

# **Sore Winners? Democratic Attitudes, Institutional Fragmentation, and Support for Executive Authority in Latin America**

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## **Introduction**

A reversal to military rule in Latin America now seems unlikely, but concerns about the quality of democracy and about mass support for its main values and principles have grown sharply (Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002; Diamond and Morlino 2005). The lack of checks on executive power, or delegative democracy, hinders participation and is not conducive to the consolidation of stable democratic institutions (O'Donnell 1994). Yet, it draws unexpected levels of popular support in the region (Carrión 2008). Who supports delegative governance? Under what circumstances are citizens more or less likely to embrace a strong executive?

Previous research on democratic attitudes shows that short-term government performance and political outlook have a substantive effect on citizens' willingness to delegate power to the executive (Carlin and Singer 2011). Echoing Anderson and Guillory (1997), this paper further argues that a country's political institutions mediate the relationship between citizens' status as electoral winners or losers and their propensity to delegate authority to the executive. It uses multi-level analysis to measure how individual-level presidential support interacts with country-level differences in party fragmentation and polarization across 17 Latin American countries. As presidents have more difficulties governing in fragmented and polarized party systems (Diamond 1997; Mainwaring and Scully 1995), electoral winners are expected to be more delegative in fragmented systems, whereas electoral losers should be less delegative in winner-take-all systems. This suggests that more power sharing and institutional checks and balances, the ostensible remedy for overreaching executives, might paradoxically increase frustration with the political system and willingness to endorse a strong executive among certain groups of citizens.

The next section briefly surveys the role of attitudinal support for executive authority in research on system support and democratic quality. Then, I examine how the historical, cultural and institutional context at the national level shape cross-national differences in delegative attitudes. I develop a model that combines political outlook at the individual level and political institutions at the country level. I subsequently present the data, method, and

analysis, before concluding by reflecting on the implications of the results for research on support for delegative governance and for delegative governance per se.

### **Explaining Support for Executive Authority**

Almost three decades after the third wave of democracy, a reversal to military rule in Latin America seems less and less likely. More than ever before, the democratic prospects of the region seem to rest in the hands of its people; through the lawful conduct of elected leaders and the stable functioning of political institutions, but also through citizens' support for democracy's core principles and values. In this context, the lack of checks on the executive branch has been identified as one of the main threats to newly constituted or re-established liberal democracies around the world (Diamond 2008). O'Donnell famously cautioned about a "new species" of democracy emerging amid deep social and economic crises: "delegative democracies rest on the premise that whoever wins election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit" (O'Donnell 1994, 59).

Presidents overriding opposition rights, censoring or closing courts and legislatures can be seen as effectively dampening democratic participation and citizens' control of the agenda. Furthermore, delegative democracies are uncongenial to the construction and consolidation of democratic institutions (O'Donnell 1994, 62). Popular presidents can use their influence to temporarily or enduringly diminish the power and legitimacy of the other branches. In fact, many Latin American countries have rewritten their constitutions in recent decades in ways that concentrated power in executive hands to the detriment of the legislative and the judiciary (Seligson 2007, 89). Delegative governance also hinders institutional loyalty among citizens, creating a vicious circle. Walker (2009, 83) indeed found that citizens who support strong executives may be supportive of democracy as a whole, but not of specific democratic institutions such as the judicial and the legislative. This grim state of affairs has led some scholars to conclude that "democratic reversals in Latin America are more likely to come today from publics who elect and reelect overbearing presidents bent on aggrandizing their own powers at the expense of the legislature and the courts than from traditional military coups" (Carrión 2008, 31).

Concern with mass attitudes, democratic principles, and political institutions is not new in the literature on system support and democratic quality (Almond and Verba 1963; Lipset 1960; Powell 1982). Although public opinion surveys reveal that a consistent majority of Latin

American respondents choose democracy as a preferred regime<sup>1</sup>, many scholars worry that survey measures that inquire directly about democracy suffer from lexical ambiguity and socially desirable responding (Baviskar and Malone 2004; Heath, Fisher, and Smith 2005; Schedler and Sarsfield 2007; Seligson 2004). One strategy to address this issue has been to include indirect survey questions aimed at measuring attitudinal support for specific democratic principles. To capture delegative attitudes for instance, that is citizens' willingness to delegate power to the executive to the detriment of opposition parties, legislatures, and courts, the AmericasBarometer survey by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) incorporated items measuring support for executive authority starting in 2006. Scholars who examined this wealth of data painted a dire picture of support for democracy in Latin America. For example, Carrión reports (2008, 21) that almost half of the respondents who endorsed democracy also believed that a military coup may be justifiable and that a quarter of self-declared democrats agreed with the statement that the president should limit the voice and vote of the opposition.

