INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICIANS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS THAT
DETERMINE PRESIDENTIAL LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS

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Working Paper # 348 - May 2008

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ABSTRACT

This study questions the level of influence that different Latin American presidents have on the making of laws. In order to delimit this analysis, it is necessary to understand the factors that affect decision making in Latin American parliaments. Many of the theoretical approaches that tackle the study of decision making within legislative bodies maintain that the laws that arise from this decisional process, in addition to depending on the institutional organization of the parliament itself, depends on the political actors taking part, on their strategies when adapting to this institutional framework, and on their interests as well as on their collective and individual preferences.

The aim of this research is to verify the explanatory strength of these theories in Latin American countries. Thus, an analysis is made of the importance that the institutional factors—relating to regulatory design—and the party factors—relating to both the presence of the political parties in the parliament and government and the ideological attitudes shown by the legislators—have in the legislative performance of diverse Latin American presidents.

RESUMEN

El trabajo se pregunta por el grado de influencia que distintos Presidentes latinoamericanos mantienen sobre la producción legislativa. Para delimitar este análisis, es necesario comprender los factores que inciden en la toma de decisiones en el interior de los Parlamentos latinoamericanos. Muchos de los enfoque teóricos que abordan el estudio de la toma de decisiones dentro de las instancias legislativas mantienen que los productos -en forma de ley- que surgen de este proceso decisional dependen, además de la propia organización institucional del Parlamento, de los actores políticos que intervienen en el mismo, de sus estrategias al adecuarse a este entramado institucional, de sus intereses así como de sus preferencias tanto colectivas como individuales.

La pretensión de la investigación es comprobar la fuerza explicativa de estas teorías en los países latinoamericanos. Para ello, se contrasta el peso que los factores institucionales –relativos al diseño normativo- y los factores partidistas –relacionados tanto con la presencia de los partidos políticos en el Parlamento y Gobierno como con las actitudes ideológicas mostradas por los legisladores- tienen sobre el desempeño legislativo de diversos Presidentes latinoamericanos.

INTRODUCTION

Studies focusing on legislative activity in Latin America, and more specifically on the importance of the role played by the president in this activity, have mainly been case analyses, with the two largest countries, Mexico and Brazil, being the center of attention of most researchers.[1] From these studies it can be gathered that when explaining legislative activity, scholars resort to both institutional and political factors. However, with a lack of other cases for comparison, they cannot conclude what the legislative influence of the presidents and parliaments is due to in comparative terms; they can only reach conclusions that relate a country's legislative activity over time and see the effect of the political and institutional changes that have occurred during that time period.

Comparative studies focusing on legislative activity are quite scarce and recent. Among these mention must be made of the article by Saiegh (2004), which analyses the passage rates achieved by thirty-five executives, including eight in Latin American countries,[2] and concludes that the presidents of parliamentary systems have higher rates of success than those of presidential systems, with this rate decreasing when the executive is formed by a coalition government.

After analyzing these same data and focusing again on the form of government, Cheibub et al. (2004: 578) state that legislative paralysis is very rare, even in presidential countries with minority governments. For these authors, the rate of presidential success falls when party positions on politics are polarized and political change has to be negotiated, and when government coalitions are internally divided as to their preferences. Another comparative study is the one carried out by Alcántara et al. (2005) which analyzes the legislative activity of twelve Latin American countries. Although the objective of the current work is not to reflect on the factors affecting such activity,

empirical progress is made by showing, comparatively, the differences existing among the different countries and by disproving the statement that the role of Latin American parliaments is marginal in all cases. A recent comparative study by García-Montero (2007a and 2007b) defends the importance of institutional factors in the influence of presidents and parliaments on legislation.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the few existing studies of legislative activity in Latin America. Specifically, we seek factors that determine the degree of legislative success of the presidents of fourteen countries in the area. Hence, we carry out an in-depth study of the contributions made by the different theories and methodologies that analyze the effects of institutional arrangements in legislative policy and at the same time compare their validity using data on lawmaking.

In the first part, we define a presidential legislative success indicator, which compares the executive's passage rates in the different countries analyzed. Next, we delimit different factors that may have an effect: the institutions, the political parties, and the electoral cycle. For the institutions, we decided to use of the index of legislative institutional power (ILIP) (García-Montero, 2007a) which reflects the institutional capacity of the parliament and executive to intervene in legislative activity.

For the political parties, the weight of six variables is contrasted. Three have to do with their presence in the parliament and in the executive (legislative majorities, party fragmentation, and forming of coalitions) and the other three focus on ideological attitudes and positions (polarization, ideological coherence, and attitudinal discipline). The sources for the indicators for the first set of three are the electoral results, whereas the attitudinal variables were made operative from data from the research project: "Elites Parlamentarias Latinoamericanas" (Latin American Parliamentary Elites, or PELA).[3] The last variable whose explanatory power is tested is the electoral cycle.
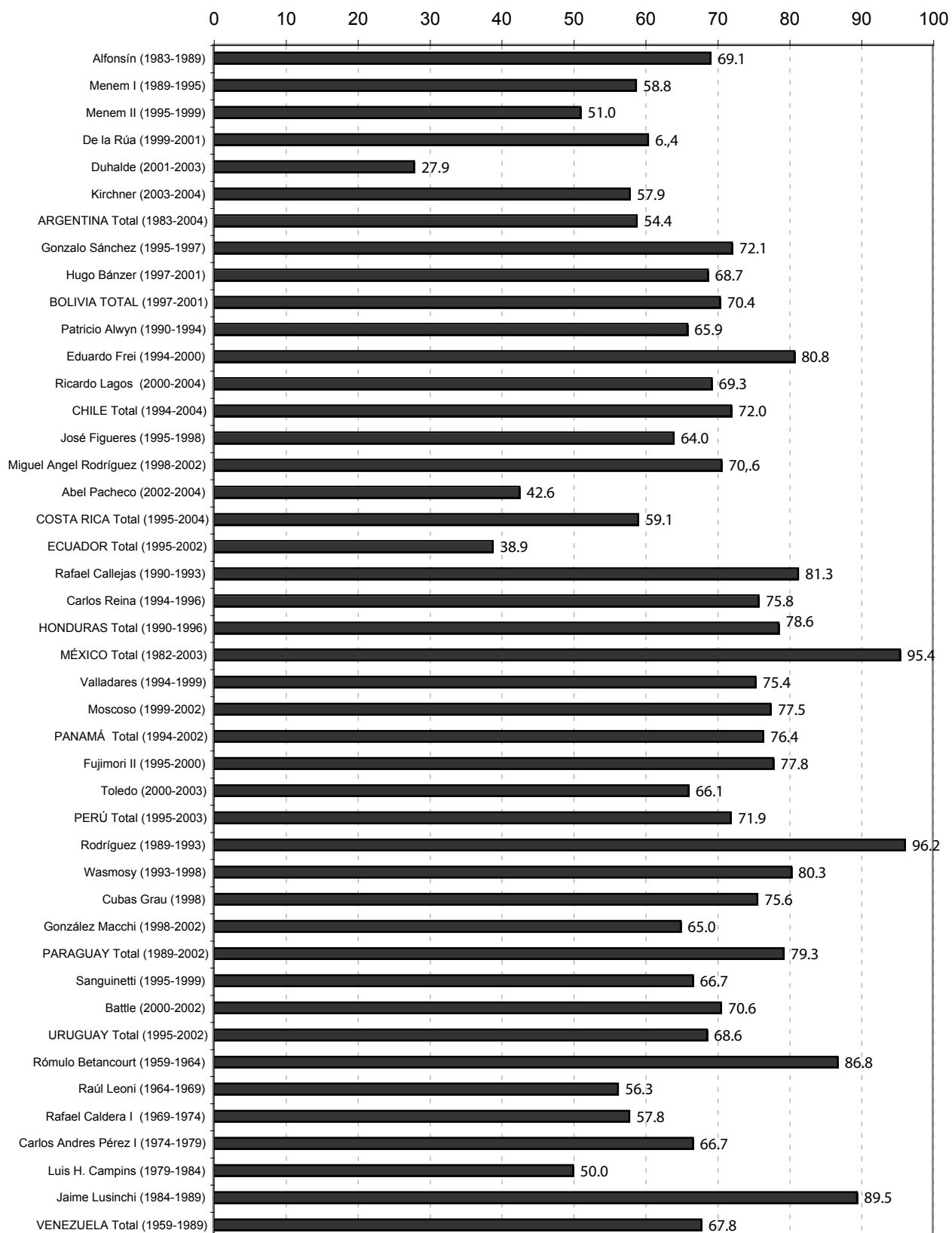
THE LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS OF THE EXECUTIVE
AND THE UNITS OF ANALYSIS

This study inquires into the factors affecting the different rates of legislative passage

of proposals by Latin American presidents. The indicator used for measuring these

different rates, based on Alcántara et al. (2005),[4] is "legislative success," which refers to

the relationship between the number of initiatives presented by the executive and those

finally passed (Alcántara et al. 2005: 99). The units of analysis are the annual sessions or

two-year legislative periods, except in the cases of Venezuela and Paraguay, where the

unit of analysis is the whole presidential period in office, and Mexico, where it coincides

with the term of office (three years). In all, 103 periods of sessions pertaining to twelve

Latin American countries are analyzed,[5] coinciding with 40 different presidential terms of

office.[6]

Figure 1 shows the values the aggregated legislative success indicator takes

per presidential term of office and per period analyzed in each country. We affirm that,

indeed, in the countries analyzed, the presidents have different rates of legislative

success. If we focus on the entire period of analysis in each country, the Mexican case, in

which the executive achieved passage of 95.4 percent of the laws initiated from 1982 to

2003, clearly stands out.

The data indicate that, despite the fact that Mexico is an extreme case, there

are another six countries out of the twelve analyzed (Paraguay, Honduras, Panama,

Chile, Peru, and Bolivia) where the executive success rate is between 70% and 80%.

Moreover, except for Ecuador, where during 1995–2002 the executive scarcely managed

to carry through 38.9% of its proposals, in none of the countries did the government

have legislative success below 50%. However, if the legislative success rate of the Latin

American presidents is compared with those of European countries characterized by

parliamentary systems, it is clear that these rates are relatively low, since Europe has what

Olson (1994: 85) calls the 90% rule—that is, approximately 90% of the projects of the

executive are passed[7] (Alcántara et al. 2005).

Figure 1: Executive success by country, period of government, and the average for the period of study

Period	Value
Alfonsín (1983-1989)	69.1
Menem I (1989-1995)	58.8
Menem II (1995-1999)	51.0
De la Rúa (1999-2001)	6,4
Duhalde (2001-2003)	27.9
Kirchner (2003-2004)	57.9
ARGENTINA Total (1983-2004)	54.4
Gonzalo Sánchez (1995-1997)	72.1
Hugo Bánzer (1997-2001)	68.7
BOLIVIA TOTAL (1997-2001)	70.4
Patricio Alwyn (1990-1994)	65.9
Eduardo Frei (1994-2000)	80.8
Ricardo Lagos (2000-2004)	69.3
CHILE Total (1994-2004)	72.0
José Figueres (1995-1998)	64.0
Miguel Angel Rodríguez (1998-2002)	70,.6
Abel Pacheco (2002-2004)	42.6
COSTA RICA Total (1995-2004)	59.1
ECUADOR Total (1995-2002)	38.9
Rafael Callejas (1990-1993)	81.3
Carlos Reina (1994-1996)	75.8
HONDURAS Total (1990-1996)	78.6
MÉXICO Total (1982-2003)	95.4
Valladares (1994-1999)	75.4
Moscoso (1999-2002)	77.5
PANAMÁ Total (1994-2002)	76.4
Fujimori II (1995-2000)	77.8
Toledo (2000-2003)	66.1
PERÚ Total (1995-2003)	71.9
Rodríguez (1989-1993)	96.2
Wasmosy (1993-1998)	80.3
Cubas Grau (1998)	75.6
González Macchi (1998-2002)	65.0
PARAGUAY Total (1989-2002)	79.3
Sanguinetti (1995-1999)	66,7
Battle (2000-2002)	70.6
URUGUAY Total (1995-2002)	68.6
Rómulo Betancourt (1959-1964)	86.8
Raúl Leoni (1964-1969)	56.3
Rafael Caldera I (1969-1974)	57.8
Carlos Andres Pérez I (1974-1979)	66.7
Luis H. Campins (1979-1984)	50.0
Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989)	89.5
VENEZUELA Total (1959-1989)	67.8

Source: Authors' data from the "El Parlamento en América Latina. Rendimiento del Poder Legislativo."

If attention is focused on the periods of government, Mexico is again clearly outstanding, since all its presidents during the period analyzed (1892–2003) have had success rates above 95%, although a slight decrease is observed from 1997 on, when the PRI no longer controlled the majority of the seats in Congress. Also outstanding is the presidency of Andrés Rodríguez in Paraguay (1989–1993) with a success rate of 96.2%. With lower success levels, other presidents who achieved percentages above 80% in the passage of laws they introduced were (in this order): Jaime Lusinchi and Rómulo Betancourt in Venezuela, Rafael Callejas in Honduras, Eduardo Frei in Chile, and J. Carlos Wasmosy in Paraguay. On the other hand, presidents with success rates below 50% were the presidents of Ecuador (1995–2002)—Sixto Durán Ballén, Abdalá Bucarám, Fabián Alarcón, and Jamil Mahuad—and the Costa Rican president Abel Pacheco (2002–04). Other Latin American executives with success rates below 60% were all the Argentinean presidents analyzed in this research study except Raúl Alfonsín, and the Venezuelan presidents Raúl Leoni, Rafael Caldera, and Luis H. Campins.

THE INSTITUTIONS: THE INDEX OF LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTIONAL POWER (ILIP)

As has been mentioned, when the importance of the presidents in legislative activity is explored, in Latin American cases it is common to attribute the institutional authorities of the executive with a fundamental role. The regulatory design reduces transaction costs either by facilitating exchange, promoting specialization, or by facilitating party discipline and the power of the majority parties in the Congress. Hence, it is undeniable that the institutions are of importance. The formal powers of the actors involved in the legislative procedures that mark the potential control of the legislative agenda are determined by at least two types of norms: the Constitution and the rules of order of the chambers.

The central importance of the Constitution in the structuring of the decision-making process and in the formulation of policies is obvious, since it defines the stages through which an initiative must pass to become law, determines the bodies that will

participate in the process, and confers and delimits the authority of the actors that participate. The internal rules regulate and organize in detail each of the stages defined by the Constitution and although they are always subject to what the Constitution stipulates, they also confer potential degrees of influence, especially for the members of the legislative power. This is of great importance since political change or stagnation, whether the status quo is maintained or modified, depends on the interaction maintained between the latter and the executive power.

