (.63)	-.01
Ethnic dummy (Indian=1; White and Mestizo =0)	-3.59* (1.46)	-.05	-3.73* (1.46)	-.05	-1.23 (.99)	-.02
Ideology (Far left=1; Far right=10)	1.14** (.18)	.13	1.12** (.18)	.13	.82** (.13)	.10
Evaluation of Banzer government (1=very good; 5=very bad)	-4.60** (.48)	-.20	-3.85** (.51)	-.17	-3.96** (.35)	-.17
Assessment of current economic situation (1=excellent; 5=very bad)	-	-	-2.26** (.51)	-.10	-	-
Support for ADN coalition in 1997 presidential elections (vote for ADN coalition=1; all else=0)	3.73** (.83)	.09	3.75** (.83)	.09	3.21** (.57)	.08
Basic service provision (1=receives water, sewerage, electricity; 0=all else)	-3.70** (.83)	-.10	-3.79** (.83)	-.10	-5.09** (.58)	-.14
Evaluation of local government services (0=very poor; 100=excellent)	.13** (.02)	.15	.12** (.02)	.14	.11** (.01)	.12
Vote dummy (No change in mayor=1)	2.97** (.76)	.08	3.0** (.76)	.08	2.68** (.54)	.07
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> (F-stat.)	.13 (27.55)		.14 (27.01)		.11 (44.36)	
N	2162		2153		4253	

Dependent variable for all models is system support index with a scale from 0-100. \* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01.

ernment, local government services, and Bolivia's economic situation. In very intuitive fashion, the model reveals that with all of these factors, the more negative the views held by a respondent, the lower the level of system support. The models also indicate that the political leanings of respondents affect system support levels as well, with those voting for the ruling ADN coalition and those identifying themselves as right-of-center being more likely to express higher levels of system support. What the strength and direction of these coefficients suggest is that we have adequately captured important determinants of system support among Bolivians that involve their partisan views, and assessments of both their local and national government performance.

Also of note is the combination of a significant negative coefficient for the education variable (for the combined 1998-2000 model) and a positive coefficient for the income variable. These two variables have a fairly strong and significant positive correlation with one another but have opposite effects on an individual's level of system support. The significant and negative coefficient for those respondents receiving the three basic municipal services indicates a fairly strong discontent with the political system among individuals who are relatively well off, at least in terms of basic services. Finally, it appears that those respondents that identified themselves as indigenous generally held more negative views of their political system than their mestizo and white counterparts. To reiterate though, the strength of these coefficients only makes our test of the effect of the *voto* on system support more stringent, as it is clear that we have included substantively important controls in the model.

Returning to the variable of most interest for this analysis, an indicator of the local institutional performance as measured by whether a mayor was able to remain in office for his/her entire term, we find the impact of local-level institutional performance has both a statistically and substantively significant impact on levels of system support across all three models. Respondents living in municipalities that did not suffer through the political turmoil of *voto*-inspired turnover in mayors expressed far stronger support for the Bolivian political system than did their counterparts living in "change in mayor" municipalities. In the context of a fragile political system like Bolivia's, this unintended consequence of one aspect of a decentralization program designed to strengthen support for the system should serve notice that such policies carry both risks and rewards for those seeking to bolster support for the many emerging democracies around the developing world.

Are there alternative explanations to our findings? One such explanation is that towns where the *voto* was employed might have been those with *prior* levels of system support significantly lower than in those towns where the *voto* was not used.

There are several features of our analysis that allow us to largely reject this countervailing explanation of the results. First, our models of system support include a comprehensive set of individual-level variables that are highly significant determinants of an individual's level of system support. These include the standard socio-economic variables (age, income, education, and ethnicity), as well as a respondent's ideology, his or her vote in the 1997 presidential election, his or her evaluation of the incumbent government, his or her evalua-

tion of local government services, and, for the 2000 model, his or her evaluation of the current economic situation. When taken together, all of these variables should capture any systematic preexisting differences in system support levels between "change in mayor" and "same mayor" towns.

For example, one might argue that municipalities with a large percentage of poorly educated, indigenous, low-income citizens that were particularly hurt by Bolivia's economic situation would be likely to have significantly lower levels of system support and thus be more inclined to employ the *voto*. Our models, however, take into account these determinants of system support and should, if use of the *voto* is simply a product of preexisting low levels of system support, reveal *no significant independent* contribution of the *voto* dummy variable to variations in system support levels.