To explore such mixed belief systems and the factors that lead citizens to embrace or reject specific democratic principles, Schedler and Sarsfield (2007) combined a cluster analysis approach with Collier and Levitsky's (1997) conceptual strategy of diminished subtypes and put forward the idea of "democrats with adjectives". Carlin and Singer (2011) successfully adapted this approach to analyze support for democracy in 12 Latin American countries and uncovered four distinctive mixed profiles alongside the ideal-typical democrats: power constrictor, power checker, power delegator, and power refrainer. They further showed that socio-cultural factors such as age, wealth and education predict full democratic commitment better than they can differentiate across mixed profiles, whereas valence variables and short-term regime performance illuminate why citizens deviate from specific democratic principles. In particular, Carlin and Singer (2011, 1502) found that respondents who support the incumbent and are satisfied with the state of the economy are more willing to support an overreaching executive.

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<sup>1</sup> A stable regional average of 60%, according to Lagos (2001, 138). Respondents are asked to select one of the three following statements: 1) "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government"; 2) "In certain situations, an authoritarian government can be preferable to democracy"; or 3) "It doesn't matter to people like me whether we have a democratic or nondemocratic government".

### Cross-National Differences in Delegative Attitudes

Theories of democratic support and regime legitimacy highlight normative support rooted in culture and socialization on the one hand, and instrumental support based on regime performance as evaluated through citizens' experiences on the other hand (Booth and Seligson 2009; Bratton and Mattes 2001; Mishler and Rose 2001; Sarsfield and Echegaray 2005; Weitz-Shapiro 2008). With notable exceptions, much of this research empirically focuses either on single-country studies or on variables measured exclusively at the individual level. Yet, individuals are also embedded in particular historical, cultural, and institutional contexts at the national level.

To date, important cross-national differences in delegative attitudes remain unexplored. Norris (1999) suggests that long-term regime performance fosters Eastonian (1975) diffuse support, whereas short-term performance by an administration produces specific support. By extension, a stable democracy with strong institutions is expected to be better equipped to harness the social and economic conditions that can fuel delegative governance while simultaneously boosting trust in the legislative and judiciary, thus limiting delegative propensities among citizens. On the contrary, weak institutions might be deemed incapable of supporting the country through social and economic hardship without the intervention of a strong executive, and they would also, de facto, be less capable of checking an overreaching executive. Therefore, all else being equal, citizens in countries with a longer experience with stable, representative democracy should be less supportive of delegative governance, and vice-versa.

The dependent variable, support for executive authority, or "delegativeness", is measured using the unweighted average score on three survey items from the face-to-face, nationally representative AmericasBarometer survey by LAPOP. Respondents were asked to answer the following questions on a scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree"<sup>2</sup>:

**POP101.** It is necessary for the progress of this country that our presidents/primer ministers limit the voice and vote of opposition parties. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?

