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Daniel E. Moreno Morales, Ph.D. Ciudadanía, Comunidad de Estudios Sociales y Acción Pública, Cochabamba, Bolivia

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April 2011

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The views expressed in this research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the US Government, Department of Defense, US Southern Command or Florida International University.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indigenous people in Bolivia have historically been excluded from the social and political life of their country, where socioeconomic differences are highly correlated with ethnic identities. However, after a serious political crisis, in 2005 indigenous leader was elected President in unprecedented election, and the country has since faced aggressive social and political transformations. survey data that ranges from 1998 to 2010, this paper shows some relevant changes in the perceptions and attitudes of indigenous people towards the democratic regime, its political institutions, and other citizens. The trends shown suggest that the average relationship of indigenous citizens with the state and its institutions has improved both in relative and in absolute terms. However, levels of political tolerance among indigenous Bolivians do not seem to have increased at the same rate as those of non-indigenous **Bolivians**

INTRODUCTION

In December 2005, Evo Morales was elected President of Bolivia in a landslide election, in which he received a historic 54 percent of the national vote. Morales, an indigenous Aymara from the Bolivian Altiplano and leader of the coca growers' union, had campaigned on a strong antineoliberal discourse, and on the promotion of indigenous peoples' rights.

Morales and his party, *Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS)*, came to power after a very serious national political crisis, in which traditional parties and leaders lost credibility, and the legitimacy of the political regime itself was questioned. In fact, the previous President elected by popular vote, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, was forced to resign in October 2003 by massive popular protests in which indigenous groups played a central role. His Vice President and successor, Carlos Mesa, had the same fate less than two years later.

Morales is the first indigenous President in a country where a substantial proportion of the population is considered to be indigenous. *MAS* itself is more a coalition of social movements, including indigenous organizations, than a political party in the traditional sense (Zuazo 2008). Morales' statist and redistributive policies are popular with the poorer sectors of the population, among whom the indigenous have historically represented a large share (Jimenez, Landa and Yañez 2006; Molina B. 2005; PNUD 2004). During the last five years, Morales has led a transformation process which has included, among other relevant reforms, the re-foundation of Bolivia as a *plurinational* state, in which indigenous cultures and social forms are supposed to have the same value as western social and political institutions.

In this context, it is very likely that the perceptions of indigenous people in regards to the country's political

institutions have improved during the last few years. This paper attempts to test this general hypothesis, focusing on a set of variables relevant to the health and stability of a democratic regime. The variables selected for the analyses are the following: *support for the democratic regime*, *support for the political system*, *voting participation*, and *political tolerance*. These variables are closely related to individuals' perceptions of rights, equal and fair access, and social inclusion, which are all crucial components to the existence of modern democratic societies.

The first two variables, *support for democracy* and *support for the political system*, can be considered as measures of legitimacy. Support for the democratic regime is the support that citizens offer to democracy as a form of government. This is a form of legitimacy of the regime itself, the level of commitment that citizens have towards democracy as the "best form of government," in its Churchillean definition.

Support for the political system, on the other hand, refers to what the specialized literature usually conceptualizes as "diffuse support" (Easton 1975; Seligson 1983); this is the level of legitimacy of the institutions that form the political system. While support for democracy is a more abstract commitment to the regime, support for the political system is more concrete as it refers to a set of specific institutions.

The third variable refers to a more active dimension of citizenship: political participation in national elections. Citizens who vote are a central part of the polity, and their participation means that they are actually included in the political system. Despite the fact that voting is compulsory in Bolivia, enforcement is very weak or non-existent, particularly in rural areas; so individuals who vote are actually those who decide to do so. This decision accounts for at least a minimal level of engagement in national politics.

Finally, the fourth variable chosen for this research, *political tolerance*, focuses on the horizontal relationship between citizens, instead of the relationship between citizens and the State, as in the previous cases. As a long strand of research has shown, the existence of politically tolerant citizens is one of the social conditions for liberal democracies.

Data employed for this project come from the Latin American Public Opinion Project's (LAPOP's) database for Bolivia, which includes biannual surveys conducted since 1998 on probability samples of approximately 3,000 cases each that represent the national population. Interviews are conducted in the Spanish, Quechua and Aymara languages. Because of their temporality and comparability across time, the data provide the ideal setting for observing changes in the average perceptions of different subpopulation groups in Bolivia.