One of the ways of delimiting the legislative importance of both powers is to analyze the legislative process as a way of isolating the institutional and the political effects. Thus, the ability that the institutions grant to the president and the legislature to exercise influence on the legislative agenda can be traced from the systematic analysis of these two basic norms, and some suppositions on the meaning of their intervention in the legislative activity expounded

In order to contrast the importance that institutional design has in presidential legislative success, we use the index of legislative institutional power (ILIP) prepared by García-Montero (2007a). To prepare this index she considered fifteen institutional indicators delimited by legislative procedure, which includes three stages: initiating, constitutive, and effectiveness. In each stage a series of institutional factors allows the executive or the legislative power to accelerate their initiative or ensure that it is undertaken (positive or proactive agenda power) or allows them to delay or veto the entry of a project or its passage (negative or reactive agenda power) (Cox, 2006). More specifically, she uses ten constitutional indicators, which are summarized in Table 1.

The other five indicators were extracted from the internal regulations of the chambers[8] and their inclusion is based on the supposition that the ability to make a law be taken into account and voted on is fundamental, as is the faculty to block a bill or delay it. A considerable part of the different congressional rules, procedures, and structures deals with settling what will be addressed in the plenary, as determined in the "agenda" (Oleszek, 2004; Cox and McCubbins, 1993 and 2004; McCubbins, et al. 2005).

TABLE 1

**Institutional Indicators of Agenda Power in the Legislative Procedure Stipulated
in the Constitution and Internal Regulations**

Ordinary legislative procedure			Extraordinary legislative procedure
Initiating stage	Constitutive stage	Effectiveness stage	
-Exclusive initiative (PAP) (*Constitution*) -Setting up of the agenda or discussion schedule (PAP) (*Regulations*) -Type of majority for changing the agenda (PAP) (*Regulations*)	-Ability of presidents to force the emergency process (PAP) (*Constitution*) -Number of chambers (*Constitution*) -Incorporation of committees (*Regulations*) -Prerogatives to prevent law being processed in committees (*Regulations*) -Power of committees to process bills (*Regulations*)	-Total veto and override (NAP) (*Constitution*) -Partial veto and override (NAP) (*Constitution*)	-Power of decree (PAP) (*Constitution*) -Calling of extraordinary sessions (PAP) (*Constitution*)
	Bicameralism		
	-Symmetry (*Constitution*) -Solving of disagreements between Chambers (PAP or NAP) (*Constitution*) a. Total rejection b. Amendments		

Note: PAP is indicator of positive agenda power.

NAP is indicator of negative agenda power.

Source: García-Montero (2007a).

Therefore, the institutional mechanisms determining the discussion schedule, together with the degree of consensus or concentration required for decision making and the power of the congressional committees, are the basic elements that define both what is to be addressed in the plenary and the number and identity of the actors participating in the legislative activity. The five indicators used for preparing the ILIP can be seen in Table 1 (marked "regulations") and, as with constitutional legislative powers, they have been grouped, taking into consideration the pertinent stage of legislative procedure.[9] The value the countries analyzed in this study take in the index[10] as well as the different stages are given in Table B of the appendix.

There are differences between the values shown by the ILIP and those of other indexes that measure legislative power (Shugart and Carey, 1992: 155; Shugart and Haggard, 2001: 80; Samuels and Shugart, 2003: 43; Payne et al. 2003:216; PNUD, 2005: 76 and Stein et al., 2005: 49). Table 2 shows the different values given by the various indexes prepared for each of the Latin American countries with the year of each country's Constitution as reference. The first matter worthy of mention is the great heterogeneity among the indexes. Not only are the values they adopt different, which is normal, since they respond to the measurement scale used, but also the presidential legislative powers in the same country are dissimilar in different indexes. This lack of similarity stems mainly from the indicators used for the indexes' preparation. In order to make them more comparable, the values have been transformed so that each scale varies from 0 to 1 instead of having its original range. A further problem concerning these measurements is that not all the dimensions or indicators have the same impact on the legislative power of the president, which may lead to errors if not considered. Of the indexes given, only that of Stein et al. (2005) evaluates the weight of each indicator.

TABLE 2

Presidential Legislative Powers in Latin America According to Various Studies

Country and Year of Constitution	Shugart and Carey (1992)		Shugart and Haggard (2001)		Samuels and Shugart (2003)		Payne et al. (2003)		PNUD (2005)		Stein et al. (2005)	ILIP
	Value	Value (0–1)*	Value	Value (0–1)*	Value	Value (0–1)*	Value	Value (0–1)*	Value	Value (0–1)*	Weighted Value	Value (0–1)
Argentina 1853	2	0.10			2	0.33					0.44	**0.49**
Argentina 1853 (ref.1994)			6	0.75	5	0.63	7	0.28	28.5	0.65	0.23	**0.31**
Bolivia 1967 (ref.1994)	2	0.10	2	0.25	2	0.33	5	0.20	15	0.34		**0.41**
Brazil 1969	7	0.29									0.62	
Brazil 1988	9	0.37	3	0.37	3	0.50	11	0.44	19	0.43		
Chile 1891	8	0.33										
Chile 1925	8	0.33										
Chile 1969	12	0.50									0.66	
Chile 1989	5	0.31	4	0.50	4	0.67	12	0.48	34	0.77		**0.70**
Colombia 1886 (ref.1968)	8	0.33			6						0.59	
Colombia 1991	5	0.31	4	0.50	4	0.67	11	0.44	20	0.45	0.23	**0.51**
Costa Rica 1949	1	0.04	1	0.12	1	0.17	2.5	0.10	17	0.45		**0.33**
Ecuador 1979	6	0.25			2	0.33					0.59	**0.59**
Ecuador 1998			3		4	0.67	14.5	0.58	33	0.75	0.33	**0.58**
El Salvador 1982	3	0.12	2	0.25	2	0.33	6.5	0.26	20	0.45	0.29	
Guatemala 1985	4	0.17	2	0.25	2	0.33	6.5	0.26	14	0.32	0.26	**0.36**
Honduras 1982	2	0.10	1	0.12	1	0.17	2.5	0.10	14	0.32	0.24	**0.39**
Mexico 1917	5	0.31	1	0.12	1	0.17	2.5	0.10	15.5	0.35	0.19	**0.31**
Nicaragua 1987	3	0.12	0	0.00	0	0.00	8	0.32	12	0.27	0.43	
Panama 1972	5	0.31			2	0.33	10.5	0.42	27.5	0.62	0.19	**0.63**
Paraguay 1992	6	0.25	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	0.12	13	0.27		**0.61**
Peru 1979	0	0.00			1	0.17					0.50	
Peru 1993			4	0.50			13	0.48	16	0.36	0.27	**0.45**
Dominican Republic 1994	2	0.10	2	0.25	2	0.33	8	0.32	31	0.70	0.38	
Uruguay 1967	6	0.25	2	0.25	2	0.33	6.5	0.26	22.5	0.51		**0.44**
Venezuela 1961	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00					0.30	**0.51**
Venezuela 2000					1	0.17	7	0.28	11	0.25		

Source: Author's data from Shugart and Carey (1992: 155); Shugart and Haggard (2001: 80); Samuels and Shugart (2003: 43); Payne et al. (2003: 216), PNUD (2005: 76), Stein et al. (2005: 49) and García-Montero (2007).

*The transformation of the value of the index to a scale of 0 to 1 was carried out as follows:

Value (0–1)={value/upper value of the range of the scale}. The coefficients are not weighted except for the index of Stein et al. (2005).

THE POLITICAL VARIABLES

Despite the fact that the discussion about the relationship between the legislative and the executive has a strong institutional component, it is true that the normative prerogatives do not explain it fully. In unstable political systems constitutions change frequently and in many countries there is a break between what appears in the text of the constitution and what really happens (Mezey, 1993: 352–53).

Thus, the legislative process and its products depend not only on the institutional design of the countries but also on the political actors participating, on their strategies when adapting to the institutional network, and on their collective and individual interests. The configuration of the political parties is, therefore, crucial for understanding the relationships between the executive and legislative powers.

The Presence of the Parties in the Legislature
Legislative Majorities

One of the basic characteristics of presidential systems is the fact that the executive power does not depend on a legislative majority for its formation. Hence, one of the first hypotheses that emerged from the new institutionalism when dealing with this type of system was the one that links the composition of Congress to the executive's ability to carry out its public policies. If the government does not have a sufficient majority in the legislature, it will have greater difficulties in carrying through its agenda than if it has the support of an ample percentage of seats in Congress, since the president should receive more support from legislators elected by his/her own party than from those of other parties. Moreover, given that in presidential systems both branches of power are independent—not only are they separate as regards the functions they perform but also as regards the political interests they represent and the purposes they each pursue (Cox and McCubbins, 2001)—if there is no cooperation between the president and the Congress, political stagnation, legislative bottlenecks, and even the fall of the government can occur (Linz, 1990; Mainwaring, 1993; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997).

This basic idea that presidents with minority support have greater difficulties in governing has given rise to many studies and hypotheses in Latin America. Thus, it has been affirmed that the minority executive uses unilateral constitutional powers, such as the decree, in order to carry through its agenda[11] (Ferreira and Goretti, 1996; Cox and Morgenstern, 2001); strengthens the role of the "median party" to define the modification of the status quo (Nacif, 2005; Negretto, 2002); and increases the need to form coalitions in order to govern (Chasquetti, 2001; Amorim, 1998; Pérez-Liñán, 2000; Altman, 2001). All these consequences arise from the strategy the president takes to overcome the minority situation. The hypothesis maintained in this study with respect to the composition of the Congress and its relationship with the legislative activity is that *in cases in which the party in government or the parties in the coalition government maintain an ample majority in the parliament, that party or parties will have greater success in passing their proposals.*

Table C in the appendix summarizes the percentage of legislators that support the executive branches under study. To build the indicator that measures the legislative majorities, both the percentage of seats obtained by the president—in the lower and upper chambers—and the increase in this percentage in those cases in which the presidents formed a coalition were taken into account. The latter is important, since these legislators whose parties come to form part of the executive are more likely to support the president than if they remain in the opposition. Finally, these percentages were used to prepare the indicator that appears in the last column of Table C, which is used to contrast the importance of legislative majorities in presidential legislative success and which contains the total percentage of legislators in both chambers who belonged to the governing party or parties after the coalitions were formed, if such was the case.

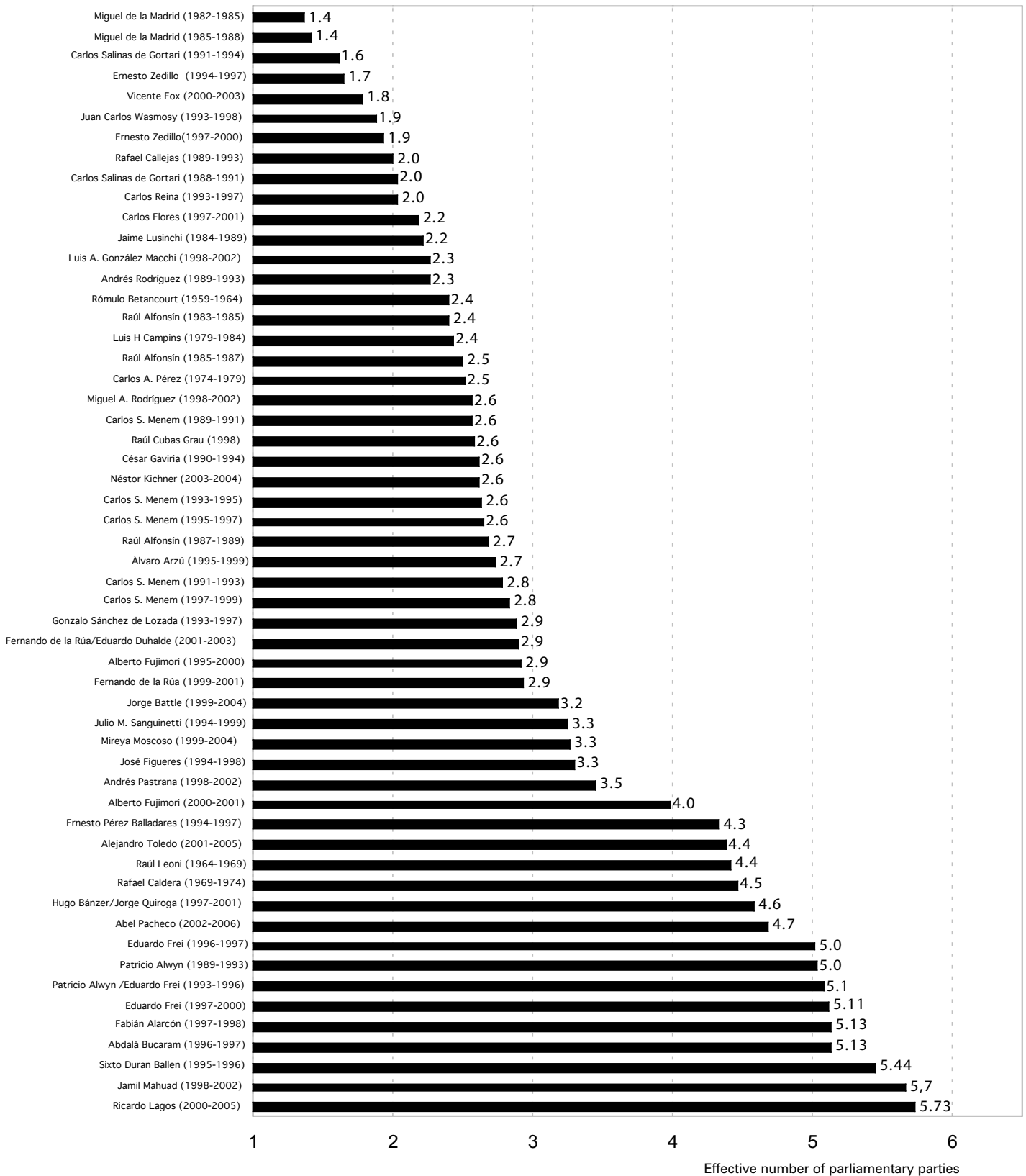### Fragmentation or Effective Number of Parties

Party fragmentation is considered to be one of the most important dimensions when discussing the dispersal or concentration of the political system. There seems to be a great

association between fragmentation, legislative majorities, and the forming of coalitions, since it is to be expected that as the number of parties increases, the proportion of seats of the president's party will decrease and, therefore, the difficulty in forming majorities in order to govern will increase and coalitions will be formed (Mainwaring, 2002; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997; Altman, 2001). In presidential contexts, the multi-party system has been considered a potentially dangerous factor for the stability of democracies (Mainwaring, 1993) although an ever-increasing number of authors considers that the danger depends on the ability to form coherent and stable coalitions when the number of parties is high (Chasquetti, 2001; Cheibub et al. 2002).