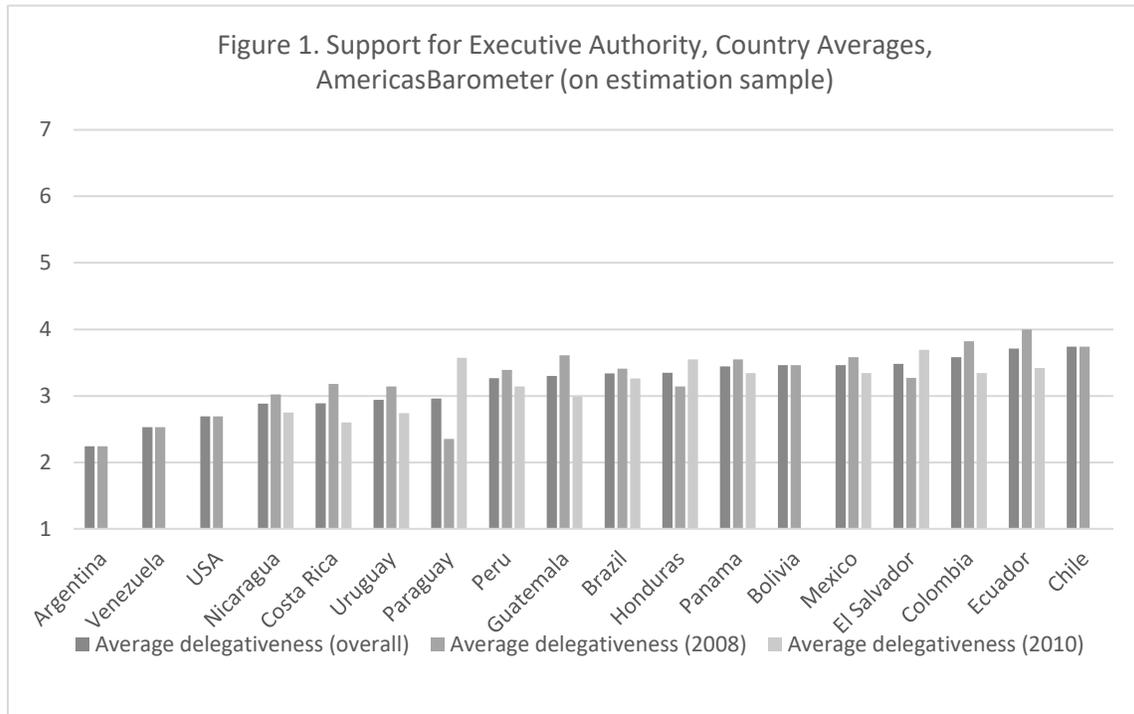
**POP102.** When the Congress hinders the work of our government, our presidents/prime ministers should govern without the Congress. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?

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<sup>2</sup> "Don't knows" (about 9% of respondents) were treated as missing.

**POP103.** When the Supreme Court/Constitutional Tribunal hinders the work of our government, it should not be paid attention to by our presidents/prime ministers. How much do you agree or disagree with that view?

Figure 1 below reports the average delegativeness score at the country level for the available years for 17 continental Latin American countries as well as for the United States, a unique baseline provided by the AmericasBarometer.



There is some variation in support for executive authority over time *within countries*, which is consistent with Carlin and Singer’s (2011) findings that short-term performance and valence issues such as presidential popularity and economic outlook are important predictors of citizens’ willingness to delegate power to the executive. However, the data shows no clear trend suggesting that a democratic culture instilled by a longer and/or more stable experience with democracy or by institutional strength explains differences in support for executive authority *across countries*. One of the least-likely case for delegative support ranks first based on these data. Indeed, notwithstanding the legacy of *Pinochetismo*, Chile is widely regarded as a stable, representative democracy with a high level of institutionalization, notably by O’Donnell (1994; see also González 2014; Machado, Scartascini and Tommasi 2011). Yet, 42% of Chilean respondents agreed that the president should bypass opposition parties, the legislature, and the courts. In contrast, Argentina and Venezuela, which have been described

