

Explaining Attitudes toward Economic Integration: The Conditional Impact of National-Level Perceptions*

Abstract: To what extent are individuals' attitudes toward economic integration shaped by their perceptions of integration's impact on the national economy? In this paper, I advance a conditional argument whereby individuals who perceive the economy as performing well are more likely to hold favorable attitudes toward integration than those who perceive the economy as performing poorly, but the impact of these perceptions will be stronger among individuals who have greater exposure to information about integration's national-level impact; building upon recent work, I focus my analysis on information imparted by mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact. I explore these dynamics in the context of the economic integration of Latin America by analyzing Latinobarometer survey data from 2004-2010. Consistent with expectations, I find evidence of a robust positive relationship between so-called "national-level" perceptions and integration attitudes. However, since most individuals have little exposure to information on integration's impact on the economy, these perceptions have a relatively small impact on integration attitudes among the public at large. These findings add nuance to scholars' understanding of the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes, and have important implications for ongoing research on the link between attitudes, policy and electoral outcomes, and issue framing in the area of integration.

Jason I. McMann
Princeton University
Department of Politics

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Explaining Attitudes toward Economic Integration: The Conditional Impact of National-Level Perceptions

Introduction

To what extent are individuals' attitudes toward economic integration shaped by their perceptions of integration's impact on the national economy?¹ Much of the existing literature argues that integration attitudes depend to varying degrees on the perceived link between integration and individuals' material well-being.² Recently, however, some scholars have begun to advance an alternative, "national-level" approach. Most notable is a well-known paper on trade policy attitudes by Mansfield and Mutz in which the authors find support for the argument that trade policy attitudes are strongly shaped by individuals' perceptions of trade's impact on the nation as a whole.³ Drawing upon earlier work by Sears and Funk, Mansfield and Mutz argue that individuals form trade policy attitudes on the basis of so-called "collective" or "national-level" perceptions⁴ because it is sometimes hard to link trade policy to their personal financial situation.⁵

In general, Sears and Funk argue that this difficulty often arises when a policy's impact on individuals' material well-being is perceived as unclear or of questionable magnitude.⁶ In the area of trade policy, recent work by Guisinger suggests one reason why this may be the case (at least in the U.S.): trade policy's relatively low salience among most individuals, including those

¹ I define economic integration as the purposeful removal and/or harmonization of barriers to the flow of goods, services, and capital across national boundaries. Examples of integration include changes in tariff and non-tariff barriers and the lifting of capital account and other investment restrictions, but exclude changes in cross-border flows that arise independent of policy changes, such as those due to an exogenous decline in transportation costs. I use the term "attitudes" rather than "preferences" to connote the idea that attitudes are more susceptible to short-term fluctuations, whereas preferences are relatively more fixed.

² See, for example, Balistreri (1997); O'Rourke et al. (2001); Scheve and Slaughter (2004); Baker (2005); Mayda and Rodrik (2005); Pandya (2010); Walter (2010); and Hicks et al. (working paper). See Mansfield and Mutz (2009) for a review. See Sears and Funk (1990, 248) for a definition of "material well-being."

³ See Mansfield and Mutz (2009). International trade is the export and import of goods and services across national borders. See OECD (2001).

⁴ I use the term "national-level perceptions" to refer to perceptions that are formed on the basis of national-level information; the latter term refers to information that describes integration's impact on the national economy.

⁵ See Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 432). I discuss the underlying mechanism in more detail in the following sections.

⁶ See Sears and Funk (1990, 255-56). See also Kinder and Kiewiet (1981); see Kramer (1983) for a critique.

whose income would be directly affected by proposed trade policy changes, may attenuate the clarity and magnitude of the perceived link between trade policy and individuals' material well-being.⁷ However, this insight also sounds a cautionary note for scholars seeking to explain integration attitudes on the basis of national-level perceptions. In particular, if integration is a low-salience issue among the public at large, many individuals may also perceive a weak link between integration and national economic well-being.⁸ In such a scenario, national-level perceptions would primarily shape integration attitudes among a relatively narrow subset of individuals for whom integration is more salient, and who therefore perceive a stronger link between integration and the national economy. Yet is this actually the case?

In this paper, I attempt to resolve this puzzle by examining the degree to which individuals form integration attitudes based on their perceptions of national economic performance, and by assessing whether the strength of this relationship is mediated by variation in individuals' exposure to information about integration's national-level impact⁹; building upon recent work, I focus my analysis on information imparted by mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact.¹⁰ In doing so, I add further nuance to Mansfield and Mutz's analysis of the link between integration attitudes and national-level perceptions, while contributing to ongoing debates on the impact of integration attitudes on policy and electoral outcomes,¹¹ and issue framing in the area of integration.¹² I focus my empirical analysis on the

⁷ Guisinger (2009, 533) focuses on the implementation of DR-CAFTA, and defines salience in terms of individuals' knowledge of trade policy, the perceived importance of trade policy among voters, and the extent to which voters hold politicians accountable for trade policy-related issues. I focus on the first two components in this paper.

⁸ I use the terms national well-being, national economic performance, and economic growth interchangeably throughout this paper.

⁹ In the following section, I define exposure along two dimensions: the amount of information to which individuals are exposed; and the frequency with which they encounter such information.

¹⁰ Mansfield and Mutz (2009) identify these channels of information transmission as two key sources of national-level information. See also Mutz (1992, 1994; and 1998).

¹¹ See Kono (2008); Baker (2009); Naoi (2009); Jensen and Malesky (2010); Baker and Greene (2011); Feinberg et al. (2011); and Hicks et al. (working paper).

economic integration of Latin America, a region whose national markets for goods, services, and capital are increasingly linked by intra-regional integration agreements, such as the Andean Community (CAN), the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), as well as by inter-regional integration agreements such as the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA).¹³ Studying the determinants of integration attitudes in this context presents a novel opportunity to test national-level mechanisms of attitude formation outside of the U.S., and complements a growing body of micro-level research on integration attitudes in Latin America.¹⁴

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, I review recent work on integration attitudes and advance two hypotheses linking these attitudes to perceptions of national economic performance. In particular, I argue that individuals who perceive the economy as performing well are more likely to hold favorable attitudes toward integration than those who perceive the economy as performing poorly, but that the impact of these perceptions on integration attitudes will be stronger among individuals who have greater exposure to information about integration's national-level impact, and therefore possess a stronger cause-and-effect awareness of the link between integration and the national economy.¹⁵ In the next section, I provide evidence of a robust positive relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes by analyzing a series of nationally representative public opinion surveys conducted by the Latinobarometer Corporation between 2006 and 2010.¹⁶ On the basis of this

¹² See Scheve and Slaughter (2001a); Hiscox (2006); and Murillo et al. (forthcoming). Note that the theory I advance does not address individuals' incentives to become informed, although the empirical analysis does address these incentives tangentially. I discuss this issue in greater detail in the conclusion

¹³ A list of member-countries for each agreement can be found in the online appendix. I discuss several agreements in greater detail in following sections.

¹⁴ See Seligson (1999); Baker (2003, 2009; and 2011); Pandya (2010); Murillo et al. (forthcoming); and Hicks et al. (working paper).

¹⁵ I describe "cause-and-effect awareness" in greater detail in the following section.

¹⁶ See Latinobarometer Corporation (multiple years).

finding, I then assess the informational aspect of the relationship between integration attitudes and national-level perceptions. Using both descriptive and regression analysis, I provide strong evidence of the hypothesized conditional relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes, offering an important qualification to scholars' understanding of national-level mechanisms of attitude formation in the area of integration. Consistent with Mansfield and Mutz, I find that national-level perceptions do influence integration attitudes; however, since most individuals have little exposure to information on integration's national-level impact, these perceptions have a relatively small impact on integration attitudes among the population at large. In the final section, I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for future research with an emphasis on policy and electoral change and issue framing.

The Determinants of Integration Attitudes

Over the past several decades, scholars have devoted substantial attention to the determinants of integration attitudes: a large literature already exists on attitudes toward trade, and has recently been complemented by a nascent literature on attitudes toward foreign direct investment (FDI).¹⁷ Understanding the sources of these attitudes is important for at least two reasons. First, a growing number of studies suggest that mass attitudes toward integration (and trade in particular) may sometimes influence policy and electoral outcomes on the basis of individual-level concerns.¹⁸ In this regard, studying the relationship between integration attitudes and national-level perceptions may help pave the way for future studies linking attitudes to outcomes on the basis of national-level concerns. Second, recent work by Hiscox, Murillo et

¹⁷ See below for discussion. A parallel literature has also developed on immigration attitudes. See, for example, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007); and Margalit et al. (2010). However, little survey data research appears to have been conducted on attitudes toward portfolio capital, despite Frieden's (1991) well-known theoretical framework. For this reason, I limit my analysis to trade and FDI in the discussion that follows.