The analyses conducted for this paper seek to identify statistically significant differences for the indigenous subpopulation across time in the chosen dependent variables. Different measures to define the indigenous population are used throughout the paper, but in most cases, and unless otherwise noted, results are independent of which grouping variable is used. While most results are presented using bivariate graphs, all of the results have been tested for independence from other potentially relevant effects through multivariate linear and logistic regressions, which are omitted from the paper for reasons of space.

¹More information on LAPOP and its database can be found at the project's website, <u>www.lapopsurveys.org</u>. Complete descriptions of the samples employed for each Bolivian study are published within their respective reports.

²All analyses conducted in this research take into account the complex nature of the samples from which the data comes from, using this information for the appropriate calculation of statistical error (Kish and Frankel 1974; Knott 1991).

THE IDENTITY RIDDLE: WHO IS INDIGENOUS IN BOLIVIA?

The first question that needs to be answered when indigenous populations are studied is who we are talking about when we talk about indigenous people. As ethnic categories are usually contested, the boundaries separating them tend to be blurry (Abdelal, *et al.* 2006; Chandra 2006; Corntassel 2003). In order to identify trends in the perceptions of a particular group, in this case indigenous people in Bolivia, a methodological decision regarding the definition of this population has to be made.

There are different theoretically legitimate approaches to defining membership within the category referred to as the indigenous population. At least three of these approaches are often used by researchers and by government institutions in Bolivia. One of them is self-identification on a racial basis; the second is self-identification on a cultural basis; and the third one is identification of the indigenous population by the languages they speak, or the language in which they first learned to communicate during childhood.

The Bolivian government itself, however, despite its emphasis on the rights of the indigenous population, does not have an official operative definition of who the indigenous people are. While the 2009 Constitution defines the indigenous peoples and nations as the communities that share culture, institutions, history, and territory, and pre-date the Spanish conquest (Art. 30), there is no official methodological definition to operationalize this concept. This lack of a practical definition has meant that different employing different state institutions have been methodological strategies to identify the indigenous

population according to their own views and requirements, and without the existence of a universally applied criterion.³

In terms of the size of the indigenous population in the country, the three approaches produce strikingly different results. Using the cultural identification item, almost three-fourths of the Bolivian population could be counted as "indigenous" in 2010. However, using the racial identification measure, only one-fifth of the national population would be a part of the group. And if the first language measure is to be considered, around a quarter of the population should be counted as indigenous.⁴

All three methodological alternatives address a particular dimension of the complex phenomenon of ethnic identities. Under the racial classification, categories comprising the non-indigenous population are *mestizos*, whites, and the smaller afro-descendent population. Under the cultural identification classification, non-indigenous are those individuals who do not feel that they belong to any of the native groups in Bolivia. When the language variable is used, the cultural origin of the person, as well as their membership in a particular linguistic community, is taken

.

³ For example, the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (INE), responsible for the Census, included in the 2001 Census the cultural identification item; however, INE has employed language spoken as the main marker of the indigenous population in their official socio-demographic study about indigenous people, using the results of the latest Census (INE 2003); other official publications (UDAPE-PNUD 2006) have employed other methods, such as the *Condición Étnico Lingüística (CEL*), a gradual measure of indigenousness that combines cultural identification with an indigenous group with language spoken and first language (Molina B. and Albó 2006).

⁴ These substantially divergent results, which have been noted elsewhere (Moreno 2008; Moreno, *et al.* 2008; Seligson, *et al.* 2006), sparked the national debate over the ethnic composition of the Bolivian population, and its consequences for public policies. For part of the debate see (Albó 2004; Albó 2009; Laserna 2004; Lavaud 2007; Lavaud and Lestage 2002; Moreno 2007; Zavaleta 2009).

into account, and the non-indigenous group is formed by individuals who do not share that cultural origin.

The LAPOP questionnaires, applied in the surveys conducted in Bolivia, have employed since 2004 items that provide information on the three approaches. Research for this paper has employed alternatively the three options, and in most cases results are consistent across measures. The exact formulation of each of the three items, as well as their results as proportions for 2010, are presented in the appendix.