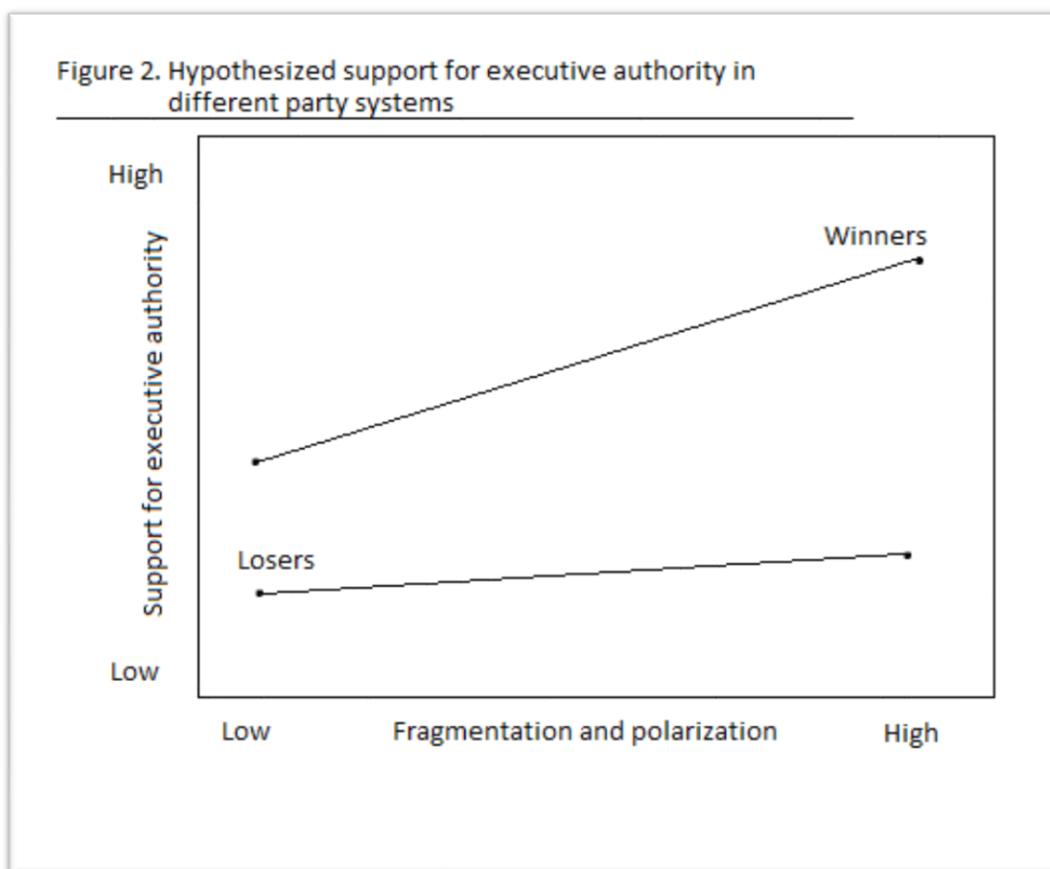
as recurring cases of delegative democracy (González 2014; see also O'Donnell 1994; Seligson 2007) rank last, with only 11% and 15% of respondents supporting an unyielding executive. Both countries in fact have levels of support for executive authority comparable to that of two consolidated democracies, the United States and Costa Rica. This challenges the proposition that country-level differences in support for executive authority are linked to democratic culture and institutional strength, and furthermore highlights that there are no inherent antidemocratic, or plebiscitary cultural tendencies in the region.

### **The Missing Link: Institutional Context**

Individuals are embedded not only in a country's history and culture, but also in its political and institutional system. An important and growing literature highlights how macro-level contexts and political institutions that vary across countries impact citizens' political attitudes, experiences, and behaviors in a vast array of issue areas (Anderson and Singer 2008; Huber, Kernell and Leoni 2005; Machado, Scartascini and Tommasi 2011; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). The connection between political institutions and delegative attitudes is of special importance given that discussions about the origins and effects of delegative democracy generally focus on weak checks and balances at the institutional level (Anderson 2006; Dodson and Jackson 2004; Helmke 2002; Peruzzotti 2001). Some scholars have argued that institutional approaches are not fruitful in the Latin American context, because all countries are presidential democracies with similar electoral, legislative and judicial systems (Booth and Seligson 2009, 111). This might very well be true when looking at system support and satisfaction with democracy broadly speaking; however, there are compelling reasons to believe that variations in party system fragmentation and polarization might impact citizens' willingness to support a strong executive, especially considering the importance of attitudes towards the incumbent at the individual level.

As Anderson and Guillory (1997) state, some political systems compensate the political minority while others allow the majority to implement policies virtually unchallenged. Political institutions thus systematically mediate the relationship between citizens' status as electoral winners or losers and their satisfaction with democracy. Likewise, institutional characteristics at the national level might mediate the relationship between citizens' status as electoral winners or losers and their propensity to delegate authority to the executive or to support an institutional balance of power. Consider that presidents have, on average, more difficulties governing in fragmented and polarized party systems (Diamond 1997; Mainwaring and Scully