¹⁸ See Kono (2008); Baker (2009); Baker and Greene (2011); and Feinberg et al. (2011). Less work has been done linking these outcomes to attitudes toward FDI and integration more broadly.

al., and Scheve and Slaughter demonstrates that issue framing can have a sizeable impact on trade attitudes, but also suggests that individuals' sensitivity to issue framing is mediated by the prior information they possess on trade.¹⁹ Studying the impact of national-level perceptions on integration attitudes and the nature of the information that individuals are exposed to may therefore provide insight into individuals' susceptibility to issue framing by politicians seeking to portray integration's national-level impact in a way that conflicts with individuals' Until recently, much of the existing work on these issues has nevertheless sought to explain integration attitudes primarily in terms of material self-interest. Most prominent are explanations that rely on economic models of integration's expected distributional impact. With regard to trade, the Heckscher-Ohlin model, in conjunction with the Stolper-Samuelson theorem,²⁰ predicts that trade will benefit owners of the relatively abundant factor of production and producers who utilize that factor intensively.²¹ By contrast, the specific factors model predicts that trade attitudes will depend upon individuals' industry of employment, based on the assumption that factors are not mobile across sectors in the short-run.²² In both cases, individuals who gain from trade should support it, while those who lose should not.²³ With regard to FDI, recent work has

¹⁹ See Scheve and Slaughter (2001a); Hiscox (2006); and Murillo et al. (forthcoming).

²⁰ Stolper and Samuelson (1941).

²¹ For example, in industrialized countries like the U.S. and France, trade benefits high-skilled labor and harms low-skilled labor, whereas trade has the opposite effect in developing countries. Scholars have produced a substantial amount of evidence in support of this approach in both U.S. and time series cross-sectional studies. See, for example, Balistreri (1997, 1394-95); O'Rourke et al. (2001, 172-77); Scheve and Slaughter (2001b, 276-77, 281-83); Baker (2005, 929-32, 934); Mayda and Rodrik (2005, 1407-09); and Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006, 484-85).

²² For example, trade benefits individuals employed in industries that produce primarily for foreign markets and harms individuals employed in industries that produce primarily for domestic markets and therefore face foreign competition for domestic market share. Scholars have found less support for this approach, although Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 428-29) note that this may be due to limited data availability on survey respondents' industry of employment. See, for example, Scheve and Slaughter (2001b, 276-77, 281-83); Mayda and Rodrik (2005, 1410-12); and Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 436-37, 442-48).

²³ Some scholars have also explored arguments whereby richer individuals are expected to support trade more. However, empirical findings have been mixed and arguments related to income independent of skill-based explanations are somewhat underspecified. See Balistreri (1997, 13); Baker (2005, 929-32); Mayda and Rodrik (2005, 1403-04); Burgoon and Hiscox (2008, 6-7); and Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 442-45). Scheve and Slaughter (2001a, 17-19) and Burgoon and Hiscox (2008, 7-8, 21-22) have also provided evidence that individuals who think that trade increases their job security or future job prospects are more likely to support trade.

proceeded from the relatively strong empirical finding that foreign firms operating in the host market pay higher wages than comparable domestic firms.²⁴ Pandya extends this mechanism by arguing that FDI raises the wages of high-skilled workers relative to those of low-skilled workers since foreign firms are “more technologically advanced and require more skilled labor than equivalent local firms.”²⁵ This motivates high-skilled labor to support FDI.

A second class of explanations based on material self-interest examines the relationship between integration attitudes and consumption.²⁶ With regard to trade, Baker and Scheve and Slaughter suggest that individuals may support trade because it lowers the price of imported goods relative to their domestic market price under autarky.²⁷ With regard to FDI, Pandya similarly argues that by increasing competition between domestic and foreign firms in the host market, FDI may increase domestic firms’ productivity, thereby lowering the prices of the goods they produce.²⁸

Some scholars have nevertheless begun to question the primacy of individual-level mechanisms in explaining integration attitudes by demonstrating the potential importance of alternative national-level mechanisms of attitude formation. Hainmueller and Hiscox, for example, offer evidence that economic literacy acquired through college-level education is a more important driver of trade attitudes than material self-interest.²⁹ More broadly, Mansfield and Mutz argue that individuals may form trade policy attitudes based on various types of

²⁴ See Harrison (1996, 164); Graham (2000, 82-83); Görg and Greenway (2001, 24-25); Lipsey (2002, 20-21); and Brown et al. (2003, 37). The “host market” represents the market in which a foreign firm invests.

²⁵ See Pandya (2010, 390).

²⁶ I view these explanations as individual-level mechanisms because of consumption’s direct pocketbook impact.

²⁷ See Scheve and Slaughter (2001a); and Baker (2003, 2009; and 2011).

²⁸ Pandya (2010, 394).

²⁹ In particular, college-level education provides individuals with greater economic literacy in terms of understanding the net national welfare gains arising from trade. See Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006, 470). Burgoon and Hiscox (2008); and Mansfield and Mutz (2009) offer some additional support.

information about trade's impact on the nation as a whole.³⁰ Relatedly, Guisinger's analysis suggests that many individuals may lack sufficient information on trade policy's distributional consequences to evaluate it based on material self-interest due to its low salience in the eyes of U.S. voters.³¹

As the most outspoken advocates of a national-level approach to attitude formation, Mansfield and Mutz provide convincing evidence that individuals who believe that trade has a positive impact on the nation are more likely to support more liberal trade policy.³² The mechanism underlying this argument is as follows: on the basis of national-level information acquired via two main sources – mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact – individuals perceive that trade has an impact on the national economy or, in the U.S. case, on many Americans.³³ Individuals who perceive this impact in a positive light are more

³⁰ See Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 431-33, 450-51). It is worth noting that Mansfield and Mutz (2009) and numerous other scholars cited previously have also explored various non-economic determinants of integration attitudes, such as partisanship and nationalism. I control for these and other variables in the empirical analysis, but do not discuss them here due to space considerations.

³¹ See Guisinger (2009). These findings are consistent with foundational work by Downs (1957) and Zaller (1992) in the American context suggesting that individuals spend little time becoming informed about complex issues and policies and retain little information about these issues and policies at any given time.

³² Mansfield and Mutz (2009).

³³ In earlier work, Mutz explains the reasons for which mass media coverage and interpersonal contact facilitate a link between national-level perceptions and attitudes toward government policy. With regard to the former, Mutz (1992, 503) argues that mass media coverage of economic issues is more likely to highlight a given policy's national-level impact than its pocketbook impact. Relatedly, Mutz (1994, 693-95) argues that mass media may strengthen the impact of national-level perceptions on attitude formation by framing issues such as trade policy as "perceived collective problems" (rather than individual problems), and by facilitating the externalization of responsibility for a given policy's impact toward national-level policymakers. On the latter point, see also Mutz (1998, 110). With regard to the latter, Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 453) argue that individuals may form perceptions of trade's national-level impact via contact with friends, family members, and others who have been personally affected by trade; this, in turn, motivates individuals to form attitudes based on national-level perceptions, even if they have limited personal experience with the issue at hand. On this point, see also Mutz (1998, 67). Importantly, it is also possible that interpersonal contact provides individuals with national-level information in another sense: acquaintances who pay relatively more attention to mass media coverage of integration may impart the content of that media coverage to those around them. I privilege this interpretation in the sections that follow. See Ansolabehere et al. (2011) for an example of the former interpretation in the context of U.S. unemployment rates.

likely to express support for more liberal trade policy, while those who perceive it in a negative light are less likely to do so.³⁴

Why do some individuals perceive trade's national-level impact positively while others hold the opposite view? Although Mansfield and Mutz do not directly address this issue, one relatively straightforward mechanism is that individuals form attitudes on the basis of the factual information – i.e. economic facts and figures – to which they are exposed.³⁵ For example, individuals who are exposed to information indicating that national economic performance has improved due to a 10% increase in net exports over a certain time period may adopt pro-trade attitudes; by contrast, individuals who are exposed to information painting trade's national-level impact in a negative light due to a growing trade deficit may adopt anti-trade attitudes.³⁶ Information acquired via interpersonal contact may produce similar effects in situations where this information reflects mass media coverage of trade's national-level impact or frames trade as a perceived collective problem.³⁷ Yet recent work by Guisinger and others suggests that this mechanism is somewhat unlikely to operate in the area of trade for the simple reason that many individuals appear to pay very little attention trade policy, and may therefore have difficulty recalling the factual content of the information (either past or present) to which they have been exposed.³⁸

³⁴ In this sense, the mechanism is “directional.” See Mutz (1998, 69).

³⁵ Importantly, other scholars who examine the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes are relatively atheoretic with respect to the role of information. For example, Edwards (2006) examines the extent to which attitudes toward various cultural and economic aspects of globalization co-vary with individuals' prospective evaluations of the economy, but does not provide a theory that explains why this might occur. Seligson (1999, 149) reports similar findings, but does not specify a mechanism.

³⁶ See Hiscox (2006) on framing effects.

³⁷ See this paper, fn. 33.

³⁸ See especially Downs (1957); Zaller (1992); and Guisinger (2009). See also Burgoon and Hiscox (2008). I am indifferent about whether individuals form attitudes solely on the basis of the factual content of the most recent national-level information they have been exposed to, or average across a range of recent and past information.