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

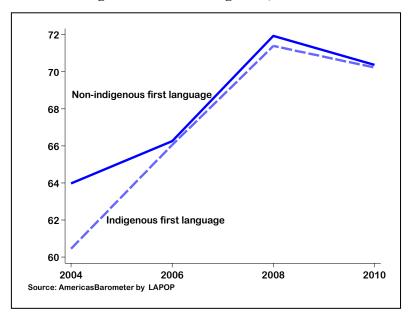
It seems evident that a consolidated democracy requires that citizens think of it as the best form of government; democracy needs to be "the only game in town" (Linz 1990; Przeworski 1991) in the minds of all, or at least most, citizens. And this agreement has to be shared by members of all relevant political parties and tendencies, as well by members of different social groups; the agreement of democracy as the only game in town has to be shared across all socially relevant cleavages, including ethnic, economic and political cleavages.

In the case of Bolivia, indigenous people showed significantly lower levels of agreement with the idea that "despite its problems, democracy is the best form of government" when compared to non-indigenous people before the first election of Morales in 2005. But since the survey conducted in 2006, the average levels of support for democracy are identical. This trend is evident when all three variables employed for defining indigenous identity are considered alternatively.

The following graph presents the evolution of the average support for democracy for individuals who had an

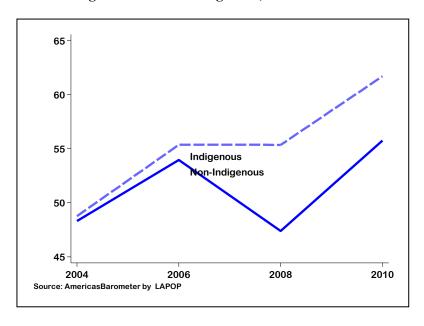
indigenous language as their first language during childhood compared to respondents who spoke a language other than an indigenous one as their first language. Differences are statistically significant in 2004, and the two averages are indistinct for 2006, 2008 and 2010. It is worth noting that after a consistent increase between 2004 and 2006 and between 2006 and 2008, support for democracy has stopped growing in the 2008-2010 period for both subpopulations.

Graph 1: Temporal evolution of support for democracy for indigenous and non-indigenous, 2004-2010



The average satisfaction with democracy has also varied in a different way for indigenous and non-indigenous individuals in Bolivia during the last 6 years. Since Evo Morales took office in 2006, satisfaction has increased significantly – by more than 10 points in the 0 to 100 scale of the variable – for indigenous people, while this increase has been much milder and less constant for non-indigenous people. The following graph shows this trend across time; groups are defined by self-identification as indigenous in a racial dimension.

Graph 2: Evolution of satisfaction with democracy for indigenous and non-indigenous, 2004-2010



These findings show that, since Evo Morales came to power, the perceptions that indigenous citizens have about democracy in Bolivia have improved. This improvement has taken place both in absolute terms and in relative terms – when perceptions for indigenous individuals are compared to the average of that for the non-indigenous population. Both variables treated here show higher averages for the indigenous population in 2010 than in 2004, as well as an improvement in the relative position compared to the non-indigenous. In the case of support for democracy, the trend has been towards evening the average support, while in the case of satisfaction with democracy, an initial similar average has turned into a more satisfied indigenous population.

While that is the general trend, there are relevant differences between indigenous groups in their satisfaction with democracy in 2010. Mean satisfaction with democracy is 10 points higher in the 0 to 100 scale for people who identify themselves as Quechua and Aymara versus the average satisfaction for people who feel apart of other indigenous groups⁵; these results are presented in detail in the appendix. This finding seems to be related with the fact that the *MAS* government has been more actively associated with indigenous organizations from the western highlands of the country, where Aymara and Quechua are the main groups. In fact, the relationship of the *MAS* government with indigenous people from the lowlands has been increasingly tense, and that was reflected through several demonstrations organized by the *CIDOB* against the Morales government in 2010.

SUPPORT FOR THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The variable employed for measuring support for the political system is an index composed of five items in the LAPOP questionnaires: the belief that courts guarantee a free trial; the level of respect for the country's political institutions; the perception of basic rights being protected; the pride of living under the country's political regime; and the idea that the political system has to be supported. ⁷ This index has been employed consistently and satisfactorily by

⁵ Other indigenous groups refer to the country's smaller indigenous populations that mainly inhabit the Eastern lowlands of the country; these groups include the *Guaraní*, *Chiquitano*, and *Mojeño* as the most important categories.