Similarly, we include citizen perceptions of the quality of local government services, a factor that is a strong determinant of system support levels. Those citizens with more positive views of local government services had higher levels of system support than those who viewed the quality of local government services as poor. Yet, even when controlling for citizens' perceptions of local government services, the coefficients for the *voto* dummy are very clearly significant and in the expected direction across all three models. These findings alone provide sufficient basis to reject the thesis that the *voto* was a product of preexisting low levels of system support.

A second element of support for the finding that system support levels are essentially a product, rather than a determinant, of use of the *voto* emerges from the knowledge that the *voto* was not used in 1999 or 2000 (because of the legal provisions restricting its use). Knowing this, we should expect, if our argument is correct, a general decline in the differences between "change in mayor" and "same mayor" towns in the 2000 survey with respect to their levels of system support. If use of the *voto* were a result of preexisting low levels of system support, then the fact that the provision was not used in 1999 or 2000 should have had no impact on the differences in system support levels between the two groups of municipalities.

What Tables 1 and 2 suggest, along with the smaller impact of the *voto* dummy coefficient in the 2000 multivariate model, is that when the *voto* was not used, the system support levels of the two groups of municipalities became more similar. For each measure of "confidence" in local government institutions in Table 1 the level of support for these institutions in the "change in mayor" group of municipalities increased between 1998 and 2000. For Table 2, the most notable change in mean levels of support among the "change in mayor" municipalities occurred for the "support for institutions" item and the "support for the system" item. Of the five items in our system support index, these two are the ones theoretically most directly related to use of the *voto*, and again, when use of the *voto* was prohibited in 1999 and 2000, we see an increase in the mean levels of support among respondents living in "change in mayor" towns. If the *voto constructivo* were not having an independent effect on system support, we should see no such change.

Taken together, we have several pieces of support for our findings that use of the *voto* did in fact contribute to a decline in levels of system support among citi-

zens living in those municipalities. This evidence suggests there is no reason to believe the alternative hypothesis for which we could uncover no empirical support.

### Discussion

Our findings clearly carry with them mixed blessings for both proponents of decentralization and those interested in the strengthening of democracy around the developing world. The first implication of this analysis of system support in Bolivia is that local institutions matter, perhaps more than at any point in the highly centralized history of Latin America (Nickson 1995; Veliz 1980). From this finding, we see the basic proposition driving the decentralization trend as correct. By bringing the political system closer to the people, and allowing them to become more involved in that system, the role of local political institutions in a person's evaluation of the political system seems to have become greater. From a normative perspective, the significant impact that local institutions can have on citizen attitudes toward their political system is a positive finding in the sense that an explicit focus of many developing countries and international development agencies in the past ten years has been to make local institutions more democratic and responsible for more government functions. In a society expressing high levels of discontent with its political system, then, our findings support the theory that strengthening local governments is one particularly useful way to influence and change those attitudes, just as proponents of the recent wave of decentralization would argue.

The dark side of the finding that local institutions matter is that they can matter for both good and ill, so if their design or performance does not match the highly publicized democratic ideals that often surround decentralization reforms, their effect on citizen views of the system can just as easily be negative. When local governments are unable or unwilling to match the rhetoric of decentralization, or when a specific institutional feature designed to promote clean government or accountability becomes merely another weapon, a particularly powerful one at that, in partisan warfare, citizen feelings of disenchantment and disillusionment with their political system are likely to increase.

For scholars of a developing world beyond Bolivia, the proposition that local-level institutions should be thought of, on the basis of our evidence, as capable of having a significant impact on mass politics and political development may seem a stretch. We disagree. Rather, we argue that the above findings are probably not unique to Bolivia, but are indicative of the effects that decentralization reforms will have in a varying degrees across many of the newly democratized countries. Analyses of political, economic, and social processes, then, will be well served to continue to incorporate local-level factors into their explanatory models.

### Notes

1. The Latin Barometer survey is not comparable across countries because sample designs vary from country to country. However, comparisons within a given country, as reported here, should be relatively reliable.