As regards the effects that the number of parties in the system has on the legislative activity, Sartori (1999: 151) stated that the greater the number of parties (having a voice) the greater the complexity and probably the complication of the system will be. Thus, the greater the number of parties, the greater the transaction costs and the possibilities of stagnation (Cox and McCubbins, 1999). In the same line, Mainwaring (2002: 79) maintained that as the fragmentation of the party system increases, the president's ability to obtain what he/she desires decreases. Therefore, the hypothesis to be tested is that *the existence of a high number of parties tends to limit the possibilities of finding support for the policies proposed by the executive, which will make its degree of success decrease. This tendency is strengthened by the fact that an increase in the number of players in Congress reduces the chamber's ability to have influence as a collective player.*[12] However, it should be mentioned that this statement also depends on the positions of the political parties. If other political parties have positions close to those of the president's party with respect to certain policies, then the difficulties for the executive associated with a significant fragmentation should decrease, introducing the subject of polarization, which for Sartori (1994, 1999), is inseparable from fragmentation, as will be seen below.

The index most used for measuring the dispersion of political power is the one proposed by Laakso and Taagepera in 1979, the *effective number of parties.*[13] Table D

Figure 2: Effective number of parties per administration

Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1985)	1.4
Miguel de la Madrid (1985-1988)	1.4
Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1991-1994)	1.6
Ernesto Zedillo (1994-1997)	1.7
Vicente Fox (2000-2003)	1.8
Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993-1998)	1.9
Ernesto Zedillo(1997-2000)	1.9
Rafael Callejas (1989-1993)	2.0
Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1991)	2.0
Carlos Reina (1993-1997)	2.0
Carlos Flores (1997-2001)	2.2
Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989)	2.2
Luis A. González Macchi (1998-2002)	2.3
Andrés Rodríguez (1989-1993)	2.3
Rómulo Betancourt (1959-1964)	2.4
Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1985)	2.4
Luis H Campins (1979-1984)	2.4
Raúl Alfonsín (1985-1987)	2.5
Carlos A. Pérez (1974-1979)	2.5
Miguel A. Rodríguez (1998-2002)	2.6
Carlos S. Menem (1989-1991)	2.6
Raúl Cubas Grau (1998)	2.6
César Gaviria (1990-1994)	2.6
Néstor Kichner (2003-2004)	2.6
Carlos S. Menem (1993-1995)	2.6
Carlos S. Menem (1995-1997)	2.6
Raúl Alfonsín (1987-1989)	2.7
Álvaro Arzú (1995-1999)	2.7
Carlos S. Menem (1991-1993)	2.8
Carlos S. Menem (1997-1999)	2.8
Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997)	2.9
Fernando de la Rúa/Eduardo Duhalde (2001-2003)	2.9
Alberto Fujimori (1995-2000)	2.9
Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001)	2.9
Jorge Battle (1999-2004)	3.2
Julio M. Sanguinetti (1994-1999)	3.3
Mireya Moscoso (1999-2004)	3.3
José Figueres (1994-1998)	3.3
Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002)	3.5
Alberto Fujimori (2000-2001)	4.0
Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994-1997)	4.3
Alejandro Toledo (2001-2005)	4.4
Raúl Leoni (1964-1969)	4.4
Rafael Caldera (1969-1974)	4.5
Hugo Bánzer/Jorge Quiroga (1997-2001)	4.6
Abel Pacheco (2002-2006)	4.7
Eduardo Frei (1996-1997)	5.0
Patricio Alwyn (1989-1993)	5.0
Patricio Alwyn /Eduardo Frei (1993-1996)	5.1
Eduardo Frei (1997-2000)	5.11
Fabián Alarcón (1997-1998)	5.13
Abdalá Bucaram (1996-1997)	5.13
Sixto Duran Ballen (1995-1996)	5.44
Jamil Mahuad (1998-2002)	5,7
Ricardo Lagos (2000-2005)	5.73

Effective number of parliamentary parties

in the appendix gives the effective number of parties present in both the lower chamber and the senate for each Latin American government in the period studied. The total that corresponds to the mean of both chambers—in the case of bicameral countries—is shown in Figure 2.

Coalitions

Strom (1990) defined a coalition as a set of political parties that agree to pursue common goals, join resources for materializing them, and distribute the benefits of the achievement of these goals. These coalitions may be pre-electoral or may be formed after the elections. The forming of coalition executives as well as their survival and effectiveness is a subject that has been dealt with extensively by researchers taking parliamentary systems as the study object.[14] However, until recently this matter had not been studied in Latin American countries, since it was thought that presidentialism generated fewer incentives for cooperation in a coalition (Stepan and Skach, 1993: 20) because under this type of government, party discipline cannot be trusted to occur (Mainwaring, 1993). Nevertheless, from 1995 onwards important studies on presidential systems in the region began to appear (Amorim, 1998; Deheza, 1998; Altman, 2001; Chasquetti, 2001; Lanzaro, 2000; Garrido, 2003; Cheibub et al., 2002) which revealed that coalition governments are set up in the region fairly frequently.

Coalitions are closely linked to legislative majorities, since the decision to share the executive among several parties depends on the percentage of seats obtained by the president's party.[15] The hypothesis the study tests is that *governments composed of one single party with a legislative majority will have greater success in having their proposals passed than those composed by a coalition, especially if the latter comprises a high number of political parties,* since the increase in the number of actors makes the president's control over them and decision making more difficult.[16]

In order to measure a variable for coalition and number of parties in the government a numerical scale has been set up that ranges from 1 to 5. The value of 5

TABLE 3

Periods of Government by Type and Number of Parties in the Executive

Single-party government with majority	Government formed by one party in minority	Coalition formed by two parties	Coalition formed by three parties	Coalition formed by four parties or more
Argentina -Carlos S. Menem (1989–1995) -Carlos S. Menem (1995–1999) -Eduardo Duhalde (2002–2003) -Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) ***Colombia*** -César Gaviria (1990–1994) ***Guatemala*** -Álvaro Arzú (1995–1999) ***Honduras*** -Rafael Callejas (1989–1993) -Carlos Reina (1993–1997) -Carlos Flores (1997–2001) ***Mexico*** -Miguel de la Madrid (1982–1988) -Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) -Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000) ***Paraguay*** -Andrés Rodríguez (1989–1993) -Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993–1998) -Raúl Cubas Grau (1998) -Luis A. González Macchi (1998–2002) ***Peru*** -Alberto Fujimori (1995–2000) ***Venezuela*** -Carlos A. Pérez (1974–1979) -Jaime Lusinchi (1984–1989)	***Argentina*** -Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1989) ***Colombia*** -Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002) *Costa Rica* -José Figueres (1994–1998) -Miguel A. Rodríguez (1998–2002) -Abel Pacheco (2002–2006) ***Ecuador*** -Jamil Mahuad (1998–2002) ***Venezuela*** -Rafael Caldera (1969–1974) -Luis H. Campins (1979–1984)	***Argentina*** -Fernando de la Rúa (1999–2002) ***Ecuador*** -Sixto Duran Ballen (1995–1996) -Abdalá Bucaram (1996–1997) -Fabián Alarcón (1997–1998) ***Peru*** -Alejandro Toledo (2001–2005) ***Uruguay*** -Julio M. Sanguinetti (1994–1999) -Jorge Battle (1999–2004) ***Mexico*** -Vicente Fox (2000–2006) ***Venezuela*** -Jorge Battle (1999–2004) -Rómulo Betancourt (1959–1964)	***Bolivia*** -Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993–1997) ***Panama*** -Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994–1999) ***Venezuela*** -Raúl Leoni (1964–1969)	***Bolivia*** -Hugo Bánzer/Jorge Quiroga (1997–2001) ***Chile*** -Patricio Alwyn (1989–1994) -Eduardo Frei (1994–2000) -Ricardo Lagos (2000–2005) ***Panama*** -Mireya Moscoso (1999–2004)
1	2	3	4	5

◆   ◆

Unfavorable to the intervention of the executive in legislative activity   Favorable to the intervention of the executive in legislative activity

Source: Authors' calculations.

is assigned to the periods of sessions in which the executive is occupied by a single party which also has a percentage of seats higher than or equal to 50%, as can be seen in Table 3.

The table shows that during the 1990s and the first years of the 2000s, forming coalitions in Latin American countries was common if not terribly frequent, which to some extent contradicts the expectations of the critics of presidentialism, who considered that such alliances had no ability to avoid the dual legitimacy and the trend to stagnation typical of systems with separation of power (Payne et al., 2003: 225). Of the forty-seven presidential periods analyzed, twenty-six were single-party governments, nineteen had an absolute majority, and eight governed in minority. The rest of the presidential periods (nineteen) were coalition governments, ten of which were formed by two political parties, three were formed by three parties, and during five presidential periods the coalition was formed by four parties. The countries that stand out for having single-party governments with an absolute majority are Honduras, Paraguay, and Guatemala, whereas the cases that concentrate coalitions with a larger number of parties are Bolivia, Chile, and Panama,[17] countries which, as has been seen above, have greater party fragmentation.

The Attitudes of the Legislators
Ideological Polarization

For Sartori and Sani (1992) the fragmentation of the party system may reflect a situation of segmentation or polarization, that is, of ideological distance.[18] Hence, they maintain that there is something fundamental that cannot be detected except by counting the political parties, since "fragmentation hinders the functioning of democracy if (and only if) it expresses the existence of polarization" (Sartori and Sani, 1992: 448). For these authors, when a system shows low values of polarization, a democracy can work even when its party system is fragmented, its social structure segmented, and its political culture heterogeneous, since polarization is what determines the stability of the democratic system. Furthermore, and once again, this variable is highly related to those given in previous sections since whether competition is centripetal or centrifugal depends

on it. If competition is centrifugal and the party system is fragmented, government coalitions will not be very viable (Oñate and Ocaña, 1999: 40). Hence, knowledge of polarization makes it possible to understand the forces that promote political agreements or render them unfit[19] and, consequently, allows spatial models of coalition formation to be tested[20] (Altman, 2002: 90).

The polarization variable is important for this research as it makes it possible to approach the degree of moderation or conflict in the relations between the executive and legislative branches. As Mainwaring and Scully (1995: 33) affirm, there is an inversely proportional relationship between party system polarization and the understanding between the branches of government. Hence, high ideological polarization hinders the coming together of common political areas on which to negotiate or reach agreements (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Hazan, 1997; Mainwaring and Shugart, 2002; and Altman, 2002). Thus, our hypothesis regarding polarization and its effect on legislative activity is that *greater ideological distances between the political parties cause greater conflict in the relations between the executive and the legislative and decrease the president's success*.

In order to capture polarization Sartori and Sani (1992) suggested seeing how distant the ideological positions of the parties are, expressed on a left-right ideological continuum. This continuum has traditionally been the backbone of political ideology but its use has been criticized for several reasons. One is that it may not be relevant in certain political systems or it may not contain the major divisions in each national context. A more general criticism mentions the emptiness of the expressions left and right as symbolic referents in today's world. Its applicability has also been questioned in Latin American countries owing, among other reasons, to the emergence of neopopulist electoral movements in which the mobilization axis does not respond to the traditional left-right ideological scale but rather to the characteristics of the political leadership. Despite all this, the use of the left-right ideological continuum remains widespread

among researchers[21] owing to the great flexibility and adaptability that it has had over time and to the fact that it is an ideological referent for the political actors and the electors who still situate themselves on the axis, thus revealing empirically that there are identifying traits that differentiate the left and the right (Zechmeister, 2004; Alcántara, 1991 and 2004; Coppedge, 1998; Ruiz, 2003). Hence, this scale will be used here to measure ideological distances, although we are aware that the polarization of the parties can always be gone into in greater depth and its understanding improved by taking into account, in addition to the place on the continuum, other variables which include fundamental and generic divisions in each specific political system.

The *polarization index* of Sartori and Sani (1992: 428) refers to the absolute difference between the average ideological self-placement of the two most extreme parties of a system divided by the theoretical maximum of that difference, which, on a left-right scale of 1 to 10, is 9.[22] The measurement ranges from 0 to 1; the values close to 1 indicate greater ideological distance between the parties. This index is very simple but is problematic because of the possible distortion owing to the existence of radical parties—which are not of great importance in the political system (Hazan 1997: 44). The *weighted polarization index* overcomes this drawback by calculating polarization taking into account both the position each party occupies on the left-right continuum and the weight that this party has in the system, measured in terms of votes or seats[23] (Oñate and Ocaña, 1999: 42). In order to prepare both indexes, PELA data from a questionnaire employed in personal interviews with the legislators[24] was used to construct a database which contains the perceptions and attitudes of members of Congress of seventeen countries in the region from 1994 to the present on several major topics.[25] Specifically, the question used to measure polarization is the one corresponding to the ideological self-placement of the representatives on the left(1)-right(10) scale.[26] Table 4 gives the values of Sartori and Sani's polarization index as well as the weighted polarization index for each of the periods of government for which data from the project are available and which coincide with those analyzed in this study.