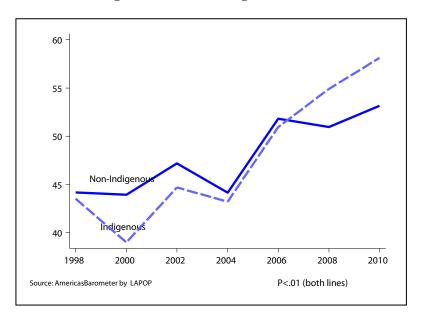
⁶ CIDOB is the *Confederación Indígena del Oriente de Bolivia*, the organization that represents most lowland indigenous people in Bolivia.

⁷ The questions are originally based on a 1 to 10 scale in which 1 means that the person does not share the proposed idea at all and 10 that the person fully agrees with the idea; the index resulting in the combination of the five items adopts a 0 to 100 scale. The exact formulation of items in the questionnaire is included in the appendix.

different studies (see, for example Booth and Seligson 2009; Seligson 2002.8

In the years previous to the election of Evo Morales, indigenous people showed lower averages of support for the political system than non-indigenous individuals. This difference was statistically significant in 2000 and 2002. Since 2008, individuals who identify as indigenous show significantly higher levels of system support than non-indigenous citizens. The following graph illustrates this trend.

Graph 3: Evolution of mean support for the political system for indigenous and non-indigenous, 1998-2010



The grouping variable considered in the previous graph is identification as indigenous in the racial self-identification

⁸ The technical construction of the index shows that the items are highly correlated among them; Cronbach's *alpha* for the index using the 2010 Bolivian data is 0.8, which shows good internal consistency.

question employed in the LAPOP questionnaire; the trend is similar for the other two alternatives for defining the indigenous population (cultural identification and first language). Additionally, and in contrast to what was observed with satisfaction with democracy, there are no relevant differences between particular indigenous identities in 2010 when their average levels of system support are considered.

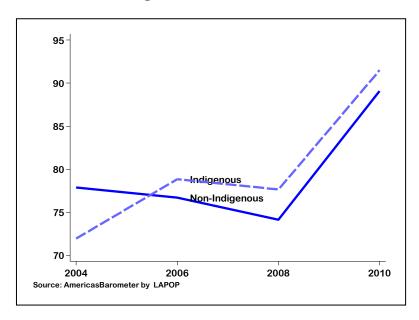
It is also relevant that in 2000 the average support for the political system was lower among indigenous people independent of other socioeconomic factors, such as income or level of education, which are correlated with ethnic identity; conversely, system support is higher among indigenous in 2010 independent of the same factors. This suggests that, even considering the significant general increase in legitimacy of the political system, it is among indigenous people where this change has been more dramatic.

VOTING PARTICIPATION

Indigenous people have historically been excluded from the Bolivian political system. Until the mid-20th century, voting was restricted to literate individuals who owned some property, which *de facto* excluded most of the indigenous population in the country. Even until the *Ley de Participación Popular* in 1994, participation for most indigenous people was limited to national elections, as municipal elections were absent from rural areas where the majority of the indigenous population lived. Additionally, voting participation in Bolivia requires not only a valid ID, which were harder to obtain and mostly useless for other purposes in rural indigenous communities, but also that individuals register as voters in a State office, which is usually absent in rural areas.

Voter turnout was lower among indigenous people in the 2002 election, according to responses to the 2004 survey; since the 2005 election, differences between indigenous and non-indigenous groups in terms of voter turnout seem to have leveled out, as they are statistically indistinct since 2006. The following graph shows the trends for both groups.

Graph 4: Evolution of voting participation for indigenous and non-indigenous individuals, 2004-2010



There is more than one explanation for this increase in the relative proportion of voters among indigenous people. One has to do with the aggressive identification policy adopted by the *MAS* administration; thousands of individuals who did not hold a national ID card were registered by mobile brigades formed for this purpose. This means that the potential number of voters increased in the country both among indigenous and non-indigenous citizens; yet, as the brigades worked mostly in rural and poor urban areas (where in fact documentation was lower), the rate of documentation

for indigenous people was higher than that for non-indigenous individuals.