2. For a discussion of the conceptual and measurement issues surrounding system support and the consequences of low levels of system support, see, e.g., Muller and Jukam (1977); Easton (1975). For recent data see Seligson (2000).
3. The Bolivian Constitution provides for legislative selection of the president when no candidate receives a majority, a frequent occurrence in recent elections. For a comprehensive discussion of this period see Gamarra (1994).
4. The Constitutional amendment that provided for this *voto constructivo* reads as follows:

Upon completion of at least one year of office by the mayor elected according to paragraph 6 of Article 200, the Council will be able to censure and remove him/her with a three-fifths vote of all its members through the constructive vote of censure, always simultaneously electing the successor from among the council members. . . . This proceeding cannot be repeated for at least one year following the change in mayor, nor during the last year of the mayoral term. (author translation)

5. With an absolute majority of votes, a party's candidate would become mayor and, according to Article 200 of the Bolivian Constitution, would not be subject to the *voto constructivo*.
6. The size of municipal councils varies by municipal population. For municipalities with a population less than 25,000 (a category that includes 88 percent of Bolivian municipalities) the number of council members is five. For populations of 25,001 to 50,000, there are seven members (there are 22 municipalities in this category). For municipalities with a population between 50,001 and 75,000 the number of members is nine (there are six municipalities in this category), while for the remaining municipalities (pop. >75,000) as well as capital cities the size of the city council is eleven (nine municipalities in this category).
7. The full text of the Council's recommendations for changes in municipal institutions is as follows:

*Voto Constructivo de Censura*

The present design of this article allowed for its use as an instrument of censure with motives preponderantly political-partisan, undermining the purpose of its original conception, a fact that generated institutional instability and damaged local democracy. Furthermore, this feature is an element of parliamentary systems of government, [not] in an environment and context where the municipal government political representatives lack maturity.

Alternatives [proposed]:

Elimination of the *voto constructivo de censura*.

Maintain the original intentions [of the *voto*], but with modifications in its design: allowing its use only after two and a half years (the midpoint of the mayor's term in office), under specific and transparent regulations that avoid the abuse and political maneuvers [of the past]. (author translation)

This text is from the Citizen Council for Constitutional Reform's "Anteproyecto de Ley de Necesidad de Reforma Constitucional" <http://www.reformas-constitucionales.gov.bo/3programreformas/htmlversion/index.html> (accessed on April 5, 2002).

8. This document is available at [www.enlared.org.bo/shnoti.asp?noticia=1586](http://www.enlared.org.bo/shnoti.asp?noticia=1586) (accessed March 29, 2002).
9. This number increased to 314 in 1999.
10. The entire project was conducted under the auspices of the University of Pittsburgh Public Opinion Project.
11. Income data were coded 0-7 with each category representing a range of monthly income (e.g., 1=<250 Bolivianos/month; 7=10,001 and >). The mean income level for the *voto* respondents in 1998 was 2.45 (between 251-500 Bs and 501-1000 Bs) and 2.51 for the non-*voto* group, suggesting that on average residents living in municipalities where the *voto constructivo* was employed earned slightly less than the non-*voto* respondents.
12. These are the basic municipal civil society institutions established by the decentralization law.
13. Each item was scored on a 1-7 basis, but are converted here to a 0-100 metric by subtracting one point from each score, dividing by six and multiplying by 100.