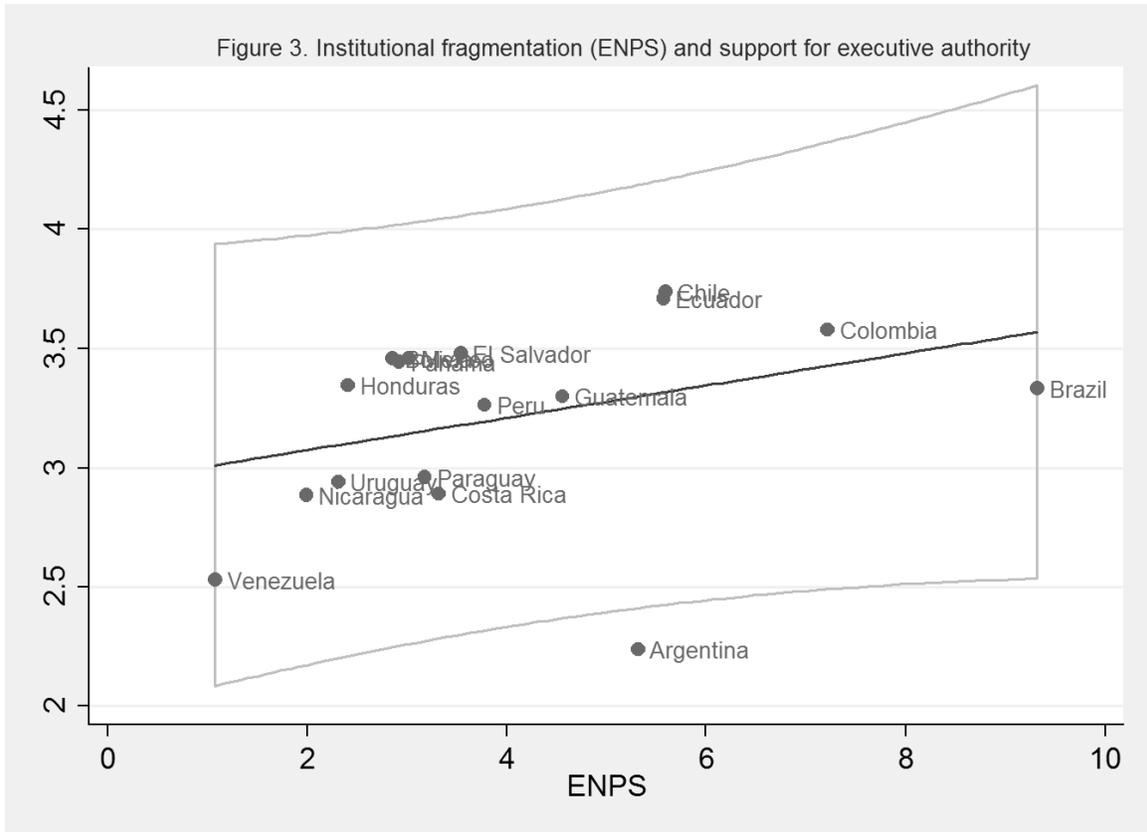
1995). As a result, supporters of the incumbent in fragmented political systems, which require more negotiation and coalition building efforts with political minorities and between the executive and the other branches, might be resentful and support their president bypassing the opposition to an even greater extent than supporters of the incumbent in less fragmented systems. Conversely, electoral losers in majoritarian-like institutional settings might react even more strongly against the idea of an already strong incumbent further bypassing the opposition than electoral losers in more gridlocked systems. Electoral winners, in a nutshell, should be even more delegative in fragmented systems, whereas electoral losers should be somewhat less delegative in winner-take-all systems. Figure 2 illustrates the hypothesized interaction.