A second complementary explanation of increased voter turnout in recent elections is linked to the interest that citizens show in politics, which has also increased significantly as a national average between 2008 and 2010. Interest in politics, higher among those who identify as Aymara, has increased as a consequence of the relevance of the most recent elections, in which the continuation of the transformation process led by Morales was at stake. Interest in politics was a robust predictor of voter participation in Bolivia during 2010, showing that an increase in interest results in an increase in turnout.

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

Political tolerance means the acceptance of people's rights to incur in practices that we do not like. Tolerance is a value needed for liberal democracies (Prothro and Grigg 1960), in which citizens can criticize or oppose institutions without having to fear negative consequences or retaliation from others.

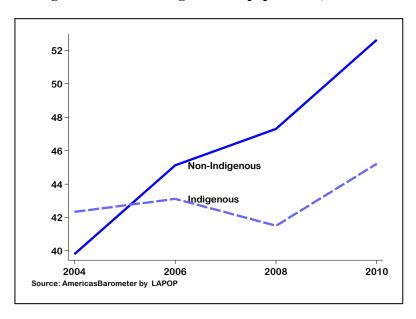
The measure used for political tolerance is an index composed of four items that refers to the rights of individuals who are critical of the country's political system; it measures citizens' perceptions of these individuals' right to vote, their right to participate in peaceful demonstrations, their right to run for office, and their right to give a public speech on TV.

-

⁹ The questions are originally based on a 1 to 10 scale in which 1 means that the person does not share the proposed idea at all and 10 that the person fully agrees with the idea; the index resulting in the combination of the five items adopts a 0 to 100 metric. The exact formulation of items in the questionnaire is included in the appendix. The tolerance index has a high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's *alpha* for the 2010 Bolivian data of 0.87.

Previous studies have shown that the levels of tolerance are, in general, low for Bolivia when compared to other Latin American countries (though a positive trend has been recorded across time) (Moreno, *et al.* 2010; Moreno and Seligson 2006). The graph below shows the evolution of the mean tolerance for individuals who identify themselves as part of an indigenous group and for the rest of the population.

Graph 5: Evolution of average political tolerance for indigenous and non-indigenous subpopulations, 2004-2010



The average levels of tolerance have increased in the country during the six-year period between 2004 and 2010. But this trend does not seem to apply to individuals who identify themselves as apart of an indigenous group, whose levels of tolerance have not increased substantially during this interval. In 2004, indigenous Bolivians showed higher levels of political tolerance than non-indigenous, and this difference was statistically significant and robust even when the effects of socioeconomic factors such as income.

education, gender and age were held constant. Six years later, the average level of tolerance for indigenous is almost the same as in 2004, while it has increased by more than 10 points within the 0 to 100 tolerance scale among people who do not identify themselves as apart of an indigenous group. The multiple regression results for 2004 and 2010 are included in the appendix of this article.

With slight differences, a similar trend can be observed when the other two variables that can be employed for defining indigenous people are considered. Additionally, individuals who identify themselves as apart of the Aymara people group show slightly lower levels of tolerance than Quechuas and other native groups.

As the variable that measures tolerance defines "those who oppose the political system" as the group to be tolerated, it could be argued that the high level of support that indigenous people confer to both the Evo Morales administration and the political system in general would explain their lower levels of acceptance of the rights of those who oppose the political system. However, a multivariate regression analysis, included in the appendix, shows that in 2010 individuals who culturally identify themselves as indigenous are less tolerant independent of their approval of the Morales administration, their level of system support, and relevant socioeconomic characteristics, such as education and income.

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence discussed in this paper suggests that the perceptions and attitudes of indigenous people in Bolivia have been deeply influenced by the Evo Morales government and the subsequent state transformation process led by the *MAS*. This impact has not been transitory or limited to the period immediately after the Morales election; many of the trends that were initially visible in 2006 could still be observed four years later.

Indigenous Bolivians now have a better relationship with the country's democratic regime, its political system, and its most relevant institutions than the one which they had prior to the *MAS* government. While most indicators of legitimacy have displayed increased average levels for the country in general, this increase has been sharper among indigenous people. This means that the improvement is evident in absolute terms, featuring higher figures amongst the relevant indicators for the indigenous subpopulation when compared to the period immediately previous to the Morales government. It also means that the improvement can be seen in relative terms, when the mean values for indigenous people are compared to those for non-indigenous citizens.