TABLE 4

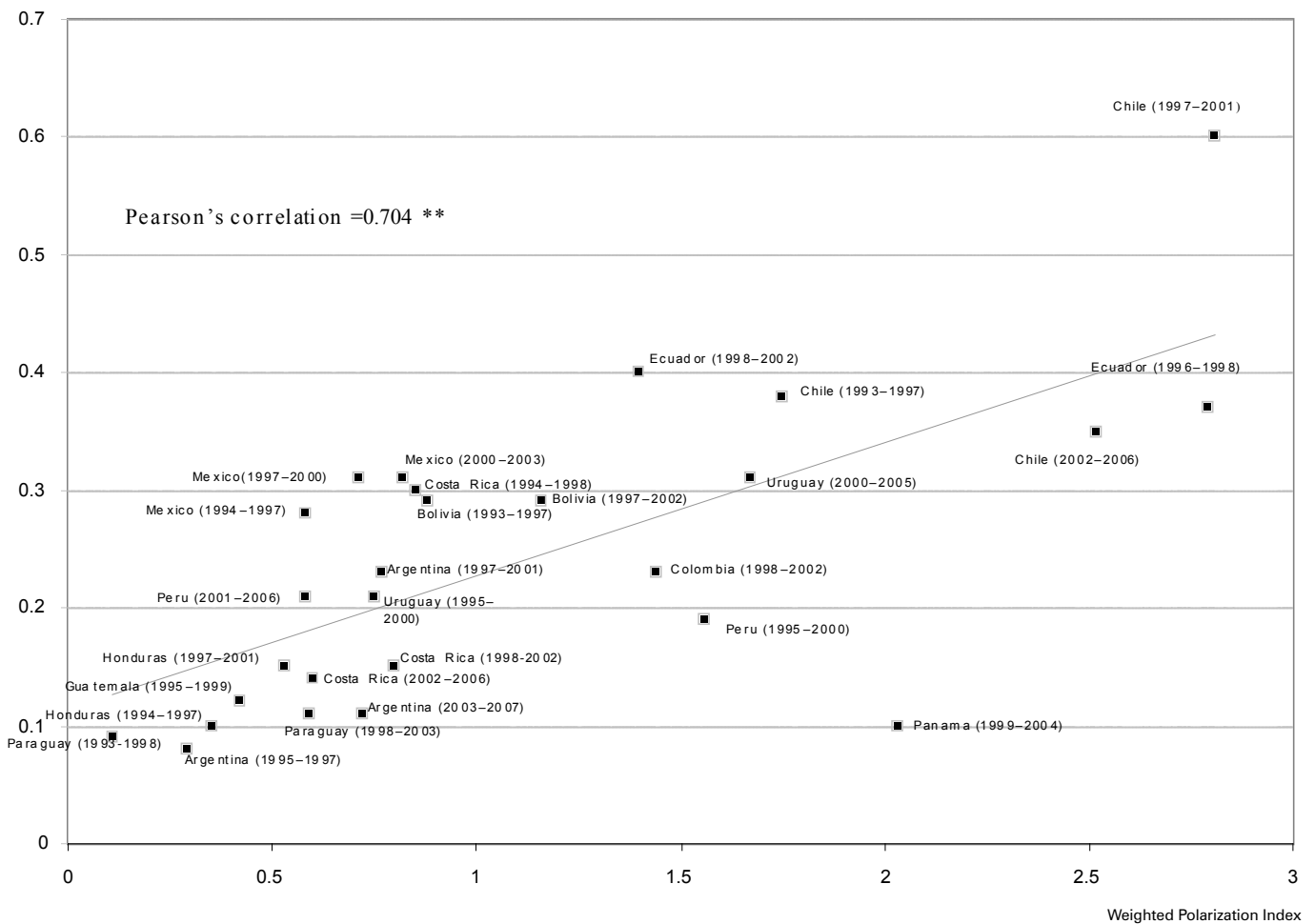**Values of the Weighted Polarization Index and Sartori and Sani's Polarization Index**

	Weighted Polarization (ideological placement)	Sartori and Sani's polarization (ideological placement)	Most extreme parties
Argentina (1995–1997)	0.29	0.08	PJ-FREPASO
Argentina (1997–2001)	0.77	0.23	PJ-FREPASO
Argentina (2003–2007)	0.72	0.11	PJ-ARI
Bolivia (1993–1997)	0.88	0.29	ADN-CONDEPA
Bolivia (1997–2002)	1.16	0.29	ADN-CONDEPA
Chile (1993–1997)	1.75	0.38	UDI-PS
Chile (1997–2001)	2.81	0.60	UDI-PS
Chile (2002–2006)	2.52	0.35	UDI-PS
Colombia (1998–2002)	1.44	0.23	PC-PL
Costa Rica (1994–1998)	0.85	0.30	PUSC-PFD
Costa Rica (1998–2002)	0.80	0.15	PUSC-PLN
Costa Rica (2002–2006)	0.60	0.14	PUSC-PLN
Ecuador (1996–1998)	2.79	0.37	PSC-MUPP/NP
Ecuador (1998–2002)	1.40	0.40	PSC-MUPP/NP
Guatemala (1995–1999)	0.42	0.12	PAN-FRG
Honduras (1994–1997)	0.35	0.10	PN-PL
Honduras (1997–2001)	0.53	0.15	PN-PL
Mexico (1994–1997)	0.58	0.28	PAN-PRD
Mexico (1997–2000)	0.71	0.31	PAN-PRD
Mexico (2000–2003)	0.82	0.31	PAN-PRD
Panama (1999–2004)	2.03	0.10	PA-PRD
Paraguay (1993–1998)	0.11	0.09	ANR-PEN
Paraguay (1998–2003)	0.59	0.11	ANR-PEN
Peru (1995–2000)	1.56	0.19	Cambio'90-APRA
Peru (2001–2006)	0.58	0.21	Unidad Nacional-UPP
Uruguay (1995–2000)	0.75	0.21	PN-FA
Uruguay (2000–2005)	1.67	0.31	PN-EP/FA

Source: Authors' data from PELA.

The Latin American countries with the most polarized party systems (see Table 4 and Figure 3) are Chile,[27] Ecuador, and Panama although there are important variations by period of government.[28] Thus, periods such as Uruguay 1999–2005, Peru 1995–2000, or Colombia 1998–2002 can be included; all these are countries which, as a whole, are not outstanding for having highly polarized party systems. Countries in which the party

system has greater ideological homogeneity are Paraguay, Honduras, Guatemala, and Argentina. Mexico is a special case since although it could be characterized as a party system of moderate polarization, the index reveals the existence of an increase in the degree of polarization from the first term of office for which information is available until the most recent period.

Figure 3: Dispersion of the ideological polarization indexes

Source: Authors' calculations from PELA.

As was to be expected, both polarization indexes maintain a very high correlation (0.704**), indicating that their measurements of the ideological distances between the parties are similar although not exactly the same. Panama (1999–2004) and Ecuador (1996–1998), as can be seen in Figure 3, are the two most outstanding cases in which the values of the two indexes do not coincide; thus, whereas Sartori and Sani's index shows that Panama is a country with low levels of polarization, the value of the weighted index reveals a polarized party system. Ecuador occupies one of the highest places with respect to its degree of weighted polarization, but if Sartori and Sani's index is taken as a reference it is in an intermediate position. This difference, in both cases, is due to the nuance introduced by weighting with the number of seats, since Panama and Ecuador are two systems with high parliamentary fragmentation despite the fact that, in relative terms, there are no great ideological distances between the parties. In this research study, therefore, we opted for the use of the weighted polarization index for testing the hypothesis that relates this variable to legislative activity because it seems to more in harmony with the political situation.

Ideological Coherence of the Government Party/Parties

Another of the variables that has been mentioned as a factor affecting legislative activity is the coherence or consistency maintained by the legislators of the executive party or the parties forming the government coalition. If polarization reflects the ideological distance between the parties, coherence seeks to reflect the intraparty distance. Our study, following Ruiz (2003) and faced with the confusion caused by the use of coherence and cohesion[29] as synonyms to reflect the attitudes inside the parties,[30] opts for the term coherence understood as "the degree of convergence among the members of a party in aspects of potential importance in the party-political arena." Among the consequences of low degrees of coherence is the difficulty in achieving political changes (Cox and McCubbins, 2001; Tsebelis, 1995, 2002). Thus, if the majority party in Congress is distant from the status quo, greater coherence of the party will mean less stability in

politics. Owing to this reasoning, authors who analyze presidentialism have assumed that predominant and coherent parties facilitate the setting in motion of policies promoted by the executive, whereas parties with little coherence hinder this type of initiative (Cox and McCubbins, 2001). Nevertheless, if the party with the majority in the Congress is identified with the status quo, the greater coherence of the party will give greater stability to politics (Pérez-Liñán and Rodríguez, 2003). The hypothesis to be tested in this study is that *the existence of greater degrees of coherence among the legislators in the president's party or in the parties forming the government coalition will increase the legislative success of the executive* since smaller attitudinal distances among the legislators of the government party or parties will make it easier to achieve cooperation and reach agreements for modifying and preparing public policies.

In order to reflect the degree of coherence of the political party or parties that support the president, ideological coherence, that is "the degree of intraparty agreement in the ideological self-placement of its members" has been used (Ruiz, 2003). The restricted use of the ideological dimension, as occurred with the polarization variable, is not entirely correct since there is a variety of dimensions with respect to which the legislators can show different levels of coherence. Thus, Ruiz and García-Montero (2003) distinguish between two dimensions: programmatic and ideological, to which Ruiz (2003) adds a third, organizational. In each of these dimensions the levels of coherence revealed by the legislators of the same party may be heterogeneous; however, in this study we opt for the ideological coherence expressed on the left-right continuum in order to test its effect on legislative activity. Although it entails a risk of losing information, this dimension was chosen because it gains in simplicity; the different political systems become more comparable; and also because of the ability this axis has to structure ideology and group attitudes symbolically, as mentioned when referring to the polarization variable.

The indicator used for measuring the degree of ideological coherence is a standard deviation (Ruiz and García-Montero, 2003; Ruiz, 2003) which shows the distance between the position in which the legislators place themselves on the ideological scale (left(1)- right(10)) and the mean for the whole government party or parties on this scale.[31] It therefore shows the variability of the legislators on the left-right continuum in relation to the mean position of their party or parties. The data used for constructing the indicator were extracted from PELA.[32] Figure 4 gives the summary of the values for the period of office as well as the party or coalition corresponding to this period.[33]

Figure 4: Ideological coherence of the government party or coalition

Source: Authors' calculations, PELA.

Attitudinal Discipline

Another of the variables where a widespread consensus is able to affect legislative results is legislative discipline. Its influence is due to the fact that a president's ability to carry through political initiatives depends on whether the party or parties supporting him/ her in the Congress also votes for his/her proposals. In presidential regimes, unlike in parliamentary systems, parties do not need to be highly disciplined, but lack of discipline often makes it more difficult to establish stable relationships between the government, the parties, and the Congress. Hence, if there is no unity in legislators' votes, presidents may not be able to promote their legislative agendas. Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) consider that discipline, together with the percentage of legislators that belong to the president's party, shapes the president's party power and this, if it is weak, makes political changes difficult and leads to institutional blocking. The literature has linked low discipline to political and legislative paralysis (Archer and Shugart, 1997; Crisp, 1997; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997; Cox and McCubbins, 2001; Mustapic, 2002), although low discipline has also been related to an increase in the personal vote on the part of the legislators as well as to a decrease in motivation for supporting public products (Ames, 2001; Carey and Shugart, 1995; Pérez-Liñán and Rodríguez, 2003). Consequently, the hypothesis that relates the variable of party discipline to legislative activity is: *low levels of discipline in the government party or parties lead to a decrease in the executive's success rates*.

In order to be able to test the hypothesis posed, an indicator must be found that measures discipline, since measurements of party discipline constructed from votes do not reflect the cost of obtaining party support because voting comes at the end of the negotiations between the presidents, party leaders, and legislators. What would be necessary for understanding this process, which in general is what is lacking, is the direction towards which the representatives lean during the processes of negotiation (Mustapic, 2000; Ames, 2000). Thus, García-Montero and Marenghi (2003) suggest understanding legislative discipline as "the *tendency* of the legislators of the same party to follow the lines marked by the party in congressional voting and unity in *behavior*

at the time of voting." Hence, for García-Montero and Marenghi, discipline has two dimensions: of attitude and of behavior or cohesion. The attitudinal dimension grows out of the values that each legislator holds individually and which form part of their own heritage and motivate them, before the vote, to make decisions that may or may not go in the direction of the designs set by the party to which they belong. The behavior dimension of discipline corresponds to the vote that the legislator actually casts in the Congress. For García-Montero and Marenghi (2003), discipline cannot be captured without taking both dimensions into account, since when legislators, influenced by their attitudes toward party discipline, decide how to vote they can go against the party line or against their own previous views of how they thought they should vote.

This is an original way of understanding discipline, since most of the studies dealing with the legislative discipline of Latin American parties empirically and/or comparatively[34] have focused on roll-call voting[35] which not only does not, in itself, reflect discipline but also has some drawbacks. The first is its low implementation in the countries in the region, to which is added the way in which its use is regulated. In some countries, such as Argentina and Paraguay, roll-call voting only takes place for certain laws and on certain occasions, whereas in other countries, such as Peru and Brazil, roll-call voting is the norm (García-Montero and Marenghi, 2003). Obviously, this makes comparison between countries difficult. Another drawback in the use of this indicator is the difficulty in gaining access to the complete data for this type of voting. Hence, in this study, without wishing to obviate the importance of voting as a reflection of behavior, we focus on the attitudinal dimension of discipline.

Once again, the data that serve to construct this indicator were taken from the PELA research project. Specifically, the items in the questionnaire that reveal attitudes toward discipline in the government party or parties are: 1) attitude toward vote discipline (understood as the predisposition to consider whether the vote should be decided freely by the legislator or by the party); 2) perception regarding the expulsion of representatives who vote against the party's decisions; 3) attitude toward the tendency to defect (whether

the seat belongs to the party or to the legislator) and 4) predisposition of the legislators to take into consideration the opinion of party leaders when making political decisions.[36] With answers to these four questions given by the legislators in the governing party/ parties a *discipline/attitudinal* indicator was constructed, with values ranging from 0 to 1. In the positions close to 1 were the legislative periods with legislators from the government party/parties with the most disciplined attitudes and, at 0, those with attitudes less favorable toward maintaining discipline.[37] The scores for the periods of office for which information is available are given in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Attitudinal discipline of the government party or parties

Paraguay (1993-1998)	ANR	0.21
Costa Rica (2002-2006)	PUSC	0.26
Mexico (1994-1997)	PRI	0.35
Paraguay (1998-2003)	ANR	0.39
Chile (2002-2006)	DC-PPD-PS	0.42
Mexico (2000-2003)	PAN	0.43
Honduras (1997-2001)	PLH	0.43
Costa Rica (1998-2002)	PUSC	0.44
Peru (2001-2006)	PP-FIM	0.44
Mexico (1997-2000)	PRI	0.46
Argentina (2003-2007)	PJ	0.48
Ecuador (1998-2002)	DP	0.50
Chile (1997-2001)	DC-PPD-PS	0.52
Colombia (1998-2002)	PL	0.52
Guatemala (1995-1999)	PAN	0.53
Bolivia (1997-2002)	ADN-MIR-CONDEPA-UCS	0.53
Panama (1999-2004)	PRD	0.61
Argentina (1997-2001)	PJ	0.62
Uruguay (1999-2005)	PC-PN	0.68
Ecuador (1996-1998)	PRE-APRE	0.69

0 — Attitude less favorable to discipline   1 — Attitude more favorable to discipline

Source: Authors' calculations, PELA

The values in this figure[38] do not have to be in harmony with the cohesion or actual behavior of the legislators when voting in the plenary (in a disciplined way or not). The values show only the representatives' predisposition to act and be influenced by the party in their voting. If the parties are faced with legislators with undisciplined attitudes, they will have to make greater efforts to achieve unity in voting by distributing incentives and penalties.