An alternative mechanism (which I privilege here) centers not on individuals' recollection of the factual content of national-level information at a given point in time, but rather, on individuals' perceptions of a cause-and-effect relationship between trade and national well-being. In particular, both mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact may expose individuals to a variety of information highlighting a cause-and-effect link between trade and national economic performance. Examples of such information include mass media reports that describe trade's contribution to gross domestic product (by way of changes in net exports) or the impact of specific trade policies (such as preferential trade agreements) on national employment; similar information may be imparted via interpersonal contact with friends, family, and co-workers. In this manner, mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact not only convey economic facts and figures about trade (which may be easily forgotten), but can also instill individuals with a more general and potentially lasting awareness that trade – or integration more broadly – exerts an impact on national economic performance. Following Sears and Funk, this, in turn, may strengthen the perceived clarity and magnitude of the link between the two variables.³⁹

Importantly, this mechanism implies that individuals may form attitudes toward integration on the basis of cause-and-effect awareness even when they cannot recall (or simply lack) economic facts about integration's national-level impact at a given point in time.⁴⁰ For example, on the basis of information conveyed via mass media coverage of economic issues or interpersonal contact, most Americans are probably aware that trade with other countries affects U.S. economic performance in some way. However, these same individuals may be somewhat less able to recall factual information about whether trade's net national-level impact – by way of

³⁹ Sears and Funk (1990).

⁴⁰ The descriptive evidence I present broadly supports this claim in the case of Latin America.

its contribution to gross domestic product, for example – is positive or negative at a given point in time. In such a scenario, these individuals may nevertheless infer trade’s national-level impact from their perceptions of the overall state of the U.S. economy, by reasoning (on the basis of cause-and-effect awareness) that if the economy is performing well, trade’s national-level impact must be positive. Thus, individuals who perceive the U.S. economy as performing well may ascribe a positive national-level impact to trade on the basis of this inference, whereas individuals who perceive the U.S. economy as performing poorly may view trade in a more negative light.

Burgoon and Hiscox highlight the plausibility of this approach to attitude formation in their analysis of the gender divide in trade policy attitudes, noting that individuals may possess an understanding of cause-and-effect relationships while simultaneously exhibiting poor knowledge of economic facts.⁴¹ This interpretation also aligns nicely with Zaller’s argument that in general, “individuals do not take the time to canvass their minds for all relevant thoughts” when forming attitudes about a given issue. Rather, they “[average] across the considerations that are immediately salient or accessible to them.”⁴² To the extent that individuals find it easier to recall a cause-and-effect awareness than economic facts and figures about integration, the former may be an especially important determinant of integration attitudes (as the empirical evidence I present in the following section suggests).

In the context of integration more broadly, the cause-and-effect mechanism described above suggests that attitudes toward integration will depend substantially on whether individuals perceive the national economy as performing well or poorly.⁴³ Thus, individuals who hold

⁴¹ Burgoon and Hiscox (2008, 12-13).

⁴² Zaller (1992, 49).

⁴³ Although the previous discussion is couched primarily in terms of trade, there is no reason to believe that the mechanism I advance would not apply equally well to FDI or integration more broadly.

positive perceptions of national economic performance will be more likely to view integration in a favorable light than individuals who hold negative perceptions of national economic performance.⁴⁴ Yet how much variation exists in the strength of the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes among different groups of individuals? Addressing this question is particularly important in light of research on American political behavior suggesting that individuals may vary substantially in their exposure to political and economic information, such as information on integration's national-level impact in the context of this study. For example, with regard to general levels of political awareness among U.S. voters, Zaller demonstrates that "there is high variance in political awareness around a generally low mean."⁴⁵ Walstad and Rebeck make a similar point, critiquing the assumption that individuals are equally informed about economic issues⁴⁶; work by Guisinger and Mutz raises similar concerns.⁴⁷

Concerns such as these have important implications for scholars' understanding of national-level mechanisms of attitude formation in that their impact may be mediated by variation in individuals' exposure to national-level information on integration along two dimensions: the amount of information to which individuals are exposed; and the frequency with which they encounter such information. On the one hand, individuals who pay substantial attention to mass media coverage of economic issues and engage in frequent conversations with

⁴⁴ An alternative mechanism which would nevertheless yield identical predictions is that mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact are more likely to present economic facts that portray trade's national-level impact in a positive (negative) light when the economy is performing well (poorly); thus, individuals who perceive the economy as performing well (poorly) may be more likely to view integration in a positive (negative) light, but do so on the basis of economic facts rather than cause-and-effect awareness. Unfortunately, the data at hand do not enable me to directly distinguish between these mechanisms. I nevertheless privilege the latter mechanism because it requires no assumptions about the content of media coverage and interpersonal contact during good and bad times.

⁴⁵ See Zaller (1992, 18). Zaller (Ibid., 21) defines political awareness as "the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics *and* understands what he or she has encountered" (emphasis in original).

⁴⁶ Walstad and Rebeck (2002, 922).

⁴⁷ See Mutz (1998, 167, 216) and Guisinger (2009, 541-42).

friends or family about issues related to the economy may encounter considerable information linking integration to national economic performance, and may also be exposed to such information more frequently; this, in turn, may promote greater awareness of the cause-and-effect relationship between integration and the economy. For these individuals, the perceived clarity and magnitude of the link between national economic well-being and integration may therefore be relatively strong. On the other hand, individuals who pay very little attention to media coverage of economic issues and engage in conversations about the economy relatively infrequently are likely exposed to less information linking integration to national economic performance, and may also encounter such information less often. Thus, for these individuals, the perceived clarity and magnitude of the link between national economic well-being and integration may be relatively weak.⁴⁸ To the extent that these dynamics manifest themselves empirically, the assumption that all individuals have similar levels of exposure to national-level information on integration is invalid, and scholars should adopt a more conditional understanding of the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes.⁴⁹

On the whole, these dynamics have received inadequate attention in existing work, but are worth exploring further to the extent that additional analysis will advance scholars' understanding of national-level mechanisms of attitude formation. There are two reasons to believe this is the case. First, existing work does not fully explore the reasons for which individuals believe that integration has a positive or negative national-level impact. To the

⁴⁸ Mutz (1998, 167), for example, finds some evidence of a conditional effect of national-level perceptions in her analysis of Americans' attitudes toward unemployment.

⁴⁹ A competing prediction is that individuals who have greater exposure to information on integration's national-level impact have less need to form attitudes on the basis of cause-and-effect awareness, as they are more easily able to recall economic facts about integration's impact. This, in turn, would potentially weaken the hypothesized relationship between perceptions of national economic performance and integration attitudes on the basis of cause-and-effect awareness. However, the empirical findings I present do not support this interpretation, as the hypothesized link between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes is in fact stronger among more informed individuals.

extent that integration attitudes co-vary with perceptions of national economic performance as I suggest above, further analysis can help to identify the content and origins of the information that individuals rely on to establish this relationship. Second, if individuals do vary substantially in their exposure to national-level information, further analysis can help to identify the subset of individuals for whom national level-perceptions are most likely to exert a large (or small) impact on integration attitudes, and can also shed light on the depth of exposure to national-level information among the public at large. This, in turn, has implications for the extent to which integration attitudes formed on the basis of national-level perceptions are likely to influence policy and electoral outcomes, as well as individuals' susceptibility to issue framing.

In the following section, I explore these issues in greater detail by testing two hypotheses that emerge from the above discussion:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who perceive the national economy as performing well are more likely to hold favorable attitudes toward integration than those who view the economy as performing poorly.

Hypothesis 2: The link between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes will be stronger among individuals who have greater exposure to information about integration's national-level impact.

Using several discrete years of Latinobarometer survey data, I first provide evidence that national-level perceptions have a statistically significant but relatively small practical impact on integration attitudes among the population at large. I subsequently investigate the conditional nature of the relationship between these variables, demonstrating that the impact of national-level perceptions is mediated by variation in individuals' exposure to national-level information, whether conveyed by mass media coverage of economic issues or interpersonal contact.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Henceforth, I use the term "information" to encompass both economic facts and cause-and-effect awareness.

The Impact of National-Level Perceptions on Integration Attitudes

Recent surveys conducted by the Latinobarometer Corporation offer an excellent opportunity to explore the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes in greater empirical detail. The Latinobarometer is relatively unique among comparable cross-country surveys due to the frequent inclusion of questions on trade, FDI, and economic integration more broadly, sometimes within the same year. The data I employ come from nationally representative surveys conducted in 18 Latin American countries⁵¹ between 2004 and 2010, covering roughly 22,000 respondents per year.⁵² These years of survey data are particularly valuable in that they include a range of questions that solicit respondents' attitudes toward various aspects of integration (as described in greater detail below).⁵³

Because the data I employ are not panel data, inferences cannot be drawn across years, and the framing of some questions in the context of "regional" economic integration may limit the external validity of the findings if attitudes toward regional integration differ from integration attitudes more broadly.⁵⁴ Testing the hypotheses using the Latinobarometer data is nevertheless worthwhile for the reasons described above, as well as for at least two additional reasons. First, many Latin American countries have participated in numerous, often overlapping attempts at regional integration, suggesting that integration may be a more salient issue among Latin Americans than among individuals residing in areas of the world where multilateral integration attempts have been less prevalent historically. In Latin America, individuals may therefore be

⁵¹ For a complete list of countries, see the online appendix.