The improvement in the relationship between indigenous people and the Bolivian State has taken place on different levels. Support for democracy has increased, as has the average satisfaction with this form of government. There have also been relevant changes in support for the political system, an evaluation that includes perceptions about fairness; rights being protected; and pride, respect, and support for political institutions. Indigenous people are now also more involved in the political system through a better relative participation in the quintessential democratic institution of elections. In all areas mentioned, exclusion along ethnic lines seems to have receded.

Despite these major improvements between indigenous people and the State, no relevant positive changes have taken place amongst the attitudes of indigenous people toward other citizens, particularly toward those who are critical of the country's political system. Independent of different socioeconomic factors, Bolivia's indigenous citizens are now shown as being less tolerant than non-indigenous. This difference is recent, and contrasts with pre-MAS data, when indigenous people appeared to be more tolerant than non-indigenous Bolivians.

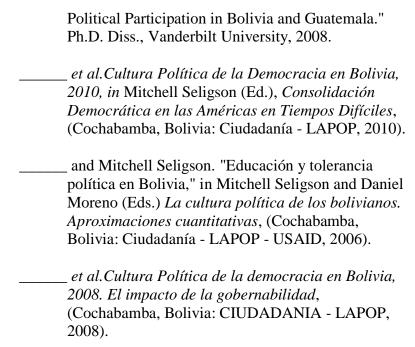
Finally, the evidence also shows that treating indigenous people as one general category can be problematic under certain circumstances. Relevant differences have been found between distinct indigenous groups, at least in terms of their levels of satisfaction with the country's democracy, and in terms of their political tolerance. This means that particular identities can be stronger and more relevant than the general and commonly employed "indigenous" categories; this finding is consistent with demands for the recognition of particular identities by many indigenous organizations, not only in Bolivia, but in different Latin American countries. Add to this fact the difficulty mentioned in assessing who the indigenous populations actually are and one sees the necessity for scholars and students of indigenous politics in Bolivia to pay more attention to the processes and dynamics particular to each distinct ethnic identity, instead of assuming homogeneity under the broader "indigenous" category.

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APPENDIX

1. Ethnic identification questions

Racial self-identification

ETID. ¿Usted se considera una persona blanca, mestiza, indígena u originaria, negra o Afro-boliviana, mulata u otra?
() Blanca () Mestiza () Indígena/originaria () Negra o Afro-boliviana () Mulata () Otra () NS () NR
<u>Cultural self-identification (question employed in the Bolivian 2001 Census)</u>
BOLETID2. [Census] ¿Se considera perteneciente a alguno de los siguientes pueblos originarios o indígenas? [Leer todas las opciones] () Quechua () Aymara () Guaraní () Chiquitano () Mojeño () Otro nativo () Ninguno () Otros(especificar) () NS () NR
Language spoken during childhood question
LENG1. ¿Cuál es su lengua materna, o el primer idioma que habló de pequeño en su casa? [acepte una alternativa, no más] [No leer alternativas] () Castellano () Quechua () Aymara () Guaraní () Otro (nativo) () Otro extranjero () NS () NR

Results for each variable (percentages for 2010)

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Cultural ID	72	28
Racial ID	19	81
First language	24	76

2. Dependent variables

Support for democracy

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?

Satisfaction with democracy

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 Bolivia?

Support for the political system

- B1. ¿Hasta qué punto cree usted que los tribunales de justicia de Bolivia garantizan un juicio justo?
- B2. ¿Hasta qué punto tiene usted respeto por las instituciones políticas de Bolivia?
- B3. ¿Hasta qué punto cree usted que los derechos básicos del ciudadano están bien protegidos por el sistema político boliviano?
- B4. ¿Hasta qué punto se siente usted orgulloso(a) de vivir bajo el sistema político de Bolivia?
- B6. ¿Hasta qué punto piensa usted que se debe apoyar al sistema político de Bolivia?

Voting participation

VB2. ¿Votó usted en las últimas elecciones presidenciales de 2009?