Electoral Cycle

A final explanatory factor considered in this study is the electoral cycle. It is included because of the existing consensus that after the presidential election there is a climate favorable to the executive—"the honeymoon period"—which can be taken advantage of by the president to carry through unpopular or conflictive policies. If such measures are introduced later on in the period of government, they may find more obstacles to their passage, since the likelihood of losing the favor of the legislature increases (Shugart and Carey, 1992; Coppedge, 1994; Mejía, 2000). This relationship between legislative support for the president and the electoral cycle has been considered to be one of the main differences between the presidential and parliamentary systems of government, since in parliamentary systems the legislators' support for the executive seems guaranteed after the government has been formed. In presidential systems, among the explanations for executives losing the support of Congress as the next presidential election approaches is the fact that the party leaders have to consolidate their own identities and avoid being penalized for the government's errors (Mainwaring, 1993). Thus, at the end of the presidential term, the parties are more concerned with their electoral results and will behave more like vote-seeking actors; this is even more likely in coalition governments[39] (Altman, 2001). *Hence, the hypothesis to be tested in this study is that in the sessions closest to the year in which the president was elected the executive's success is greater.*

In order to measure the electoral cycle variable, a scale was prepared with values that group the units of analysis—the parliamentary sessions—according to their

distance from the presidential election, measured in years. The percentile distribution of the periods of office analyzed here is summarized in Table 5. This table shows that the periods of office studied are divided similarly in the different years of the electoral cycle, except for the fifth year. This is because there are very few countries in which the presidential term lasts five years; in most Latin American cases the cycle is four years.

TABLE 5

Distribution of Legislative Sessions According to the Electoral Cycle

	Presidential election held in the same period as legislative session	1st	2nd	3 rd	4th	5th year	Total
N	19	26	26	22	12	3	108
%	17.6	24.1	24.1	20.4	11.1	2.8	100%

◆————————————————————————————————◆
Favors the influence of the   Unfavorable to the influence of the
executive in legislative activity   executive in legislative activity

Source: Authors' calculations.

Other Explanatory Factors

To sum up, the previous pages have focused on the operationalization of seven variables that the institutional literature has considered capable of influencing legislative activity and seven hypotheses have been outlined for testing in the following section. Nevertheless, before analyzing the effects of the independent variables defined, two factors must be commented on which may be explanatory although their weight will not be tested in this research, mainly because we lack the necessary data for their measurement and operationalization. The first of these variables and the one which is of greatest importance, especially for explaining the levels of presidential success, is popular support for the executive.[40]

Several studies have called attention to the effect of public opinion on the behavior of the legislative branch, encouraging greater congressional cooperation with the president, provided that the president has ample public backing. This relationship has been stressed in Latin American case studies, such as those carried out by Mainwaring (1997) for Brazil, Altman (2000) for Uruguay, and Calvo (2004) for Argentina. In order to evaluate the weight of this factor in legislative activity, homogeneous public opinion bases would be necessary for the fourteen countries on which this study focuses, as well as the evaluation the citizens make of the different presidents over time. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to obtain this information.

Another variable that is difficult to measure, and hence its empirical testing has been rejected, is the composition of the presidential cabinet. Amorim (1998; 2006) proposed an interesting theoretical model that explains how cabinet formation helps the president to carry through his/her legislative agenda.[41] Hence, the composition of executives' ministerial teams can help to predict their levels of success. It has not been possible to find out the composition of the cabinets and their changes for the forty presidential periods this study covers, therefore their influence cannot be shown.

TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION OF PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESS

Interactions Between the Party Variables

In the previous section it was mentioned that many of the variables that define political parties are related to each other, so that some may be the effect of others. In order to verify the relationships between these seven explanatory factors, we considered it appropriate to run a correlation analysis to find the degree of influence and relationship among them. Table 6 gives the results of the analysis and reveals the existence of some very strong pairs of associations. The correlation between the effective number of parliamentary parties and the existence of broad government coalitions is outstanding (0.765). Hence, in party systems characterized by a high number of political actors

in Congress, government coalition formation is much more frequent. Another of the relationships the data show is that between the forming of coalitions and ideological polarization (0.630). In systems in which the political parties are more polarized, more coalition governments occur.
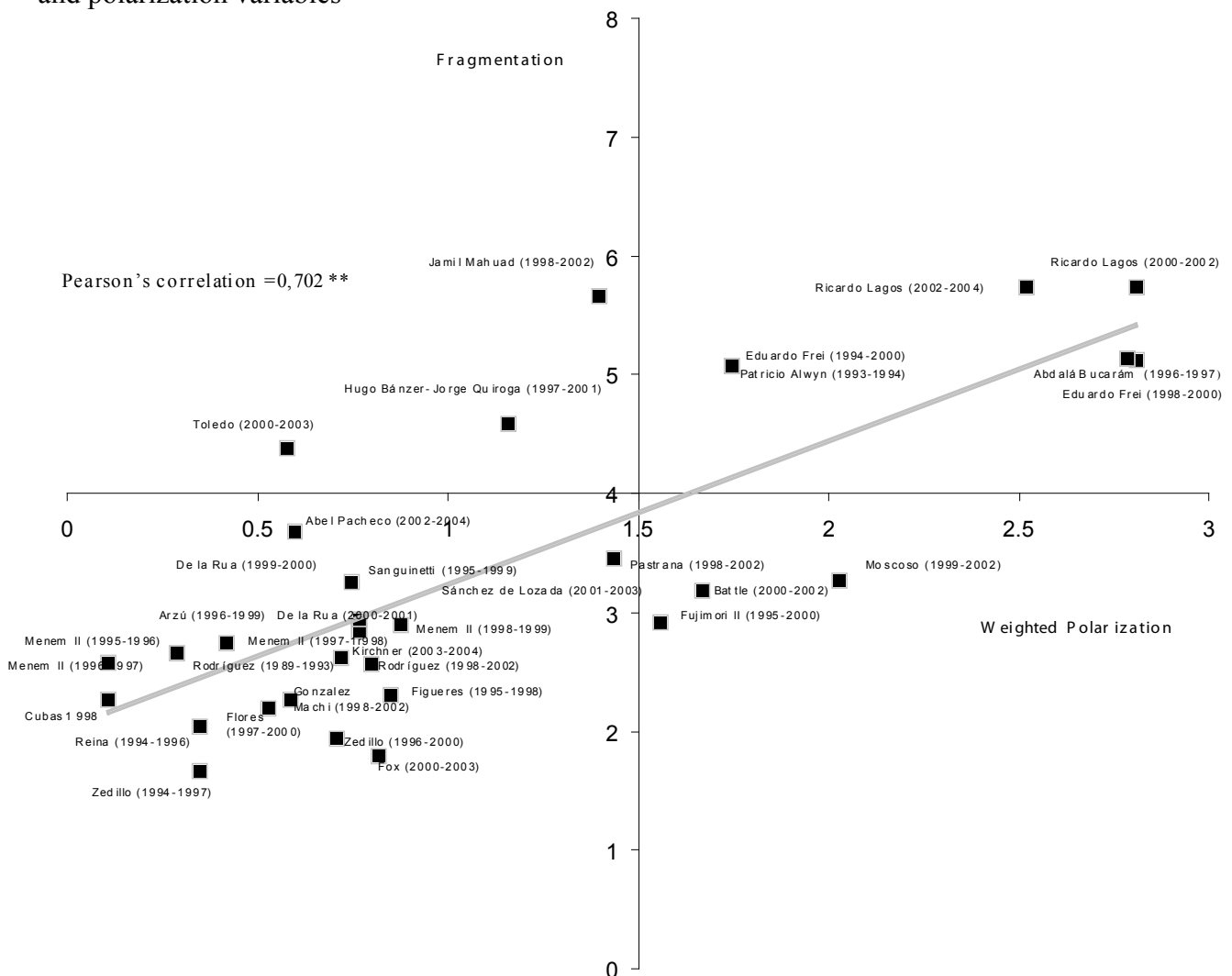
TABLE 6

Correlations Among Political Variables

		Attitudinal discipline	Effective number of parliamentary parties	Legislative majority	Weighted polarization	Party coherence/ government coalition	Electoral cycle
Effective number of parliamentary parties	Pearson's correlation	0.144					
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.295					
	N	55					
Legislative majority	Pearson's correlation	-0.018	-0.306(**)				
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.897	0.001				
	N	55	118				
Weighted polarization	Pearson's correlation	0.429(**)	0.735(**)	-0.260(*)			
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.001	0.000	0.022			
	N	53	78	78	78		
Party coherence/ government coalition	Pearson's correlation	-0.211	0.046	0.118	-0.089		
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.130	0.691	0.305	0.438		
	N	53	78	78	78	78	
Number of years since presidential election	Pearson's correlation	-0.077	-0.049	0.038	0.000	0.000	
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.583	0.618	0.696	0.999	0.999	
	N	53	108	108	75	75	108
Coalition and number of parties in the government	Pearson's correlation	0.302(*)	0.765(**)	0.017	0.603(**)	0.002	0.103
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.025	0.000	.857	0.000	0.988	0.290
	N	55	118	118	78	78	108

** Correlation significant at level 0.01 (bilateral).
* Correlation significant at level 0.05 (bilateral).

This relationship, however, needs explaining, since both variables show a high association, not because the ideological distances help coalitions to form but rather because in fragmented party systems, in which coalitions are more likely, polarization is higher (0.735).[42] Figure 6 shows the dispersion of the different periods of government in the crossing of the weighted polarization and fragmentation variables. The trend line clearly reflects the existence of the positive linear relationship between the number of parties and ideological polarization. Specifically, Chile and Ecuador are the two countries that stand out by occupying the most extreme position in both variables; in the last

Figure 6: Dispersion of the periods of government on the crossing of the fragmentation and polarization variables

Source: Authors' calculations from the composition of the Congress and PELA.

decade[43] their presidents have had as their counterpart parliaments with high ideological polarization, formed by a high number of influential parties. Other Latin American presidents who acted in contexts of high fragmentation, albeit with a less extreme situation as regards degree of polarization, were Alejandro Toledo in Peru and Hugo Bánzer in Bolivia, although in most of the Latin American presidential terms considered in this study the effective number of parties in the parliament did not reach extreme pluralism. Thus, the presidents of Argentina, Honduras and Paraguay, among others, acted in two-party scenarios or scenarios of two-and-a-half parties with low polarization, which is a frequent situation in Latin America.[44]

Other significant correlations, although much more moderate, are those established between: ideological polarization and attitudinal discipline (0.429), which shows that the legislators most identified with and open to following the guidelines dictated by their parties are those who act in contexts with great ideological polarization; fragmentation and legislative majorities (-0.306), showing that the greater the number of parties in the parliament, the lower the percentage of legislators the government controls;[45] forming coalitions and attitudinal discipline (0.302), which indicates that in governments composed of a greater number of parties attitudinal discipline is higher; and legislative majorities and the degree of ideological polarization, whereby in systems in which the government has a more solid majority there is a lower degree of ideological polarization in the political parties.[46] Finally, the only variable among those considered which is not linked to the political actors is the electoral cycle and, as might be expected, it has no statistically significant relationship with any of the other explanatory factors that refer to the party system.

The correlations found in the previous analyses empirically confirm the existence of very strong associations between some of the variables linked to the party system. However, their impact on legislative activity remains to be tested; this will be dealt with in the following pages. In order to test the hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was
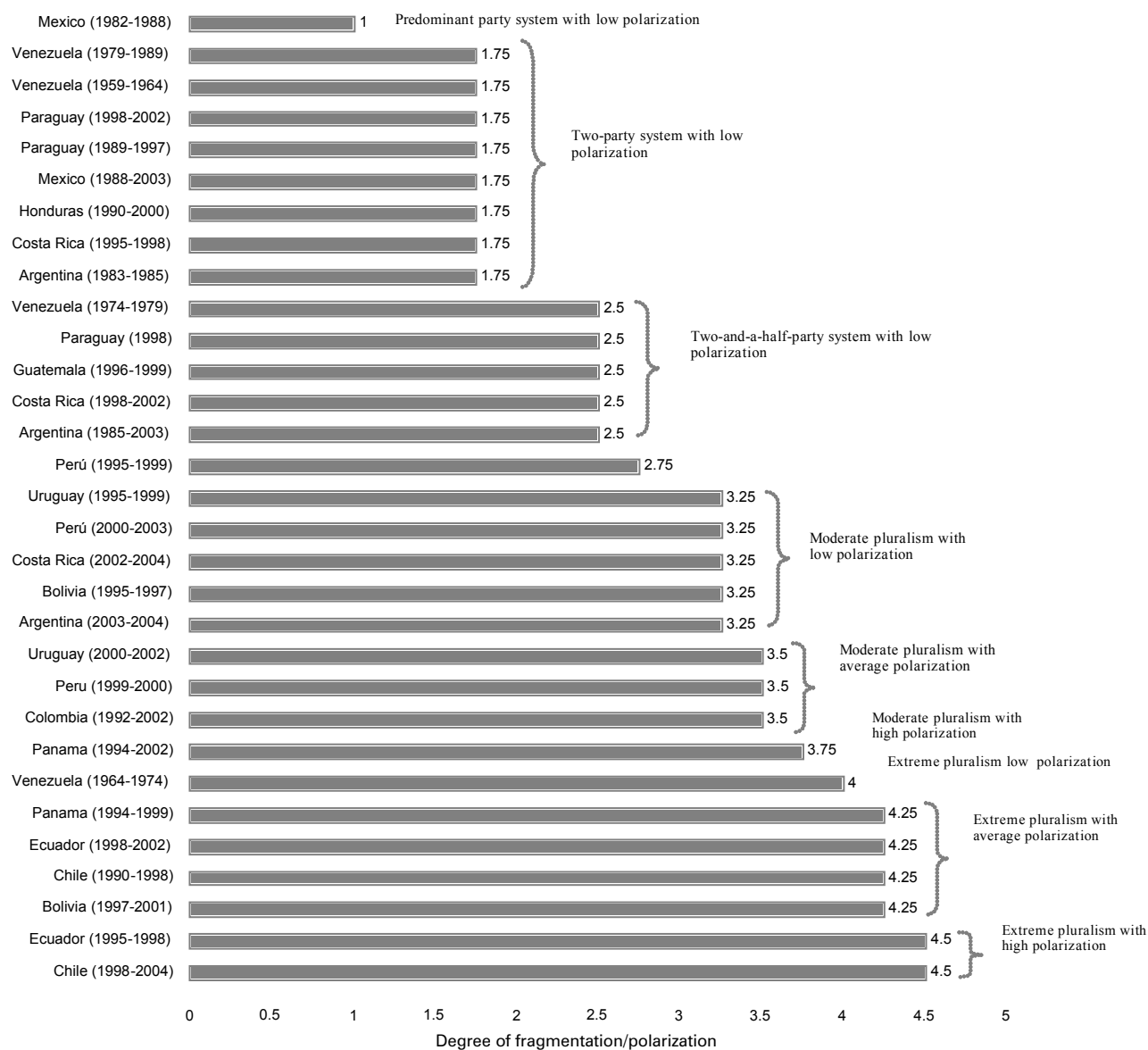
chosen as a route to find the possible relationships between the independent variables defined and the rates of presidential success.