⁵² Comparable surveys that do not include such questions on a routine basis include the Afrobarometer, the Arab Barometer, the East Asia and Asian Barometers, the Eurobarometer, the European Values Survey, the Latin American Public Opinion Project's Americas Barometer, and the World Values Survey.

⁵³ Some questions on trade, FDI, and integration also appear in earlier years of the survey, but the data in those years are not nationally representative. See online appendix for details.

⁵⁴ In the data at hand, regional integration describes integration among Latin American countries, but may include the U.S. as well (as in the cases of DR-CAFTA and the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)).

more likely to encounter information describing how integration affects the economy.⁵⁵ To the extent that this is true, testing the hypotheses in this setting can help to identify the upper bound of national-level perceptions' impact on integration attitudes. Second, many recent studies of integration attitudes rely exclusively on U.S. survey data. Testing the hypotheses using the Latinobarometer data thus offers a unique opportunity to explore the determinants of integration attitudes outside of the U.S.

I begin by testing the relationship between perceptions of national economic performance and integration attitudes. To do so, I construct a series of binary dependent variables that measure respondents' attitudes toward three different aspects of integration. The first set of dependent variables is coded from questions in the 2006 survey that solicit attitudes about integration's effects, asking individuals to assess the impact of integration agreements on the economic development of their country and quality of life based on what they know or have heard about the issue. The second set of dependent variables is coded from questions appearing in the 2006-2008 surveys that ask individuals about their willingness to support two specific aspects of regional integration⁵⁶: the reciprocal removal of import and export tariffs, and the reciprocal removal of restrictions on foreign investment.⁵⁷ The third set of dependent variables is coded from questions that appear in the 2008-2010 surveys, and ask individuals how much they support the economic integration of Latin America, without reference to a specific aspect of integration. Taken together, these questions afford a unique opportunity to assess individuals' attitudes toward various aspects of integration. Moreover, the questions I employ are all framed

⁵⁵ The descriptive evidence I present in subsequent section speaks to this issue.

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⁵⁷ The survey question wording, which refers only to "foreign investment," may encompass both portfolio and foreign direct investment.

in neutral terms, meaning that they do not qualify integration's potential impact; question wording should therefore have little impact on individuals' responses.⁵⁸

To test *Hypothesis 1*, I create an ordinal independent variable (*perceptions: national*) based on individuals' responses to a survey question that asks them to evaluate the current economic situation of their country relative to the situation that prevailed 12 months ago.⁵⁹ Response categories include "much better," "somewhat better," "somewhat worse," and "much worse," and the question is present in all years of survey data I examine with the exception of 2007.⁶⁰ I also create a series of control variables to account for the impact of other potential determinants of integration attitudes identified in earlier studies. In particular, existing work has found economic literacy to be an important determinant of attitudes in that individuals with college-level economics training are more supportive of integration. To control for this effect, I employ a commonly-used binary measure of education (*education level: binary*) that indicates whether an individual has completed at least some college-level education.⁶¹ To control for pocketbook concerns,⁶² I construct an ordinal variable (*perceptions: individual*) based on individuals' responses to a survey question asking them to evaluate their personal economic

⁵⁸ Complete question wording for all variables and summary statistics by year can be found in the online appendix.

⁵⁹ Retrospective evaluations are most in line with the theory because they provide individuals with a reference timeframe over which to evaluate integration's impact, and because I expect individuals to form attitudes on the basis of information about integration and the economy acquired in the recent past. Using an alternative variable that does not make reference to the past 12 months yields roughly identical results.

⁶⁰ For 2007, I rely on respondents' answers to an alternative question asking them to evaluate their country's current economic situation, without making reference to the past 12 months.

⁶¹ Numerous studies (see Mansfield and Mutz (2009) for a good overview) have highlighted the issues that arise when using educational attainment as a proxy variable for economic literacy: since education level is correlated with skill in the workplace, it is unclear whether educational attainment is best viewed as a measure of economic literacy, workplace skill, or more cosmopolitan attitudes. In the absence of a more fine-grained measure, I rely on a binary measure of educational attainment as an indicator of economic literacy; I use an ordinal measure of educational attainment (*education: level*) to try to capture the impact of skill level more directly in a series of robustness checks. Due to survey data limitations, it is not possible to identify respondents' industry of employment or determine if they work in the nontradables sector.

⁶² Mansfield and Mutz (2009), for example, find that individuals who think that trade benefits their family are more likely to support trade.

situation relative to their situation 12 months ago.⁶³ To control for party affiliation, I create an ordinal variable (*partisanship*) based on respondents' answers to a question asking them to situate themselves on a left-right political scale.⁶⁴ Recent work has also found that beliefs about cultural superiority may influence integration attitudes.⁶⁵ To capture this effect, I create an ordinal variable (*nationalism*) based on individuals responses to a question asking them how proud they are of their country, or whether they believe their country is better than others.⁶⁶ Finally, I include binary variables indicating individuals' employment status (*unemployed*) and sex.⁶⁷

Empirical Analysis

To test the first hypothesis, I estimate a series of probit models for each of the dependent variables described above. I include country fixed effects in all models to capture the potential impact of time-invariant country-specific characteristics, and cluster standard errors by country.⁶⁸

Table 1 reports the baseline regression results.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Consistent with expectations, the results reported in Table 1 indicate that perceptions of national economic performance have a positive and statistically significant impact on integration attitudes across all three categories of dependent variables, with the exception of the 2007

⁶³ This question was not included in the 2007 survey. As a result, I employ respondents' answers to a question asking if their salary and that of their family satisfactorily meets their needs.

⁶⁴ More right-leaning individuals are sometimes found to be more supportive of trade and FDI. See, for example, Mayda and Rodrik (2005); Mansfield and Mutz (2009); and Pandya (2010).

⁶⁵ For example, Mansfield and Mutz (2009) find that individuals who view their country as culturally superior are less likely to support integration.

⁶⁶ Question wording varies by year. See codebook in the online appendix for details.

⁶⁷ Unemployed individuals and women are often less supportive of integration. See, for example, Mansfield and Mutz (2009); and Pandya (2010).

⁶⁸ To avoid the incidental parameters problem, for each regression I drop any countries in which the value of the dependent variable is the same for all individuals.

models.⁶⁹ Pocketbook concerns and education level generally have the expected sign, but fail to attain conventional levels of statistical significance for several models. Partisanship mostly has the correct sign, but is only sometimes significant, while nationalism has a positive sign (contrasting sharply with most findings in existing work), but is always significant. Interestingly, whether an individual is unemployed has little consistent impact on integration attitudes. Finally, sex has the expected sign in most models, but is sometimes insignificant.

To test the robustness of these results, I rerun the baseline models with an alternative, ordinal measure of education that may be a better proxy for skill level; I also rerun all baseline models as ordered probit. All of the national-level perceptions results are robust to these changes.⁷⁰ As another test, I run a series of extended models which include additional control variables that have been found to predict integration attitudes in some studies. In particular, to capture the effects of cosmopolitanism,⁷¹ I create a binary variable (*cosmopolitanism*) that measures individuals' willingness to live abroad. To capture the effects of xenophobia,⁷² I create a binary variable (*xenophobia*) that asks individuals how much trust they have in a foreigner. I also create a binary variable (*public employee*) that measures whether individuals work in a

⁶⁹ I discuss potential reasons why this may be the case below.

⁷⁰ See online appendix for complete results using *education: level*. Importantly, Fordham and Kleinberg (2012) highlight the potential for reverse causality in studies such as those conducted by Mansfield and Mutz (2009); Sears and Funk (1990) raise similar concerns. In the context of this study, it seems unlikely that integration attitudes would shape individuals' perceptions about the national economy, as individuals' perceptions of national economic performance likely depend on many factors beyond their integration attitudes. Moreover, descriptive evidence presented in the following section suggests that most individuals pay very little attention to integration, further suggesting that integration attitudes are unlikely to drive national-level perceptions in any meaningful way. Additional evidence in support of this claim may be seen in the fact that when asked to identify the most important problems affecting their country, the most frequent economic issues cited by respondents between 2004 and 2010 – economic problems writ large, inflation and economic crises, poverty, social inequality, and unemployment (the leading response category across all years) – may all have numerous causes beyond integration. See online appendix for details.

⁷¹ Mansfield and Mutz (2009) find that more cosmopolitan individuals are more supportive of trade. The measure I employ is the best available within the Latinobarometer data.

⁷² Mansfield and Mutz (2009, 429) find that more xenophobic individuals are less supportive of trade.

public company or a state-owned firm.⁷³ Finally, I create a binary variable (*union member*) to control for the impact of attitudes arising from membership in a trade or labor union.⁷⁴ Data for these variables are only available for 2006 and 2007, but nevertheless offer some indication of the results' robustness to the inclusion of additional control variables.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Consistent with expectations, the extended results reported in Table 2 indicate that national-level perceptions continue to have a positive impact on integration attitudes across all models.