Political tolerance

- D1. Hay personas que siempre hablan mal de la forma de gobierno de Bolivia, no sólo del gobierno de turno, sino del sistema de gobierno, ¿con qué firmeza aprueba o desaprueba usted el derecho de votar de esas personas?
- D2. ¿Con qué firmeza aprueba o desaprueba usted que estas personas puedan llevar a cabo manifestaciones pacíficas con el propósito de expresar sus puntos de vista? Por favor léame el número.
- D3. Siempre pensando en los que hablan mal de la forma de gobierno de Bolivia. ¿Con qué firmeza aprueba o desaprueba usted que estas personas puedan postularse para cargos públicos?
- D4. ¿Con qué firmeza aprueba o desaprueba usted que estas personas salgan en la televisión para dar un discurso?

3. Results

Mean satisfaction with democracy by ethnic identity, 2010 (0 to 100 scale)

Group	Mean	Linearized std.	95% Confidence	
		error	Interval	
Quechua	59.8	0.932	58.0	61.7
Aymara	61.7	1.049	59.6	63.7
Other indigenous	50.9	1.608	47.7	54.1
None (No	51.9	1.218	49.5	54.3
indigenous)				

Predictors of system support, 2000 and 2010 (Linear regression)

	2000		2010	
	Coefficient	t	Coefficient	t
Indigenous (racial self-ID)	-4.89**	-3.56	5.77**	5.54
Income	0.54	1.71	-0.13	-0.59
Education	-0.11	-1.21	0.04	0.44
Gender (female)	-1.61*	-2.2	0.82	1.13
Age	-0.06*	-2.12	0.01	0.37
N/R square	2631	.009	2414	.014

^{*} p < .05; **p < .01

Predictors of tolerance, 2004 and 2010 (Linear regression)

	2004		2010	
	Coefficient	t	Coefficient	t
Indigenous (cultural				
self-ID)	2.20*	2.32	-6.31**	-6.35
Government				
approval	-0.08**	-3.38	-0.13**	-5.55
System support	0.11**	4.94	0.01	0.51
Income	-0.02	-0.17	0.04	0.4
Education	0.13	0.34	-0.10	-0.36
Gender (female)	-1.81*	-2.06	-1.10	-1.24
Age	-0.08**	-2.86	-0.10**	-3.19
N/R square	2605	.020	2325	.049

^{*} p < .05; **p < .01

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel E. Moreno Morales is Social Research Coordinator at Ciudadanía, Comunidad de Estudios Sociales y Acción Pública, (www.ciudadaniabolivia.org) a non-profit research organization in Cochabamba, Bolivia. He is currently the national coordinator of the LAPOP project in Bolivia. His areas of expertise include, among others, political culture, public opinion, ethnic identities, and democratic governance. Among his publications are the following: Cultura política la democracia en Bolivia, 2010 (Coordinator), (Cochabamba: LAPOP - Ciudadanía, 2010), Series edited by Mitchell Seligson; "La Marcha Nuestra de Cada Día. Normalización de la protesta en Bolivia" in Observatorio de la Cultura Política (Ed.) Cultura Política en Tiempos de Cambio. Institucionalidad Conflicto y Región en Bolivia, LAPOP Ciudadanía. (Cochabamba, "Territorialidad, política y reforma constitucional en Bolivia" (with Gonzalo Vargas) in PIEB (Ed.) Poder y Cambio en Bolivia, 2003-2007, (La Paz: PIEB, 2009); Cultura política de la democracia en Bolivia, 2008 (Coordinator), (Cochabamba, LAPOP - Ciudadanía, 2009), Series edited by Mitchell Seligson; "National Political Community and Ethnicity: Evidence from two Latin American Countries," in Nationalism and Ethnic Politics 14.2 (2008); "National Identity and Ethnic Minorities in the Americas" in Mitchell Seligson (Ed.) Challenges to democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean: Evidence from the AmericasBarometer 2006 (Nashville, TN: LAPOP, 2007); Auditoría de la democracia. Ecuador 2006 (co-author with Mitchell Seligson, Juan Carlos Donoso, Vivian Schwarz, y Diana Orcés), (Quito: LAPOP - USAID); Auditoría de la democracia. Informe Bolivia 2006 (co-author with Mitchell Selisgon, Vivian Schwarz, Juan Carlos Donoso, Diana Orcés, Abby Córdova), (Cochabamba: LAPOP – Ciudadanía); La cultura política de los bolivianos. Aproximaciones cuantitativas (co-editor con

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