Among the conditions necessary for guaranteeing the validity of the statistical model chosen is non-collinearity. As has been observed, three of the independent variables defined (parliamentary fragmentation; ideological polarization; and coalitions with the number of parties forming them) show very high association, with Pearson's correlation index being higher than 0.5,[47] thus revealing a linear relationship among them. It was therefore decided to eliminate the variable of coalitions and the number of parties forming them, since the information it provides was already contained, to a large extent, in the variable for congressional party fragmentation, given that the forming of these governments depends, as has been seen, on the number of parties present in the parliament.

Furthermore, we decided to merge two variables: ideological polarization and fragmentation, as we considered that, although they are related, they refer to different issues. In order to merge the two factors without losing the information they contain, a new indicator was created in the form of a scale ranging from 1 to 4.5.[48] Predominant party systems with low polarization would be situated at 1 and extreme pluralistic systems with high polarization at the maximum value, 4.5. The hypothesis to be tested is that in the periods of sessions in which *a large number of highly polarized parties act, executive success will be lower than in those periods in which the number of parties present in the Congress is lower and their ideological distance is small*.

Figure 7 groups the countries according to the value they take in the new indicator arising from the merging of the polarization and fragmentation variables. Given that in the period analyzed in this research elections have been held in the different countries to renew both the executive and the legislative branches, the value of the indicator is not the same in each country, although the trend is for there to be no major changes in the values, since a brusque change would mean a point of inflection in the party system.[49]

Figure 7: Values adopted by the countries in the merging of the fragmentation and polarization variable

Source: Authors' calculations from the effective number of parties and the weighted polarization index.

Explanatory Analysis

Once the problem of collinearity has been overcome, the explanatory analysis can be performed through multiple regression.[50] Table 7 summarizes the hypotheses posed, all linear relations. Two models are proposed for testing them. In the first, the explanatory model for success contains only the independent variables relating to the parties and

the electoral cycle, and the weight of the ILIP is not tested. In the second model. the

institutional index has been added to the explanatory factors previously mentioned in

order to isolate both party system effects and institutional effects.

TABLE 7

Hypotheses of Relationship Between Legislative Activity and Executive Success

Independent variable	Hypothesis
Index of legislative institutional power (ILIP)	In legislative periods characterized by high ILIP values, the executive has greater success in passing its proposals
Legislative majority	When the president has the support of an ample percentage of seats in parliament, executive success in passing proposals increases
Ideological coherence government party/coalition (Self-placement variable)	As ideological differences decrease and there is greater coherence between the legislators belonging to the coalition party supporting the executive, the president's success increases
Fragmentation and polarization of the party system	The existence of a large number of highly polarized parties in Congress reduces executive success
Attitudinal discipline	Low levels of discipline in the government party or parties lead to a reduction in the executive's rates of success
Electoral cycle (number of years since the election of the president)	The longer the executive is in office, the more the president's success decreases

Table 8 shows that in the first model, two of the party factors proposed have

a significant joint impact on the variability of the executive's success. Specifically,

the ideological coherence of the government party or coalition and the percentage

of legislators supporting the executive have an influence on the number of laws the

executive manages to pass. These two variables together explain 11% of the variance

of presidential success. The factor with the greatest statistical strength in the impact on

success is a legislative majority, thus confirming the starting hypothesis that the control

of a higher percentage of legislators by the executive increases the number of president-

proposed initiatives the parliament passes. Although with less strength, ideological coherence also affects the degree of presidential success, since in periods of office in which the party or parties of the executive maintain greater ideological distances at the intraparty level, the president achieves a lower percentage in passing of initiatives he/ she presents in the Congress. The explanatory factors that have no statistical strength for discriminating the degree of executive success are attitudinal discipline, fragmentation and polarization of the parties in the legislature, and the electoral cycle, although the sign shown by these three variables tends toward the direction proposed by the starting hypotheses.

TABLE 8

Explanatory Models of Executive Success

Independent variables	Model 1 Executive success (without ILIP)				Model 2 Executive success (with ILIP)			
	B	Beta	t	Sig.	B	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	100.185		4.245	0.000**	71.183		3.733	0.001**
Attitudinal discipline	-42.608	-0.082	-1.461	0.154	-41.623	-0.236	-1.861	0.072
Fragmentation and polarization	-1.790	-0.082	-0.512	0.612	-24.810	-1.138	-4.543	0.000**
Electoral cycle (number of years since the election of the president)	-2.303	-0.161	-0.955	0.347	-5.264	-0.367	-2.701	0.011*
Coherence of government party/ coalition (self-placement variable)	-17.876	-0.372	-2.171	0.037**	-9.624	-0.201	-1.471	0.151
Legislative majority	0.479	0.384	2.314	0.027**	0.949	0.761	5.101	0.000**
ILIP					164.856	1.274	4.838	0.000**
R2 corrected	0.110				0.476			

** Relation significant at 0.01 (two-party).

* Relation significant at 0.05 (two-party).

In addition to the factors that refer to the political parties and the electoral cycle, the second model contains the index that summarizes institutional power, ILIP. With its introduction, prediction of legislative activity improves visibly, as does the goodness of fit of the model.

Taken together, the ILIP, fragmentation and polarization of the parties with parliamentary representation, the percentage of legislators with similar interests to the government, and the electoral cycle explain 47% of the variance in executive success.

The two most important variables in the regression equation in this model are the institutional index, confirming that institutional designs more favorable to the influence of the executive increase the government's success significantly, and the existence of a legislative majority in favor of the president. The degree of success can also be largely explained by the number of parties present in the parliament and their degree of polarization: the greater the latter, the lower the percentage of laws that the president manages to carry through Congress. A final variable with significant influence on the dependent dimension, although with less weight than the others, is the electoral cycle, which confirms the starting hypothesis that newly elected presidents achieve greater legislative success.

These results show that institutions are important in determining the president's legislative success. Hence, Latin American executives achieve greater influence if they have institutional benefits, although it also helps if they have ample majorities, if the parties present in the parliament are few and ideologically close, and they recently assumed office.

These results are consistent with most of the hypotheses posed in the research. It is not the aim of this study to affirm that the final model maintains a causal effect at other times or in other regions. However, it can be said that these results are not contradictory and show validity despite the fact that the explanation of presidential success can be visibly improved with the introduction of other variables, an increase in the sample, or the testing of the hypotheses in other regions.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has analyzed the main party-linked variables that the institutional literature has considered strong enough to intervene in presidential success, and has tested the weight of these variables, together with the institutional design, in the legislative passage rates achieved by Latin American executives. Six of the explanatory factors operationalized in the previous pages are related to the political parties: three focus on their number and parliamentary presence (legislative majorities, fragmentation, coalition formation) and the other three refer to the ideological attitudes shown by the parties (polarization, coherence, and attitudinal legislative discipline). Besides these variables there is the electoral cycle and the institutions operationalized by means of the index of legislative institutional power (ILIP).

The procedure followed with each of the variables was to first prepare the theoretical hypothesis that relates each factor to legislative success, and then to seek the best indicator for its measurement and empirical testing. Nevertheless, the description of the values that each variable acquires in the different periods and countries analyzed in the research offered information beyond that strictly related to the dependent variable. Thus evidence was found to show that, although there is a tendency for a legislative bottleneck to occur when there is a minority government, this is very slight, which gives nuance to some of the suppositions that maintain that when this situation occurs under a form of presidential government, it leads to institutional paralysis. Likewise, we confirmed that the forming of coalition governments, although not the majority situation, has in fact occurred fairly frequently in Latin American countries, contradicting the critics of presidentialism who asserted that these alliances did not have the ability to prevent dual legitimacy and the trend to stagnation typical of this form of government.

As regards the different explanatory factors, a great deal of the literature links one to another. In this study we confirmed that there is a very high association between fragmentation and the need to form coalitions as well as between fragmentation and

ideological polarization. Other more moderate and unfamiliar relationships that merit more detailed exploration and which are beyond the scope of this study are those found between ideological polarization, the forming of coalitions, and attitudinal discipline.

With respect to the determinants of legislative success, our analyses revealed the importance of the institutional index in improving the prediction of presidential success. It responds to a linear combination of different variables, but the factors that stand out with most influence on variability are the ILIP and legislative majorities. To sum up, the scenario that increases the president's legislative success is characterized by an institutional design defined by the rules of Congress and the Constitution. Such a design favors executive influence, an ample legislative majority, a legislature composed of few parties with low ideological polarization, and in terms of electoral cycle, the time when the president has just taken office.

APPENDIX

TABLE A

Institutional Hypotheses that Guide the Construction of the Index of Legislative Institutional Power (ILIP)

ILIP indicator	1. Executive success Hypotheses
Initiating stage	
Exclusive initiative	In countries in which the executive has more power of exclusive initiative, legislative success in passing proposals is greater
Setting of the agenda	Procedures which concentrate the preparation of the agenda in the hands of a few actors favor the executive's legislative success
Type of majority for modifying the agenda	Procedures that hinder modification of the agenda favor the success of the executive
Constitutive stage	
Committee members	In countries where the election of the committee members is more centralized (the responsibility of fewer actors) the executive's legislative success is higher
Prerogatives for omitting the committee procedure	The regulations that facilitate obviating the committee stage in the legislative process favor the executive's legislative success
Legislative power of committees	The greater the legislative prerogatives of the committees, the lesser the success of the executive
Ability of the executive to force urgent processing	Where executive prerogatives facilitate the urgent processing of executive projects, success in passing initiatives will be greater
Number of chambers	In countries where the legislature has two chambers executive success is less
Bicameral government systems	
Degree of symmetry	In countries with a bicameral system in which there is symmetry in both chambers, the executive will have less success in passing proposals
Disagreement between chambers (total rejection)	Asymmetric procedures for solving disagreement between the chambers when a bill is rejected favors the success of the executive if one of the chambers loses veto strength
Disagreement between chambers (modifications)	In countries with a two-chamber system with more concentrated forms for solving conflicts the executive's success increases, since it is easier for the legislative group supporting the government in one of the chambers to impose its criterion
Effectiveness stage	
Total veto and override	Where very restrictive majorities are required in order to override the presidential veto, the executive's success will be greater
Partial veto and override	In countries where it is possible to partially veto bills and overrides requires very ample majorities, the power of veto is stronger and the success of the executive greater.
Extraordinary legislative procedures	
Power of decree	In countries in which the power of the president to legislate by decree is contemplated, the legislative success of the executive will be greater
Calling of extraordinary sessions	Where the executive is able to call for extraordinary sessions, the executive's legislative success will be greater

Source: García (2007).

TABLE B

Index of Institutional Legislative Poer (ILIP) Values by Stages and Totals

	Initiating stage	Constitutive stage	Bicameral	Effectiveness stage	Extraordinary procedure	Total	Total (0–1)
Argentina 1853	*	*	0	0.65	0.83	1.48	0.49
Argentina 1853 (1994)	0.13	0.13	0	0.65	0.63	1.54	0.31
Bolivia 1967	0.61	0.31	0.6	0.25	0.3	2.07	0.41
Chile 1980	0.86	0.58	0.8	0.65	0.63	3.52	0.70
Colombia 1991	0.62	0.23	0.4	0.28	1	2.53	0.51
Costa Rica 1949	0.17	0.31	**	0.33	0.5	1.31	0.33
Ecuador 1979	*	0.21	**	1	0.57	1.78	0.59
Ecuador 1998	0.41	0.35	**	1	0.57	2.33	0.58
Guatemala 1985	0.19	0.46	**	0.33	0.47	1.45	0.36
Honduras 1982	0.33	0.5	**	0.25	0.47	1.55	0.39
Mexico 1917	0.19	0.38	0.4	0.42	0.17	1.56	0.31
Panama 1972	0.43	0.42	**	0.83	0.83	2.51	0.63
Paraguay 1967	*	*	0.2	0.62	1	1.82	0.61
Paraguay 1992	0.39	0.38	0.2	0.45	0.3	1.72	0.34
Peru 1993	0.36	0.33	**	0.1	1	1.79	0.45
Uruguay 1967	0.49	0.55	0.2	0.47	0.47	2.18	0.44
Venezuela 1953	*	*	0.2	0.65	0.1	0.95	0.32
Venezuela 1961	*	*	0.2	0.65	0.67	1.52	0.51

Source: Authors' data.
*In these cases the prevailing regulations for the constitutional period are lacking; hence, the index was calculated taking into account only the constitutional prerogatives of the stage and weighting their value over the total value that the index can reach without the aforementioned prerogatives being present.
** Countries with single-chamber legislative design.