Although the variable misses conventional levels of statistical significance for the 2007 models, these results should be taken with a grain of salt for several reasons. In particular, the variable's failure to attain statistical significance does not appear to be driven by the inclusion of *cosmopolitanism* or *nationalism*, as it remains significant in the extended 2006 investment model, which also includes these variables. Nor do the results appear to be driven by the *xenophobia* or *union member* variables, as dropping either one or both of the variables produces no change in the sign or significance of the *perceptions: national* variable in the 2007 models. Finally, the use of an alternative measure of national-level perceptions in the 2007 models does not appear to be driving the results, as this measure attains conventional levels of statistical significance when used to replicate the entire baseline regression analysis. This suggests that unidentified factors not captured by the model may be driving the 2007 results, but should not be viewed as invalidating the overall regression findings.

Importantly, statistical significance does not necessarily imply practical significance in the regression models I employ. To that end, I calculate the average marginal effect of national-level perceptions on individuals' probability of expressing favorable attitudes toward integration

⁷³ Pandya (2010), for example, finds that public employees are somewhat less likely to support FDI.

⁷⁴ Balistreri (1997); O'Rourke et al. (2001); and Mansfield and Mutz (2009) find that union members are somewhat less supportive of trade.

for both the baseline and the extended models, holding all control variables at their means. For each model, I report the difference in the predicted probability of supporting integration for an individual who believes that the country's current economic situation is much better than it was 12 months ago (the most positive response category) relative to an individual who believes that the current economic situation is much worse (the most negative response category). Marginal effects for this variable, as well as for individual-level perceptions and nationalism can be found in the bottom rows of Tables 1 and 2.⁷⁵ Averaging across all baseline models, national-level perceptions have a moderate impact on integration attitudes: an individual who believes that the economy is performing very well is roughly 8.80% more likely to have a favorable view of integration than an individual who believes that the economy is performing very poorly; individual-level perceptions exert a somewhat smaller impact (7.70%), while nationalism exerts a somewhat larger impact (12.15%).⁷⁶ While these results are all statistically significant, the practical impact of national-level perceptions on integration attitudes is nevertheless relatively small, giving reason to question the extent to which national-level perceptions are an important predictor of integration attitudes among the population at large.⁷⁷ I address this issue in greater detail in the following section.

As a final robustness check, I use a series of survey questions from the 2009 Latinobarometer survey to assess the likelihood that the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes obtains on the basis of the mechanism I describe, and not on

⁷⁵ I only report marginal effects when the impact of the variable is statistically significant in the corresponding regression model. I report marginal effects for variables representing pocketbook concerns and nationalism because they are often found to be important predictors of attitudes in existing work.

⁷⁶ Corresponding marginal effects for the extended models are as follows: national-level perceptions (7.87%); individual-level perceptions (11.10%); and nationalism (12.38%).

⁷⁷ Interestingly, the onset of the financial crisis does not appear to have had a significant impact on integration attitudes, as average levels of support for investment (in 2006-2008) and integration more broadly (in 2008-2010) do not exhibit significant shifts in 2007 or 2008. See summary statistics in the online appendix for details.

the basis of an artificial statistical relationship between the two variables.⁷⁸ In particular, the 2009 survey asks individuals to evaluate several regional integration agreements, conditional upon them having heard or read about the agreement. Crucially, all respondents are asked to answer these questions, regardless of whether they live in a country that is a member of a particular agreement. MERCOSUR, for example, is a regional trade bloc whose member-countries include Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and (since roughly 2012) Venezuela.⁷⁹ If the mechanism I propose is valid, for individuals who know about MERCOSUR and reside in a MERCOSUR member-country, I expect to observe a positive and statistically significant relationship between national-level perceptions and attitudes toward MERCOSUR on the basis of evaluations of national economic performance under MERCOSUR. However, for individuals who know about MERCOSUR but do not reside in a MERCOSUR member-country, I expect to observe no relationship between national-level perceptions and attitudes toward MERCOSUR. Simply put, individuals cannot rely on evaluations of national economic performance to form attitudes toward integration agreements to which their country does not belong. Thus, if the mechanism I propose is valid, national-level perceptions should only be related to integration attitudes for individuals falling in the former category.

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

I test this hypothesis using respondents' evaluations of three specific integration agreements: the Andean Community, MERCOSUR, and UNASUR.⁸⁰ The Andean Community and MERCOSUR are customs unions established in 1969 and 1991, respectively. The former began the process of market integration in the early 1990s, as did the latter; UNASUR, a relatively new economic bloc, seeks to merge the Andean Community and MERCOSUR into a

⁷⁸ See Kramer (1983).

⁷⁹ See online appendix for details.

⁸⁰ The online appendix contains a list of member-countries for each agreement and links to agreement websites.

single economic union while undertaking deeper political integration among member-countries, based on UNASUR's 2008 constitutive treaty. Given UNASUR's relatively recent creation and its umbrella role with respect to the Andean Community and MERCOSUR, I expect individuals to be able to form attitudes toward all three agreements on the basis of recent evaluations of national economic performance despite the fact that the Andean Community and MERCOSUR went into effect much earlier. Moreover, unlike several other agreements for which data are available,⁸¹ these agreements have also required member-countries to implement changes in tariff levels or investment restrictions.⁸²

Table 3 reports the results. As expected, national-level perceptions are a statistically significant predictor of integration attitudes for "Informed Residents" – those who know about a given agreement *and* reside in a country that is a member of that agreement. The sole exception concerns informed non-residents of the Andean Community, for whom the variable narrowly attains a lower level of statistical significance. Thus, the evidence is not fully conclusive, but does suggest that the results reported in Tables 1 and 2 are likely to obtain on the basis of the mechanism I propose.⁸³

The Conditional Impact of National-Level Perceptions

The results reported above provide evidence of a relatively robust positive relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes among the population at large. However, to the extent that individuals vary in their exposure to information on integration's national-level impact – whether acquired via mass media coverage of economic issues or

⁸¹ See Table 5 for a list.

⁸² Although UNASUR has not yet implemented such changes, UNASUR aims to integrate two existing trade blocs which have both previously implemented the policy changes described above. Thus, I expect individuals to form attitudes toward UNASUR on the basis of prior experience with membership in the Andean Community or MERCOSUR. I include only full members of each agreement in the analysis that follows.

⁸³ Interestingly, the marginal impact of national-level perceptions is notably larger for informed residents relative to the baseline results, ranging from 21.70% to 33.50%.

interpersonal contact – the strength of the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes may vary as well, as predicted by *Hypothesis 2*. Yet is this actually the case? Descriptive and regression analysis of the Latinobarometer data suggest that the answer is yes.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

To that end, Table 4 presents a variety of descriptive evidence on variation in two broad aspects of individuals' exposure to information on integration's national-level impact via mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact: the amount of information to which most individuals are exposed; and the frequency with which they encounter such information.⁸⁴ With regard to mass media coverage of economic issues, individuals' responses to survey questions asking them how much attention they pay to news about the economy and international affairs on television are particularly illustrative.⁸⁵ Excluding individuals who do not own a television (roughly five percent of the sample), Table 4 indicates that a large majority of individuals – roughly 79% – pay little to no attention to television coverage of the economy. Similarly, roughly 57% of individuals pay little to no attention to television coverage of international affairs or foreign policy. To the extent that integration falls broadly under either of these two categories, the data suggest that most individuals are likely exposed to relatively little information on integration's national-level impact via mass media, and may also encounter such information on an infrequent basis.⁸⁶ Table 4 provides similar evidence with regard to interpersonal contact. In particular, roughly 71% of individuals spend almost no time, or no time

⁸⁴ The evidence addresses this issue somewhat indirectly, but comprises the most relevant evidence available.

⁸⁵ Focusing on television coverage is appropriate because the data indicate that more individuals (roughly 79-84%) inform themselves about politics via television than via any other media such as radio, newspapers, or the internet (see Table 4). Although mass media coverage of politics is clearly a broader category than mass media coverage of the economy and integration in particular, the data suggest at a minimum that most individuals are especially likely to be exposed to national-level information about integration via television reporting.

⁸⁶ The fact that television represents individuals' primary access point to information about politics suggests that most individuals are even less likely to be exposed to information about integration via other types of mass media.

at all, talking about politics with friends. To the extent that integration falls under the category of politics (even tangentially), the data suggest that most individuals likely encounter little information about integration via interpersonal contact with friends. The fact that roughly 48% of individuals (averaging across years) have little or no interest in international affairs or foreign policy lends further weight to this claim, and may also explain why many individuals pay so little attention to mass media coverage of these issues.

[INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Tables 5 and 6 offer a clearer picture of individuals' exposure to economic facts about integration (regardless of how this information is acquired), and also speaks more directly to the plausibility of the mechanism underlying *Hypothesis 1*. In particular, Table 5 reports individuals' knowledge of various integration agreements for two subsamples of individuals: (1) those who have heard or read about a given agreement and live in a country that is a member of that agreement; and (2) those who have heard or read about a given agreement but do not reside in an agreement member-country. Consistent with the evidence presented in Table 4, the "Member-Countries" column of Table 5 provides stark evidence that a majority of individuals in the former category has neither heard nor read anything about the agreements to which their country belongs, with the notable exception of MERCOSUR.⁸⁷ Comparing across the "Member-Countries" and "Non-Member Countries" columns, it is also apparent that for many agreements (e.g. DR-CAFTA and UNASUR), individuals who reside in a country that belongs to a given agreement are only slightly more likely to have read or heard about that agreement than individuals who reside elsewhere. Overall, these data suggest that most individuals' knowledge

⁸⁷ The signing of various bilateral agreements between Argentina and Brazil, ongoing discussions about the creation of the Bank of the South, and the completion of the MERCOSUR's 38th Summit Meeting – all in 2009 – may help explain why so many individuals reported having heard or read something about MERCOSUR. On the former two points, see Klonsky et al. (2012).

of economic facts about integration may be relatively shallow, consistent with some scholars' findings about Americans' knowledge of NAFTA.⁸⁸

[INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

Although most individuals have limited exposure to factual information about specific integration agreements, they appear to possess a better cause-and-effect awareness of integration more broadly. Evidence supporting this claim is visible in Table 6, which reports non-response rates for each of the survey questions used to create the dependent variables in the regression analysis. Interestingly, non-response rates for these questions are all relatively low compared to the response rates describing lack of knowledge presented in Table 5. This evidence should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously, as it is possible that some individuals offer “top-of-the-head” responses rather than respond “don’t know.”⁸⁹

Collectively, the regression results presented earlier and the descriptive evidence presented in Tables 4 through 6 raise an interesting puzzle related to *Hypothesis 2*: national-level perceptions are clearly associated with integration attitudes in the earlier regression analysis, but the descriptive evidence presented here indicates that most individuals likely have relatively little exposure to information about integration’s impact on the economy. This disjuncture highlights the need to conduct a more thorough analysis of potential variation in the degree to which national-level perceptions inform integration attitudes among different subsamples of individuals. In particular, as predicted by the second hypothesis, it is possible that the link between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes is relatively strong among individuals who have greater exposure to information on integration’s national-level impact, and relatively weak among those who have less.

⁸⁸ See Burgoon and Hiscox (2008, 26).

⁸⁹ See Zaller (1992, 38).

To that end, I first return to the 2009 Latinobarometer data and examine whether individuals who have heard of all three integration agreements appearing in Table 3 (the “Informed” subsample) watch more television, are more interested in politics, are more educated, and have lower non-response rates to the dependent variable survey question than individuals who have not of any of the three agreements (the “Uninformed” subsample).⁹⁰ Consistent with expectations, Table 7 indicates that on average, individuals in the “Informed” subsample watch a little more television, pay somewhat more attention to politics, and are marginally more likely to have completed at least some college education than individuals in the “Uninformed” subsample. They also exhibit lower non-response rates, suggestive of a stronger cause-and-effect awareness of integration. Although the differences across subsamples are relatively small in magnitude, *t*-tests provide evidence of a highly statistically significant difference in the subsample means of each covariate reported in Table 7 (with *p*-values approximately equal to zero). This gives strong reason to believe that substantial variation may exist in the strength of the relationship between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes among individuals with different levels of exposure to information on integration’s national-level impact.

[INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE]

To test this possibility more rigorously, I first divide individuals into “Informed” and “Uninformed” subsamples for each year of Latinobarometer survey data used in the earlier regression analysis as a proxy for individuals’ exposure to national-level information about integration acquired via mass media coverage and interpersonal contact. The “Informed” subsample includes individuals who watch TV at least five days per week and talk about politics

⁹⁰ I focus on individuals’ knowledge of these particular agreements for reasons described earlier. Although individuals’ frequency of watching television and interest in politics are imperfect measures of exposure to information on integration via mass media coverage of economic issues and interpersonal contact, they are the best proxy measures available in the Latinobarometer survey data across all of the years of data that I employ in the subsequent regression analysis.

very frequently with friends (or are very interested in politics)⁹¹; the “Uninformed” subsample includes individuals who watch TV less than five days per week and talk about politics less often.⁹² I then rerun the baseline regressions presented in Table 1 on both subsamples, with the exception of the 2008 models.⁹³ Table 8 presents the results of the subsample analysis.

[INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE]

Consistent with expectations, Table 8 indicates that in the models in which national-level perceptions are statistically significant, their marginal impact on integration attitudes (averaged across all models) is relatively more significant in both statistical and practical terms among the “Informed” subsamples. With regard to practical significance (as seen in the bottom rows of Table 8), the average marginal effect of national-level perceptions on integration attitudes is almost twice as large among “Informed” individuals – 17.0% when averaged across all models – than among “Uninformed” individuals (9.66%).⁹⁴ Moreover, among the “Informed” subsamples, the average marginal impact of national-level perceptions is larger than the impact of both individual-level perceptions (13.50%) and nationalism (16.13%) on integration attitudes.⁹⁵ Despite the limitations imposed by the use of imperfect proxy variables, this finding offers substantial support for the second hypothesis, suggesting that national-level perceptions do exert an impact on integration attitudes, but that the magnitude of this impact is much larger among individuals who pay more frequent attention to mass media coverage of economic issues and engage in more frequent interpersonal contact, both of which are posited to increase individuals

⁹¹ Questions about talking politics with friends were only included in 2006 and 2007; I therefore rely on individuals’ interest in politics as an imperfect proxy for interpersonal contact in 2009 and 2010.

⁹² In conducting the subsample analysis, I necessarily incur selection bias in that individuals must provide responses to the dependent variable survey questions in order to be included in the regression analysis; thus, there is no way to sample individuals’ based on variation in cause-and-effect awareness using the evidence reported in Table 6. I also avoid sampling on the basis of individuals’ education level in order to retain education as a control variable in the regression analysis.

⁹³ The questions required to create the relevant subsamples were not included in the 2008 survey.

⁹⁴ I calculate average marginal effects using the same procedure as before.

⁹⁵ Interestingly, the reverse ordering holds for individuals in the “Uninformed” subsets.

exposure to national-level information on integration.⁹⁶ Thus, while the descriptive evidence presented in Tables 4 through 7 suggests that most individuals have relatively little exposure to national-level information on integration, information acquired via mass media coverage and interpersonal contact does inform national-level perceptions among individuals with greater exposure to such information and, to a lesser extent, among the public at large.

Conclusion

The findings presented in the previous sections provide strong support for both hypotheses, offering new insight into the relationship between integration attitudes and national-level perceptions. In particular, my findings – which build closely upon Mansfield and Mutz’s recent work – demonstrate that the impact of national-level perceptions on integration attitudes is strongly mediated by variation in individuals’ exposure to national-level information about integration.⁹⁷ Indeed, with regard to integration attitudes, the average marginal impact of national-level perceptions is almost twice as large among individuals who watch television at least five days per week and engage in frequent interpersonal conversations about politics, or are very interested in politics. At the same time, the average marginal impact of national-level perceptions on integration attitudes among the public at large is relatively small, as many individuals appear to have relatively little exposure to national-level information on integration. The findings also provide support for an alternative mechanism of attitude formation whereby individuals rely on cause-and-effect awareness to form attitudes rather than economic facts.

Taken together, the findings I present suggest several possible directions for future research on national-level mechanisms of attitude formation in the area of integration. First, with

⁹⁶ Interestingly, the difference in the average marginal impact of national-level perceptions on integration attitudes across the “Informed” and “Uninformed” groups is far larger for the development models than for the support models. This could occur because answering questions about integration’s economic impact may be more informationally intensive than answering questions about individuals’ support for integration in the abstract.

⁹⁷ See Mansfield and Mutz (2009).

regard to variation in informational exposure, the proxy variables that I employ are relatively indirect measures of individuals' exposure to information about integration via mass media coverage and interpersonal contact. In this regard, future research on national-level perceptions may be advanced by more precisely characterizing the information that individuals are actually exposed to and the channels through which they encounter this information. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the theory I advance does not address the issue of why individuals choose to become informed about integration in the first place; nor does it address the extent to which individuals' incentives to become informed are related to their perceptions of integration's impact on their own material well-being. In reality, individuals' incentives to become informed may depend on a variety of individual-level variables, ranging from education level and sector of employment to consumption habits and income, all of which may impact individuals' material well-being. These and other variables (such as partisanship) may also introduce bias in the content of the information that individuals are exposed to, whether via mass media coverage or interpersonal contact. For these reasons, future work on national-level perceptions in the area of integration would benefit by devoting greater attention to developing and testing theories that more clearly address individuals' incentives to become informed, and by examining the potential bias in informational content these incentives may produce.