## References

- Almond, Gabriel A. and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Anderson, Christopher J. and Christine A. Grillo. 1997. "Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems." *American Political Science Review* 91, 1: 66-81.
- Anderson, Christopher J. and Yuliya V. Tverdova. 2000. "Corruption and Attitudes Toward Government in Contemporary Democracies." Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C.
- Bland, Gary. 1999. "Bolivia's Popular Participation Law and the Emergence of Local Accountability." Woodrow Wilson Center Report, Washington, D.C.
- Booth, John A. and Mitchell A. Seligson. 1993. "Political Culture and Regime Type: Evidence from Nicaragua and Costa Rica." *Journal of Politics* 55 (August): 777-792.
- Clarke, Harold D., Nitish Dutt, and Allan Kornberg. 1993. "The Political Economy of Attitudes Toward Polity and Society in Western European Democracies." *The Journal of Politics* 55, 4: 998-1021.
- Crabtree, John and Laurence Whitehead, eds. 2001. *Towards Democratic Viability: The Bolivian Experience*. New York: Palgrave.
- Diamond, Larry. 1999. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Easton, David. 1975. "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support." *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (October): 435-57.
- Gamarra, Eduardo. 1994. "Crafting Political Support for Stabilization: Political Pacts and the New Economic Policy in Bolivia." Pp. 105-128 in *Democracy, Markets, and Structural Reform in Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico*, eds. W. Smith, C. Acuña, and E. Gamarra. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Grindle, Merilee S. 2000. *Audacious Reforms: Institutional Invention and Democracy in Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. "Postmodernization Erodes Respect for Authority, but Increases Support for Democracy." Pp. 236-256 in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, ed. P. Norris. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karatnycky, Adrian. 2000. "The 1999 Freedom House Survey: A Century of Progress." *Journal of Democracy* 11, 1: 187-200.
- Kinder, Donald R. and D. Roderick Kiewiet. 1979. "Economic Discontent and Political Behavior: The Role of Personal Grievances and Collective Economic Judgments in Congressional Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 23, 3: 495-527.
- Lagos, Marta. 2001. "Between Stability and Crisis in Latin America." *Journal of Democracy* 12, 1: 137-145.
- Lazarte Rojas, Jorge. 1993. *Bolivia, certezas e incertidumbres de la democracia*. Cochabamba, Bolivia: ILDIS.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael. 1985. "Pocketbook Voting in U.S. National Election Studies: Fact or Artifact?" *American Journal of Political Science* 29, 2: 348-356.
- Lipset, Seymour M.. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53 March: 65-105.
- Lipset, Seymour M., Kyoung-Ryung Seong, and John Charles Torres. 1993. "A Comparative Analysis of the Social Requisites of Democracy." *International Social Science Journal* 136 (May): 155-75.
- Listhaug, Ola and Matti Wiberg. 1995. "Confidence in Political and Private Institutions." Pp. 298-322 in *Citizens and the State*, eds. Hans-Dieter Klingemann and D. Fuchs. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mayorga, Rene Antonio. 1997. "Bolivia's Silent Revolution." *Journal of Democracy* 8, 1: 142-156.
- Morales, Juan Antonio. 1994. "Democracy, Economic Liberalism, and Structural Reform in Bolivia." Pp. 129-150 in *Democracy, Markets, and Structural Reform in Latin America: Argen-*



- tina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico*, eds. W. Smith, C. Acuña, and E. Gamarra. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Muller, Edward N. and Thomas O. Jukam. 1977. "On the Meaning of Diffuse Support." *American Political Science Review* 71, 4: 1561-1595.
- Muller, Edward N., Thomas O. Jukam, and Mitchell A. Seligson. 1982. "Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior: A Comparative Analysis." *American Journal of Political Science* 26, 2: 240-264.
- Nickson, R. Andrew. 1995. *Local Government in Latin America*. Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner.
- Norris, Pippa, ed. 1999. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pharr, Susan J. and Robert D. Putnam. 2000. *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rose, Richard, Doh C. Shin, and Neil Munro. 1999. "Tensions Between the Democratic Ideal and Reality: South Korea." Pp. 146-165 in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, ed. P. Norris. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seligson, Mitchell A. 2000. "Toward A Model of Democratic Stability: Political Culture in Central America," *Estudios interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 11, 2 (July-December): 5-29.
- Seligson, Mitchell A. and Edward N. Muller. 1987. "Democratic Stability and Economic Crisis: Costa Rica, 1978-1983." *International Studies Quarterly* 31, 3: 310-326.
- Seligson, Mitchell A., Edward N. Muller, and Steve Finkel. 1989. "Economic Crisis, Incumbent Performance and Regime Support: A Comparison of Longitudinal Data from West Germany and Costa Rica." *British Journal of Political Science* 19: 329-351.
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 2000. *USAID/Bolivia: Results Review* (July). Washington, D.C.: Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau of Global Programs, Field Support and Research.
- Veliz, Claudio. 1980. *The Centralist Tradition in Latin America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Vetter, Angelika. 2002. "Local Political Competence in Europe: A Resource of Legitimacy for Higher Levels of Government?" *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 14, 1: 3-18.
- Weatherford, Stephen M. 1987. "How Does Government Performance Influence Political Support?" *Political Behavior* 9: 5-28.
- Wiarda, Howard J., ed. 1974. *Politics and Social Change in Latin America: The Distinct Tradition*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- World Bank. 1999. "A Strategic View of Decentralization in Bolivia: Advances, Issues, Opportunities, and Recommendations." Project Evaluation Report (February).