TABLE C

Percentage of Legislators Supporting the Government

President (term of office)	Party/parties	% Legislators in president's party Lower Chamber (election)	% Legislators in government party/parties Lower Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators in president's party Upper Chamber (election)	% Legislators in government party/parties Upper Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators in government party/parties total
Argentina						
Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1985)	UCR	51.19	51.19	39.10	39.10	45.15
(1985–1987)	UCR	50.79	50.79	39.10	39.10	44.95
(1987–1989)	UCR	44.49	44.49	39.10	39.10	41.80
Carlos S. Menem (1989–1991)	PJ	48.03	48.03	56.50	56.50	52.27
(1991–1993)	PJ	45.53	45.53	58.30	58.30	51.92
(1993–1995)	PJ	49.03	49.03	58.30	58.30	53.67
(1995–1997)	PJ	51.75	51.75	55.50	55.50	53.63
(1997–1999)	PJ	46.30	46.30	55.50	55.50	50.90
Fernando de la Rúa (1999–2001)	UCR/FREPASO	33.07	48.25	30.60	30.60	39.43
(2001–2002)	UCR/FREPASO	27.63	34.24	30.60	30.60	32.42
Eduardo Duhalde (2002–2003)	PJ	47.50	47.50	65.9	56.9	52.20
Néstor Kirchner (2003–2004)	PJ	52.10	52.10	55.50	55.50	53.80
Bolivia						
Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993–1997)	MNR/UCS/MBL	40.0	60.77	62.96	66.66	61.87
Hugo Bánzer/Jorge Quiroga (1997–2001)	ADN/MIR/ CONDEPA/UCS	25.38	73.85	40.74	85.18	79.51
Chile						
Patricio Alwyn (1989–1994)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	31.67	51.67	27.65	46.80	49.23
Eduardo Frei (1994–1997)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	29.17	56.67	28.26	45.65	51.16
(1997–2000)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	30.80	58.33	29.16	41.67	49.99
Ricardo Lagos (2000–2005)	DC/PPD/PS/PR	10.00	53.33	10.41	41.67	47.50
Colombia						
César Gaviria (1990–1994)	PL	59.80	59.80	57.89	57.89	58.84
Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002)	PC	32.30	32.30	14.70	14.70	23.50
Costa Rica						
José Figueres (1994–1998)	PLN	49.12	49.12			49.12
Miguel A. Rodríguez (1998–2002)	PUSC	47.37	47.37			47.37
Abel Pacheco (2002–2006)	PUSC	33.33	33.33			33.33
Ecuador						
Sixto Duran Ballen (1995–1996)	PUR/PCE	2.6	11.69			11.69
Abdalá Bucaram (1996–1997)	PRE/APRE	24.39	28.6			28.6
Fabián Alarcón (1997–1998)	PRE/APRE	24.39	28.6			28.6
Jamil Mahuad (1998–2002)	DP	28.93	28.93			28.93
Guatemala						
Álvaro Arzú (1995–1999)	PAN	53.75	53.75			53.75
Honduras						
Rafael Callejas (1989–1993)	PNH	55.47	55.47			55.47
Carlos Reina (1993–1997)	PLH	55.47	55.47			55.47
Carlos Flores (1997–2001)	PLH	52.34	52.34			52.34

TABLE C (continued)

Percentage of Legislators Supporting the Government

President (term of office)	Party/parties	% Legislators in president's party Lower Chamber (election)	% Legislators in government party/parties Lower Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators in president's party Upper Chamber (election)	% Legislators in government party/parties Upper Chamber (coalition)	% Legislators in government party/parties total
Mexico						
Miguel de la Madrid (1982–1985)	PRI	74.75	74.75	98.44	98.44	86.60
(1985–1988)	PRI	73.00	73.00	98.44	98.44	85.72
Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1991)	PRI	52.00	52.00	93.75	93.75	72.88
(1991–1994)	PRI	64.00	64.00	95.31	95.31	79.66
Ernesto Zedillo (1994–1997)	PRI	60.00	60.00	74.21	74.21	67.10
(1997–2000)	PRI	47.80	47.80	60.15	60.15	53.97
Vicente Fox (2000–2003)	PAN/PARM	41.40	44.60	35.93	35.93	40.27
Panama						
Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994–1997)	PRD/PALA/LIBRE	41.79	43.10			43.10
Mireya Moscoso (1999–2004)	PA/PDC/PLN/					
Solidaridad	25.4	39.4			39.4	
Paraguay						
Andrés Rodríguez (1989–1993)	ANR	66.70	66.70	66.66	66.66	66.69
Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993–1998)	ANR	47.50	47.50	44.44	44.44	45.97
Raúl Cubas Grau (1998)	ANR	56.30	56.30	53.33	53.33	54.82
Luis A. González Macchi (1998–2002)	ANR	56.30	56.30	53.33	53.33	54.82
Peru						
Alberto Fujimori (1995–2000)	Cambio90	55.83	55.83			55.83
Alberto Fujimori (2000–2001)	Cambio90	43.33	433.33			43.33
Alejandro Toledo (2001–2005)	PP/FIM	37.50	46.67			46.67
Uruguay						
Julio M. Sanguinetti (1994–1999)	PC/PN	32.30	55.60	33.33	67.67	61.64
Jorge Battle (1999–2004)	PC/PN	32.30	55.60	32.26	54.83	55.22
Venezuela						
Rómulo Betancourt (1959–1964)	AD/COPEI	54.90	69.17	62.70	74.50	71.84
Raúl Leoni (1964–1969)	AD/FDP/URD	33.17	55.78	46.80	70.20	62.99
Rafael Caldera (1969–1974)	COPEI	27.60	27.60	17	17	22.30
Carlos A. Pérez (1974–1979)	AD	51.00	51.00	59.60	59.60	55.30
Luis H Campins (1979–1984)	COPEI	42.20	42.20	47.70	47.70	44.95
Jaime Lusinchi (1984–1989)	AD	55.90	55.90	63.60	63.60	59.75

Source: Authors' calculations using data on chamber composition.

TABLE D

Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties in the Chamber of Representatives, Chamber of Senators and Total of Both Chambers by Term of Office

President (term of office)	ENP Chamber of Representatives	ENP Chamber of Senators	ENP Total Both Chambers
Argentina			
Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1985)	2.19	2.6	2.4
(1985–1987)	2.4	2.6	2.5
(1987–1989)	2.75	2.6	2.68
Carlos S. Menem (1989–1991)	2.79	2.33	2.56
(1991–1993)	3.15	2.4	2.78
(1993–1995)	2.86	2.4	2.63
(1995–1997)	2.86	2.42	2.64
(1997–1999)	3.25	2.4	2.83
Fernando de la Rúa (1999–2001)	3.45	2.4	2.93
Fernando de la Rúa/Eduardo Duhalde (2001–2003)	3.43	2.35	2.89
Néstor Kirchner (2003–2004)	2.75	2.46	2.61
Bolivia			
Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993–1997	3.71	2.05	2.88
Hugo Bánzer/Jorge Quiroga (1997–2001)	5.5	3.66	4.58
Chile			
Patricio Alwyn (1989–1993)	5.2	4.83	5.02
Patricio Alwyn /Eduardo Frei (1993–1996)	4.88	5.26	5.07
Eduardo Frei (1996–1997)	4.88	5.14	5.01
(1997–2000)	5.07	5.14	5.11
Ricardo Lagos (2000–2005)	6.1	5.36	5.73
Colombia			
César Gaviria (1990–1994)	3	2.22	2.61
Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002)	3.28	3.62	3.45
Costa Rica			
José Figueres (1994–1998)	3.29		3.29
Miguel A. Rodríguez (1998–2002)	2.56		2.56
Abel Pacheco (2002–2006)	4.68		4.68
Ecuador			
Sixto Duran Ballen (1995–1996)	5.44		5.44
Abdalá Bucaram (1996–1997)	5.13		5.13
Fabián Alarcón (1997–1998)	5.13		5.13
Jamil Mahuad (1998–2002)	5.66		5.66
Guatemala			
Álvaro Arzú (1995–1999)	2.73		2.73
Argentina			
Honduras			
Rafael Callejas (1989–1993)	2		2
Carlos Reina (1993–1997)	2.03		2.03
Carlos Flores (1997–2001)	2.18		2.18

TABLE D (continued)

**Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties in the Chamber of Representatives,
Chamber of Senators and Total of Both Chambers by Term of Office**

President (term of office)	ENP Chamber of Representatives	ENP Chamber of Senators	ENP Total Both Chambers
Mexico			
Miguel de la Madrid (1982–1985)	1.73	1	1.37
(1985–1988)	1.83	1	1.42
Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1991)	3.04	1	2.02
(1991–1994)	2.21	1	1.61
Ernesto Zedillo (1994–1997)	2.29	1	1.65
(1997–2000)	2.86	1	1.93
Vicente Fox (2000–2003)	2.55	1	1.78
Panama			
Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994–1997)	4.33		4.33
Mireya Moscoso (1999–2004)	3.26		3.26
Paraguay			
Andrés Rodríguez (1989–1993)	1.97	2.55	2.26
Juan Carlos Wasmosy (1993–1998)	1.89	1.85	1.87
Raúl Cubas Grau (1998)	2.45	2.69	2.57
Luis A. González Macchi (1998–2002)	1.97	2.55	2.26
Peru			
Alberto Fujimori (1995–2000)	2.91		2.91
Alberto Fujimori (2000–2001)	3.97		3.97
Alejandro Toledo (2001–2005)	4.37		4.37
Uruguay			
Julio M. Sanguinetti (1994–1999)	3.3	3.19	3.25
Jorge Battle (1999–2004)	3.07	3.27	3.17
Venezuela			
Rómulo Betancourt (1959–1964)	2.58	2.2	2.39
Raúl Leoni (1964–1969)	5.35	3.46	4.41
Rafael Caldera (1969–1974)	4.89	4.01	4.45
Carlos A. Pérez (1974–1979)	2.72	2.3	2.51
Luis H. Campins (1979–1984)	2.65	2.18	2.42
Jaime Lusinchi (1984–1989)	2.42	1.99	2.21

Source: Authors' calculations.

TABLE E

Construction of the Indicator for Attitudinal Discipline

Questions used

"The subject of discipline has traditionally given rise to highly diverse opinions. With which of the following opinions are you most in agreement?" - Party discipline should always be demanded in the parliamentary group; Each representative should be allowed to vote according to his/her own criterion; Some matters should be subject to discipline and others not.

"Next, I would like to know whether you are very much, quite a lot, not very much, or not at all in agreement with the following statement: a political party should expel members of Congress who vote against their party's political decisions."

"Sometimes a representative who has been elected in the lists of a certain party later decides to break with the party. On these occasions, what do you think the representative should do? - Keep his/her seat and join another parliamentary group or resign so that another candidate from the party on whose lists he/she was elected can occupy it?"

"To what extent do you take into account the opinion of your party leaders when making political decisions? - Very much, quite a lot, not very much, not at all."

Transformation

The transformations made with the question values to construct the indicator were carried out in two steps. First the four questions were recoded so that each would acquire a maximum value of 1. Thus, in the question about attitude toward party discipline, legislators in favor of representatives voting according to their own criterion were coded 0. Representatives who thought that vote discipline should always be demanded were assigned the value 1, whereas those who thought that discipline should be subject to the issues received a value of 0.5.

The question concerning agreement with the expulsion of legislators who vote against the political decisions of their party was transformed so that those who were not at all in favor of expulsion were given a value of 0, those who were not very much in agreement with the expulsion were assigned 0.33, those who were quite in agreement, 0.66, and those who were totally in agreement, 1.

On as to whether a representative who leaves the party he/she was elected for should keep the seat or resign it, those who thought he/she should leave the position as representative were given a 1, and legislators who thought that the seat should be kept received a 0.

The question about the degree to which the legislators take into account the opinion of their party leaders when making political decisions was transformed so that those who say they take them greatly into account received a value of 1, those who take them into account quite a lot, 0.66, those who do not take them very much into account, 0.33, and those who do not take them into account at all, 0.

The second step was to calculate the means obtained in the four questions and transform them into a scale ranking from 0 to 1. This scale is the indicator that measures attitudinal discipline in the study. In the values close to 1 would be those terms of office where the representatives of the government party or parties have an attitude more favorable to discipline and in the values close to 0, those less favorable to receiving instructions from their party.

Source: Author's calculations, PELA.

ENDNOTES

[1] One of the main reasons for the low number of studies is the difficulty in gaining access to the lawmaking data of many of Latin American congresses. For Mexico, see Casar (2002), Hurtado (2002), Ugalde (2003), Alarcón and Jiménez (2003), Nava and Yañez (2003), Weldon (2004) or Jiménez (2004); for Brazil, Cheibub Limongi (2000), Ricci (2002); Samuels (2002) or Amorim and Santos (2003); for Argentina Molinelli et al. (1999), Mustapic (2002), Calvo (2004) or Calvo and Alemán (2006); for Chile, Siavelis (2002); for Honduras, Taylor and Díaz (1999); for Nicaragua, Navarro (2004); for Central America, Ajenjo (2005); for Ecuador, Mejía (2000); for Uruguay, Lanzaro et al. (2000); for Paraguay, Molinas et al. (2004) and for Venezuela, Amorim and Malgar (2000).

[2] Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Honduras, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

[3] This research project, directed by Manuel Alcántara, has been carried out in the lower chambers of Latin American countries since 1994; its objective is to collect the values and attitudes of Latin American members of Congress by means of a questionnaire applied to a representative sample of the members of Congress of the different countries in the region. For further information on this research see García-Diez and Mateos (2008) and Alcántara (2008).

[4] It relates the number of initiatives that the executive presents in a session to the number of initiatives from the actors themselves which are passed. The empirical data in this study were collected within the framework of the research project directed by Manuel Alcántara, "El Parlamento en América Latina. Rendimiento del Poder Legislativo: Una clave interpretativa de los problemas de gobernabilidad de la región". Hence, most were obtained from primary sources, except those for Paraguay, taken from the study by Molinas et al. (2004), the data on Honduras prior to 1997, from the study by Taylor and Díaz (1999) and the data for Venezuela, from Amorim and Malgar (2000).

[5] Unfortunately it was not possible to include eighteen Latin American countries, as was our intention, owing to the difficulty in gaining access to the data on legislative activity in Latin America. However, having information on twelve is considered sufficient for performing the analysis the study proposes, since the cases analyzed are sufficiently representative of the regional situation. The Latin American countries not analyzed in the research are: Brazil, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic; Colombia and Guatemala are considered in some instances.

[6] It is not our purpose here to make an in-depth study of each of the countries and verify the type of legislation the executive power initiates (its level of aggregation, its effect, or its subject matter) but rather to concentrate on the president's "success" rates. Hence, the laws themselves will not be classified. Evidently, the subject matter of a law affects the probability of its being passed. For some authors (Adler and Wikerson 2005), rather than showing the success of an actor in the passing of his/her proposals, an attempt should be made to show the common qualities of the laws passed and explain why these qualities are associated with the degree of "success." We are, therefore, aware that by not classifying them, the "success" indicator becomes related to laws of unequal importance.