Beyond these issues, the findings I present also have potentially important implications for research at the intersection of integration attitudes and policy and electoral outcomes, as well as for debates about issue framing in the area of integration. With regard to policy outcomes, recent work highlights various ways in which attitudes formed on the basis of individual-level perceptions (primarily related to trade's impact on the price of consumer goods) may shape trade

policy outcomes.⁹⁸ In the context of integration, the findings I present suggest that for many individuals, national-level perceptions may exert a larger average marginal impact on integration attitudes than pocketbook concerns; thus, future work might benefit by paying greater attention to the ways in which attitudes formed on the basis of national-level perceptions influence policy outcomes. With regard to electoral outcomes, the findings I present similarly highlight an alternative mechanism by which attitudes toward integration may exert an impact. Guisinger, for example, finds little support for a direct mechanism of electoral influence whereby constituents retrospectively punish politicians for voting to implement policies that are expected to have a perceived negative impact on their material well-being.⁹⁹ My findings suggest an alternative mechanism of electoral sanction whereby voters punish politicians retrospectively on the basis of perceived changes in national economic performance, rather than on the basis of individual-level concerns. Thus, low trade policy salience in terms of individual-level concerns does not necessarily imply that trade policy attitudes cannot impact electoral outcomes by way of national-level mechanisms.¹⁰⁰

Finally, with regard to issue framing, recent work by Murillo et al. suggests that the impact of issue framing on integration attitudes is mediated by the amount of prior information that individuals possess; thus, individuals with stronger “priors” on a given issue dimension are less likely to be swayed by frames that conflict with these priors.¹⁰¹ This finding is especially interesting in light of my analysis, which suggests that the impact of national-level perceptions on integration attitudes is larger among individuals who have greater exposure to information about integration. In particular, while national-level perceptions exert a larger impact on

⁹⁸ See Kono (2008); Baker (2009); Baker and Greene (2011); Feinberg et al. (2011); and Hicks et al. (working paper).

⁹⁹ See Guisinger (2009).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Murillo et al. (forthcoming).

integration attitudes among individuals with high levels of informational exposure, Murillo et al.'s findings suggest that these individuals are less likely to be swayed by politicians whose portrayal of integration's national-level impact conflicts with their own prior assessments; this is good news to the extent that (on average) the perceptions of well-informed individuals accurately reflect reality. Most individuals nevertheless appear to possess weak priors about integration's national-level impact, and may therefore be particularly susceptible to issue framing, even though the impact of national-level perceptions on their attitudes toward integration is relatively small. Careful analysis of these issues, among others, may further enhance scholars' growing understanding of the link between national-level perceptions and integration attitudes, and help to more precisely characterize the impact of these variables on policy and electoral outcomes.

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Table 1. Baseline regression results.

Independent Variables	Impact of Integration On:		Support for Regional Liberalization Of:				Support for Regional Integration:		
	Development (2006)	Quality of Life (2006)	Investment (2006)	Investment (2007)	Investment (2008)	Trade (2007)	Support (2008)	Support (2009)	Support (2010)
Education Level: Binary	0.086 (0.029)**	0.134 (0.040)**	0.063 (0.061)	0.064 (0.035)	0.052 (0.05)	-0.058 (0.035)	0.228 (0.054)**	0.195 (0.038)**	0.155 (0.047)**
Perceptions: National	0.101 (0.021)**	0.051 (0.021)*	0.045 (0.017)**	0.018 (0.026)	0.046 (0.020)*	0.037 (0.022)	0.069 (0.023)**	0.104 (0.032)**	0.129 (0.019)**
Perceptions: Individual	0.033 (0.019)	0.083 (0.021)**	0.017 (0.017)	0.034 (0.022)	0.045 (0.018)*	-0.008 (0.017)	0.07 (0.020)**	0.078 (0.024)**	0.088 (0.037)*
Partisanship	0.022 (0.009)*	0.02 (0.008)*	0.024 (0.008)**	0.017 (0.010)	0.007 (0.01)	0.009 (0.008)	-0.005 (0.014)	-0.02 (0.013)	0.000 (0.015)
Nationalism	0.123 (0.029)**	0.116 (0.029)**	0.07 (0.020)**	0.190 (0.035)**	-- --	0.099 (0.027)**	-- --	0.145 (0.024)**	-- --
Unemployed	-0.028 (0.057)	0.018 (0.047)	0.016 (0.045)	0.074 (0.051)	0.097 (0.040)*	0.041 (0.053)	-0.046 (0.042)	0.023 (0.068)	0.122 (0.060)*
Sex	0.006 (0.024)	-0.015 (0.022)	0.001 (0.027)	-0.057 (0.026)*	-0.046 (0.019)*	-0.061 (0.028)*	-0.05 (0.032)	-0.068 (0.021)**	-0.026 (0.031)
Observations	12,739	12,405	14,617	14,752	15,465	14,022	14,985	13,319	13,531
Log-Likelihood	-6,679.25	-6,757.54	-7,528.40	-8,540.59	-8,608.89	-9,185.74	-6,616.49	-5,522.39	-5,465.21
Pseudo R-Squared	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.05
Marginal Effects									
Perceptions: National	0.123 (0.025)**	0.065 (0.026)*	0.052 (0.020)*	-- --	0.059 (0.025)*	-- --	0.067 (0.022)**	0.094 (0.028)**	0.113 (0.016)**
Perceptions: Individual	-- --	0.107 (0.027)**	-- --	-- --	0.058 (0.023)*	-- --	0.070 (0.020)**	0.071 (0.022)**	0.079 (0.034)*
Nationalism	0.122 (0.031)**	0.119 (0.031)**	0.065 (0.020)**	0.198 (0.036)**	-- --	0.116 (0.032)**	-- --	0.115 (.216)**	-- --

Notes: Models are probit with country fixed effects and standard errors clustered by country. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01.

Table 2. Extended model results.

Independent Variables	Impact of Integration On:		Support for Regional Liberalization Of:		
	Development (2006)	Quality of Life (2006)	Investment (2006)	Investment (2007)	Trade (2007)
Education Level: Binary	0.086 (0.032)**	0.127 (0.041)**	0.069 (0.057)	0.053 (0.036)	-0.064 (0.034)
Perceptions: National	0.100 (0.021)**	0.049 (0.021)*	0.045 (0.017)**	0.010 (0.027)	0.031 (0.022)
Perceptions: Individual	0.036 (0.020)	0.086 (0.022)**	0.015 (0.017)	0.039 (0.023)	-0.010 (0.017)
Partisanship	0.021 (0.009)*	0.02 (0.008)*	0.023 (0.008)**	0.016 (0.010)	0.010 (0.008)
Nationalism	0.116 (0.029)**	0.11 (0.029)**	0.075 (0.020)**	0.193 (0.034)**	0.103 (0.026)**
Cosmopolitanism	-0.123 (0.031)**	-0.069 (0.036)	0.076 (0.039)*	0.113 (0.032)**	0.093 (0.030)**
Public Employee	0.041 (0.046)	0.088 (0.053)	-0.108 (0.040)**	0.030 (0.051)	0.008 (0.048)
Unemployed	-0.03 (0.056)	0.021 (0.046)	0.009 (0.043)	0.064 (0.053)	0.025 (0.053)
Sex	0.005 (0.024)	-0.014 (0.022)	-0.004 (0.028)	-0.053 (0.024)*	-0.053 (0.030)
Xenophobia	--	--	--	0.204 (0.028)**	0.069 (0.048)
Union Member	--	--	--	-0.131 (0.033)**	0.004 (0.035)
Observations	12,601	12,269	14,458	13,967	13,338
Log-Likelihood	-6,583.60	-6,680.20	-7,445.20	-8,036.69	-8,753.83
Pseudo R-Squared	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.04
Marginal Effects					
Perceptions: National	0.121 (0.025)**	0.062 (0.027)*	0.053 (0.020)**	--	--
Perceptions: Individual	--	0.111 (0.028)**	--	--	--
Nationalism	0.114 (0.031)**	0.112 (0.032)**	0.070 (0.019)**	0.202 (0.036)**	0.121 (0.031)**

Notes: Models are probit with country fixed effects and standard errors clustered by country. * p<0.05; **

Table 3. Agreement-specific regressions.						
Independent Variables	Andean Community (2009)		MERCOSUR (2009)		UNASUR (2009)	
	Informed: Resident	Informed: Non-resident	Informed: Resident	Informed: Non-resident	Informed: Resident	Informed: Non-resident
Education Level: Binary	-0.083 (0.067)	-0.002 (0.070)	0.015 (0.069)	0.012 (0.036)	-0.062 (0.068)	-0.098 (0.076)
Perceptions: National	0.138 (0.042)**	0.096 (0.044)*	0.142 (0.055)**	0.087 (0.051)	0.217 (0.048)**	0.045 (0.035)
Perceptions: Individual	0.073 (0.050)	0.069 (0.032)*	0.050 (0.035)	0.043 (0.036)	0.060 (0.028)*	0.033 (0.074)
Partisanship	-0.028 (0.021)	0.001 (0.014)	0.000 (0.004)	-0.023 (0.022)	-0.053 (0.027)*	0.016 (0.022)
Nationalism	0.013 (0.084)	-0.001 (0.076)	0.049 (0.030)	-0.007 (0.040)	0.001 (0.042)	0.013 (0.129)
Unemployed	0.081 (0.180)	-0.040 (0.120)	0.077 (0.093)	-0.036 (0.098)	-0.040 (0.091)	0.089 (0.145)
Sex	0.027 (0.080)	0.134 (0.064)*	0.081 (0.071)	-0.033 (0.039)	0.051 (0.059)	0.018 (0.088)
Observations	1,403	1,438	2,572	3,475	2,141	829
Log-Likelihood	-951.27	-949.96	-1,668.34	-2,317.96	-1,403.12	-535.55
Pseudo R-Squared	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.03	0.05	0.07
Marginal Effects						
Perceptions: National	0.217 (0.065)**	.1513 (0.068)**	0.222 (0.084)**	--	0.335 (0.070)**	--

Notes: Models are probit with country fixed effects and standard errors clustered by country. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01.

Table 4. Variation in informational exposure.

<i>How do you inform yourself about politics?</i>			
Response Categories	2008	2009	2010
Via Television	81.52%	84.36%	79.03%

<i>How much attention do you pay to news about the economy on television?</i>	
Response Categories	2004
A lot	18.30%
A little	51.08%
No attention	27.53%
Don't know/NA	3.09%

<i>How much attention do you pay to news about international affairs or foreign policy on television?</i>	
Response Categories	2004
A lot	40.09%
A little	44.11%
No attention	13.36%
Don't know/NA	2.44%

<i>How much interest do you have in international affairs (in what happens in the world?)</i>		
Response Categories	2004	2008
A lot	19.49%	19.66%
Some	26.50%	32.93%
Little	31.48%	28.04%
None	19.66%	16.74%
Don't know/NA	2.87%	2.61%

<i>How often do you talk politics with friends?</i>		
Response Categories	2006	2007
Very frequently	5.77%	6.23%
Frequently	20.00%	22.58%
Almost never	32.99%	38.29%
Never	39.65%	30.73%
Don't know/NA	1.59%	2.17%

Notes: Tabulations for 2004 exclude Chile and Paraguay because the 2004 survey data are not representative for those countries. However, tabulations are nearly identical when Chile and Paraguay are included. All columns sum to at least 99.98% (due to rounding error). Complete survey question wording can be found in the codebook in the online appendix.

Table 5. Knowledge of regional integration agreements.

Agreement	% Read or Heard of Agreement		Year Asked	List of Member Countries
	Member-Countries	Non-Member Countries		
Andean Community	28.80%	11.50%	2009	BO, CO, EC, PE, VE
Bolivarian Alliance	39.64%	13.62%	2009	BO, EC, HN, NI, VE
DR-CAFTA	36.40%	27.47%	2004	CR, DR, GT, HN, NI, SV
FTAA	30.82%	na	2004	all
Mercosur	65.23%	23.22%	2009	AR, BR, PY, UY, VE
SICA	19.55%	12.03%	2009	CR, GT, HN, NI, PA, SV
UNASUR (2009)	21.36%	11.45%	2009	AR, BO, BR, CL, CO, EC, PE, PY, UY, VE
UNASUR (2010)	27.77%	11.15%	2010	AR, BO, BR, CL, CO, EC, PE, PY, UY, VE

Notes: For agreements that have already entered into force, member-countries include all those that are considered to be "full members" of the agreement. For agreements still under negotiation, member-countries include all those that have participated in agreement negotiations. Complete survey question wording, a full list of country abbreviations, and references used to compile agreement membership can be found in the codebook and regional agreement membership appendix in the online appendix. Results for FTAA and DR-CAFTA exclude Chile and Paraguay because the 2004 survey data are not representative for those countries.

Table 6. Dependent variable non-response rates.		
Dependent Variable	Year	Non-Response Rate
Impact of integration agreements on <i>economic development</i>	2006	20.83%
Impact of interation agreements on <i>quality of life</i>	2006	23.05%
In context of the economic integration of Latin America, support for removal of <i>investment</i> restrictions	2006	5.58%
--	2007	4.81%
--	2008	6.80%
In context of the economic integration, support for removal of <i>trade</i> restrictions (import/export taxes)	2007	11.43%
<i>Support</i> for economic integration of Latin America	2008	10.86%
--	2009	15.29%
--	2010	13.85%

Notes: Italicized text indicates dependent variable names as they appear in all tables that report regression results.

Table 7. Mean values of relevant covariates for 2009 subsamples.			
Variable (Range)	Informed	Uninformed	Full Sample
Number of days watching television (0-7)	5.19	4.37	4.60
Interest in politics (0-3)	1.37	0.91	1.02
Percentage of individuals completing at least some college education (0-1)	32.76%	10.02%	16.50%
Education level (0-6)	3.63	2.26	2.72
Non-response rate for dependent variable survey question	3.19%	21.47%	15.29%

Notes: The "Informed" subset includes those individuals who have heard of the Andean Community, MERCOSUR, and UNASUR. The "Uninformed" subset includes those individuals who have not heard of any of the three agreements.

Table 8. Subsample regression results.

Independent Variables	Development (2006)		Quality of Life (2006)		Investment (2006)		Investment (2007)		Trade (2007)		Support (2009)		Support (2010)	
	Informed	Uninformed	Informed	Uninformed	Informed	Uninformed	Informed	Uninformed	Informed	Uninformed	Informed	Uninformed	Informed	Uninformed
Education Level: Binary	0.245 (0.116)*	0.109 (0.058)	0.122 (0.137)	0.144 (0.083)	-0.143 (0.173)	0.042 (0.072)	-0.018 (0.109)	0.083 (0.055)	0.071 (0.165)	-0.138 (0.057)*	-0.021 (0.154)	0.218 (0.064)**	0.185 (0.145)	0.159 (0.069)*
Perceptions: National	0.265 (0.068)**	0.058 (0.029)*	0.170 (0.072)*	0.033 (0.031)	0.078 (0.080)	0.047 (0.024)	0.106 (0.060)	0.027 (0.025)	0.122 (0.060)*	0.034 (0.029)	0.135 (0.046)**	0.092 (0.036)*	0.130 (0.049)**	0.146 (0.040)**
Perceptions: Individual	0.137 (0.081)	0.032 (0.036)	0.091 (0.070)	0.097 (0.030)**	-0.052 (0.063)	0.023 (0.027)	0.052 (0.063)	0.036 (0.017)*	0.002 (0.042)	-0.013 (0.026)	0.034 (0.061)	0.065 (0.031)*	0.177 (0.083)*	0.054 (0.035)
Partisanship	0.018 (0.021)	0.024 (0.008)**	0.016 (0.022)	0.014 (0.009)	0.022 (0.034)	0.020 (0.009)*	0.019 (0.018)	0.018 (0.010)	0.008 (0.020)	0.006 (0.012)	-0.051 (0.034)	-0.010 (0.013)	-0.032 (0.022)	0.000 (0.016)
Nationalism	0.092 (0.112)	0.183 (0.031)**	0.027 (0.150)	0.169 (0.029)**	0.071 (0.080)	0.103 (0.030)**	0.178 (0.065)**	0.217 (0.046)**	0.057 (0.061)	0.118 (0.034)**	0.125 (0.078)	0.160 (0.043)**	--	--
Unemployed	-0.317 (0.157)*	-0.007 (0.079)	-0.440 (0.194)*	0.113 (0.069)	-0.118 (0.164)	0.018 (0.115)	0.083 (0.374)	-0.023 (0.093)	-0.245 (0.307)	-0.032 (0.108)	-0.245 (0.169)	0.114 (0.116)	0.230 (0.284)	0.093 (0.093)
Sex	0.075 (0.087)	-0.008 (0.053)	0.141 (0.129)	-0.002 (0.054)	-0.213 (0.098)*	0.007 (0.039)	0.080 (0.133)	-0.079 (0.034)*	-0.249 (0.112)*	-0.007 (0.048)	-0.121 (0.088)	-0.053 (0.061)	-0.026 (0.097)	0.008 (0.044)
Observations	648	4,791	627	4,664	695	5,636	768	5,076	742	4,783	1,055	4,372	826	4,839
Log-Likelihood	-282.20	-2,550.74	-287.15	-2,566.77	-302.67	-2,911.52	-434.94	-2,878.05	-468.39	-3,125.71	-321.31	-1,944.75	-281.53	-1,980.23
Pseudo R-Squared	0.14	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.08	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.04	0.10	0.06	0.09	0.05
Marginal Effects														
Perceptions: National	0.291 (0.077)**	0.072 (0.037)*	0.191 (0.082)*	--	--	--	--	--	0.188 (0.092)*	--	0.085 (0.028)**	0.089 (0.034)**	0.095 (0.038)*	0.129 (0.034)**
Perceptions: Individual	--	--	--	0.128 (0.039)**	--	--	--	0.036 (0.017)*	--	--	--	0.065 (0.031)*	0.135 (0.068)*	--
Nationalism	--	0.190 (0.034)**	--	0.180 (0.033)**	--	0.099 (0.030)**	0.186 (0.069)**	0.224 (0.047)**	--	0.138 (0.040)**	--	0.137 (0.041)**	--	--

Notes: Models are probit with country fixed effects and standard errors clustered by country. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01.