[7] For example, in Western Germany in the period 1949–87 the percentage of government proposals passed was 84%; in Great Britain from 1950 to 1970 it was 95%; in Spain from 1982 to 2004, 88.3%; and in Belgium between 1968 and 1996, 74.8%.

[8] One of the scarcest resources in Congress is time, since the plenary session has to attend to many tasks of which legislation is only one; when it attends to this function, it faces a large number of proposals. This means that time control by the different authorities participating in the formulation of laws seems to be a factor determining agenda power in the parliament, gaining special importance in the initiating stage, when what will be discussed is decided.

[9] The hypotheses behind the inclusion of each institutional indicator are given in Table A in the appendix.

[10] Detailed information on the construction of the index and the country values of each indicator can be seen in García-Montero (2007)

[11] When a president has an ample legislative majority, the use of unilateral power of decree is not very important for attaining political goals (Cox and Morgenstern, 2001) and, on the other hand, when the majority of Congress has faith in the president as an agent, he/she can delegate executive decree power in order to speed up the legislative agenda (Carey and Shugart, 1998; Pérez-Liñán and Rodríguez, 2003).

[12] On the effects of the increase in the number of players, see Tsebelis (2002)

[13] The formula for the effective number of parties index is $NEP = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} pi^2}$, p_i being the proportion of votes or seats of each party. The values of the effective number of parties index generally range in the +/-1 interval of the actual number of parties. The value of this indicator will, therefore, be lower in the usual case in which not all the parties achieve similar results (Oñate and Ocaña, 1999: 37).

[14] See Riker (1962); De Swaan (1973); Dodd (1976); Budge and Keman (1990); Laver and Schofield (1990); Strom (1990); Laver and Shepsle (1996); Mershon, (1999); Müller and Strom (2000).

[15] Deheza (1998) groups governments into two types a) single-party government and b) coalition government. The latter may be majority governments when they have support equal to or higher than 50% of the seats or minority governments when they control a percentage lower than the absolute majority. Although forming coalitions entails benefits for both the president and the parties involved, it can also entail risks, since decision making needs a greater number of actors, which limits the president's control while lack of discipline can always occur.

[16] See Tsebelis (1995).

[17] Although in these three countries the formation of coalition governments in the period studied was of crucial importance for their political system it should be pointed out that there are great differences between the Chilean coalitions, on the one hand, and the Bolivian and Panamanian ones, on the other hand. In Chile, the four parties that form the Concertación por la democracia (Coalition for Democracy)—Partido Demócrata Cristiano (Christian Democratic Party, or PDC), Partido Socialista (Socialist Party, or PS), Partido por la Democracia (Party for Democracy, or PPD), and Partido Radical Socialdemócrata (Radical Social Democrat Party or PRSD)—and the two that form the Union for Chile—Renovación Nacional (National Renovation Party, or RN) and Unión Demócrata Independiente (Independent Democratic Union, or UDI)—are structured in quite different and conflicting ideological ways, owing to the view they have of the authoritarian past and its legacy for democracy. All the executives that have arisen in the most recent democratic period in Chile have been part of the Concertación and, despite the existence of trends within it, a certain consensus has been ensured as to a government program (Nolte, 2003). However, the Panamanian and Bolivian coalitions have been highly volatile, mainly because of the lack of a program pact when they formed. Program has been subordinated to matters more related to the distribution of resources and the benefits of quotas among the parties.

[18] Sartori (1992) defines polarization as the general sphere of the ideological spectrum of any political community.

[19] Mainwaring and Shugart (2002: 260) maintain that if a high percentage of seats is controlled by parties with similar ideological positions on most key issues, the need for the president's party to control a large number of legislators decreases, since it is easier to form a coalition.

[20] The literature that connects ideological polarization with government coalitions is very interesting. Some authors determine that the mere existence of "centrist" parties affects ideological polarization negatively (increasing it) and, consequently, the possibility of a coalition forming or being able to survive diminishes (Hazan, 1997).

[21] Many authors have focused, and continue to focus, their attention on the left-right continuum to deal with polarization (Castles and Meir, 1984; Hazan, 1997; Kitschelt, 1994; Altman, 2002; Jones, 2005).

[22] The formula for the polarization index is as follows: $IP = \frac{(x_d - x_i)}{9}$, where x_d is the party with the most extreme ideological placement on the right of the scale and x_i is the party with the most extreme ideological placement on the left of the scale.

[23] The formula for calculating the weighted polarization index is: $IPP = \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i (x_i - \overline{x_p})^2$, where p_i is the party's proportion of seats or votes, x_i is the mean position of the party on the scale of 1 to 10 and $\overline{x_p}$ the average of the positions of all the parties on that scale, weighted by the distribution of votes or seats.

[24] The appendix includes the technical charts of the studies.

[25] Unfortunately, the polarization indexes cannot be completed with information on upper chambers. Although the project "Functions and Functioning of the Senates in the Southern Cone" of the Institut Für Iberoamerika-Kunde of Hamburg made a valuable contribution to research on senates in Latin America, the databases on the attitudes of the senators obtained by this project are limited to a single legislature. We decided not to include them in our calculation because of the risk of biasing the polarization indexes.

[26] The wording of the question is: "As you will remember, when speaking of politics the expressions left and right are normally used. On this card there is a series of boxes that go from left to right. In which box would you place yourself, taking into account your political ideas?"

[27] In Chile, as has already been said, the political parties are divided into two blocs with clearly differentiable ideology—on the one hand the Concertación por la Democracia can be defined as center-left and, on the other the Unión por Chile is on the right—as well as by opposing positions concerning the dictatorship of General Pinochet. In the political debates, this party division has been reflected as the violation of human rights during the military dictatorship or the survival of institutional legacies from the previous regime. Moreover, within the two blocs there are also differences, a fact which undoubtedly affects the value obtained in the polarization indicator. Despite this, the Chilean party system has been considered to be one of the most institutionalized in the region (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Siavelis, 2000) and the country has had no democratic stability problems thanks to the collaboration and consensus of the political actors that have formed the government coalitions.

[28] The fact that these three countries have in common a fragmented party system leads one to think that there may be a relationship between polarization and the number of parties that compete in the political system. This relationship will be returned to later in the paper.

[29] Party cohesion refers to the homogeneity or unity of the members of the party in their behavior, normally referring to voting in the chambers.

[30] A clear difference between the two concepts and others used for reflecting the party universe can be seen in Ruiz and García (2003) and Ruiz (2003).

[31] Standard deviation is defined as the square root of the variance. The latter is the mean of the square of the differences of n scores with respect to their arithmetical mean. It expresses the variability of the scores of the subjects in a variable. Standard deviation is used instead of variance because the latter is expressed in units squared whereas standard deviation is expressed in the same unit as the variable measured.

The formula for calculating the standard deviation is: $s^2 = \sqrt{\dfrac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(x_i - \overline{x})}{n-1}}$; where x_i is the value offered by each subject in the variable x (ideological self-placement of the legislator in our case), is the mean value for all the subjects (mean ideological self-placement of the government party or coalition in our case) and n is the number of subjects.

[32] As with the ideological polarization variable, the question selected from the questionnaire is the one referring to the ideological self-placement of the legislators: "As you will remember, when speaking of politics the expressions left and right are normally used. On this card there is a series of boxes that go from left to right. In which box would you place yourself, taking into account your political ideas?"

[33] The calculation of the coherence of the party or parties supporting the government may not include all the political parties that formed the coalition. When a party had only a small number of seats, the PELA Project did not interview its legislators, given their minimal representative effect.

[34] Most of the analyses of discipline in Latin America are case studies among which the following should be mentioned: Figueiredo and Limongi (1995); Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (1997); Carey (1999); Ames (2000), Ugalde (2002); Jones (2001), Nacif (2002); Weldon (2002); and Morgenstern (2003).

[35] The most classic and most widely used index is the one proposed by Rice (1928) which is the difference between the majority percentage and the minority percentage of the vote of the parliamentary group present at the time of voting divided by the sum of the majority and minority percentages. This index ranges from 0 to 1; values close to 0 indicate very low discipline and values close to 1, very high discipline. This index has been criticized mainly because it overestimates the party's degree of discipline, since there are matters that generate a high degree of consensus and which, when included in the index, overvalue the existence of discipline. Jones (2001) proposed a way of overcoming this by establishing as a selection criterion for roll-call voting where at least 20% of the votes should belong to the losing option. However, this decision has been criticized for being arbitrary and possibly hiding situations of strong discipline. Ames (2000: 41–42), when posing the problem of overestimation of discipline with purely procedural or unilateral voting, weights the index by the number of representatives that voted and by the closed nature of the voting. Another basic issue discussed when preparing the discipline indexes is the integration of the absences of the legislators and abstention (Weldon, 2002). Absences and abstentions can be caused by different factors; one is that the legislators are absent and/or abstain so as not to have to vote against the party and be "punished" for it. Jones (2001) proposes two indexes: relative discipline and absolute discipline, the latter contemplates those who do not vote and abstentions. Another discipline index for roll-call voting is the one proposed by Carey (1999), called the weighted unity index, which has an element that he calls contested or conflictive and in which the presence or absence of the legislators at the time of voting is also included (García-Montero and Marenghi, 2003).

[36] The complete text of the questions used is as follows: "The subject of discipline has traditionally given rise to highly diverse opinions. With which of the following opinions are you most in agreement?" Possible answers were: "Party discipline should always be demanded in the parliamentary group. Each representative should be allowed to vote according to his/her own criterion. Some matters should be subject to discipline and others not." The next questions were: "Next, I would like to know whether you are very much, quite a lot, not very much or not at all in agreement with the following statement: a political party should expel a member of Congress who votes against his/her party's political decisions"; "Sometimes a representative who has been elected in the lists of a certain party later decides to break with this party. On these occasions, what do you think the representative should do? Keep his/her seat and join another parliamentary group or resign so that another candidate from the party in whose lists he/she was elected can occupy it"; and "To what extent do you take into account the opinion of your party leaders when making political decisions? Very much, quite a lot, not very much, not at all?"

[37] Table E in the appendix shows how the answers were transformed to construct the indicator that reflects attitudinal discipline.

[38] During the first stage of the research project, which corresponds to the collection of information for 1993–1997, the questions selected for measuring attitudinal discipline were not posed; they were included in the following stages. Hence, there is no complete information for the whole analysis period.

[39] There are several Latin American case studies that attempt to prove the existence of this relationship empirically, such as Coppedge (1994) for Venezuela, Conaghan (1994) and Mejía (2000) for Ecuador, Carey (1997) for Costa Rica, and Ajenjo (2004) for Central America. The results given by Ajenjo (2004: 135) seem, however, to be contrary to the hypothesis maintained by other authors, since she corroborates an increase in the control of the legislative agenda by the executive in the last year of the electoral cycle, whereas in the preceding years the influence of the executive does not show significant variations.

[40] This variable was formulated using the literature on rational choice when dealing with the United States Congress. Given that the president has very little ability to initiate legislation, the proposition is that for a policy that the executive is interested in to be accepted by Congress, both the president and the initiative must enjoy popular support (Groseclose and McCarty 2001; McCubbins et al., 2005).

[41] Presidents may have two strategies for setting their policies in motion: the first is based on the use of the ordinary legislative process and therefore has to take heed of legislators' opinions and interests, and the second is based on the use of their legislative powers and constitutional prerogatives such as the decree and the veto. If the goal is to carry the legislation through parliament, the president must form a majority government and consequently appoint party members to the different ministries on a proportional basis according to whether or not the government is a coalition. If the goal is to legislate through unilateral initiatives, then the president may form the cabinet with technocrat ministers (Amorim, 2006: 423). Mejía (2000) proposes a hypothesis in this sense for the case of Ecuador.

[42] This is endorsed by Downs' theory (1957), according to which the most rational strategy for parties in systems in which a high number compete is to produce a specific and integrated ideology which differentiates the party from the rest as a way to achieve greater electoral support. On the other hand, in two-party systems, the most rational strategy a party can follow is to produce a diffuse and moderate ideology, thus showing lower degrees of polarization.

[43] This was the context for the presidencies of Patricio Alwyn, Eduardo Frei, and Ricardo Lagos in Chile and of Abadalá Bucaram and Fabián Alarcón in Ecuador.

[44] In order to verify that this high correlation between fragmentation and polarization is not being biased by the calculation of the indicators, since the number of seats intervenes in both, another analysis was performed between polarization and fragmentation, using Sartori and Sani's index in which the formula does not use the composition of the Congress but, as seen in the previous section, only the distance between the two most extreme parties. As the results show, this association is confirmed, since the correlation index continues to be very high (0.702**).

[45] This association is not very high. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that in order to calculate the legislative majorities executive negotiations to form larger majorities were taken into account, in addition to the composition of Congress resulting from the elections. Therefore, the indicator that measures the legislative majority includes not only the president's party but also the rest of the parties that support the president. This undoubtedly moderates the relationship between the two variables.

[46] Although some of these relationships are very interesting and open up new roads of research, they are beyond the specific objective of this study.

[47] Linear relations higher than 0.5 show collinearity.

[48] The procedure for merging was as follows: on the one hand we took the classification of Mainwaring and Scully (1995), discussed when referring to the fragmentation variable, which situates the system according to the effective number of parties in the predominant party system (when the index is below 1.7), two-party system (values between 1.8 and 2.4), two and a half party system (when the effective number of parties is between 2.5 and 2.9), moderate pluralism system (index between 3.0 and 3.9) and extreme pluralism (values above 4). On the other hand, the ideological polarization variable was classified in three categories: low polarization (when the index values are between 0 and 0.94), average polarization (values between 0.95 and 1.88) and high polarization (1.88 and 2.81, which is the maximum value this index acquires in the systems dealt with). Finally, the categories were brought together on a scale ranging from 1 to 4.5, assigning 1 to predominant party systems with low polarization, 1.25 to predominant party systems with average polarization and so on until reaching the value 4.5 corresponding to extreme pluralism systems with high polarization.

[49] This is the case of Peru where the three elections occurring during the period of analysis have given rise to a different configuration of the party system from the two and a half party system with average polarization characteristic of the period (1995–1999), to moderate pluralism with low polarization (2000–2003) or average polarization (1999–2000) which is, undoubtedly, an indicator of the relatively low institutionalization and stability of the party system during the period.

[50] The function selected for the degree of fit was the ordinary least squares criterion, by means of which the sum of the squares of the vertical distances between each point and the regression straight line is minimized.

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