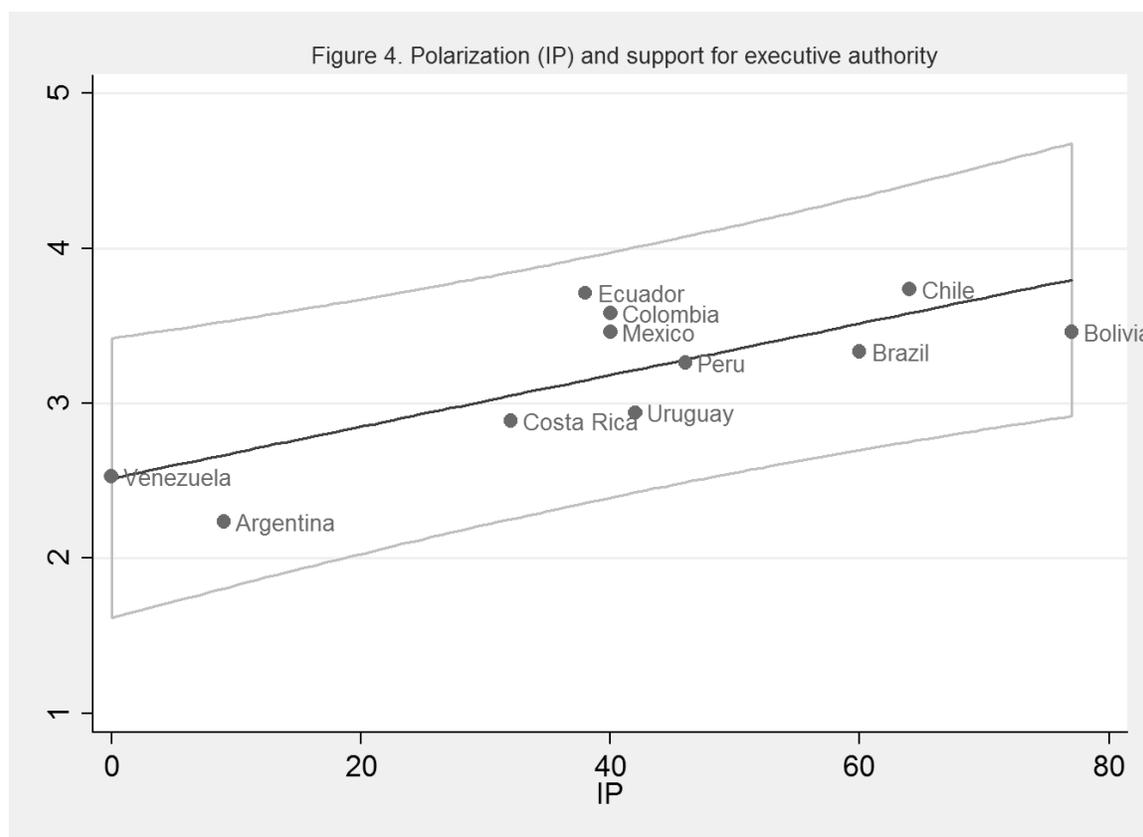
### Data and Method

To test this explanation empirically, I use the effective number of parties in term of seats in the lower house (ENPS) as a proxy for institutional fragmentation as well as Coppedge's Index of Polarization (IP) at the country level, which measures the dispersion of the vote from the relative center of the party system. The data comes from Coppedge (2007), and it is

based on fragmentation and polarization in the legislative elections preceding the 2008 survey data used at the individual level. Coppedge’s data does unfortunately not cover Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay; the matching data for ENPS comes from Payne, Zovatto, and Mateo Díaz (2007, 73). As Figure 3 and 4 display, there is a positive relationship between support for executive authority and party system fragmentation and polarization.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Argentina is outlying, but note that many small parties are in fact regional or personal factions of the Peronist Party (PJ).



To further look into the relationship between support for the incumbent and party system fragmentation and polarization, I use a hierarchical linear model with individual-level characteristics as level one, country-level characteristics as level two, and a cross-level interaction between support for the incumbent and the level-two variables. The outcome variable is support for executive authority at the individual level. The independent variables at the country level are ENPS and IP. The independent variables at the individual level capture socio-demographic attributes as well as political attitudes and come from the 2008 AmericasBarometer mentioned above. They are discussed below.

*Socio-demographic variables* First, I include gender, age, education, wealth, and place of residence.<sup>4</sup> *Gender* and *place of residence* are dichotomous variables respectively scored “0” for male and “1” for female (52% of respondents) and “0” for rural and “1” for urban (70% of respondents). *Age*, a continuous variables ranging from 16 to 96 years old, was regrouped into three categories, “16 to 25” (26% of respondents), “26 to 55” (57% of respondents), and

<sup>4</sup> Ethnicity was considered, but ultimately not included due to poor measurement.

“56 years and over” (17% of respondents). *Education* was similarly regrouped into “none or primary” (35% of respondents), “secondary” (46% of respondents), and “university” (19% of respondents).<sup>5</sup> Because income had a high non-response rate (more than 10%), I use an alternative approach and measure household *wealth* using possession of certain household appliances (television, refrigerator, cellular phone, washing machine, and computer), adding one point for each item (range 0 to 5, mean=3.18).

Oxhorn (1998) argues that populist leaders have traditionally appealed more strongly to the popular sectors, canalizing their frustration and hope for change for political gain. I would thus expect the socio-demographic profile of the average delegative respondent to be that of an uneducated young man, working and living in precarious conditions in the city, but still eager to see change in society. More pragmatically, since the poor are disproportionately affected by social and economic hardship, they would seem to have more to gain by supporting a president who promotes radical policy solutions. The mirroring profile conversely supports the expectations of Modernization approaches, which suggest that older, wealthier and more educated citizens nurture more democratic values (Lipset 1960). Yet, age in itself is somewhat unpredictable in the Latin American context: some have suggested that younger cohorts have more likely been socialized in a pro-democratic environment (Lagos 2001), but on the other hand, older citizens might very well vividly remember violations of human rights committed under nondemocratic regimes (Booth and Seligson 2009, 114).

*Political and attitudinal variables* In considering the likelihood of citizens being willing to delegate authority to the executive at the expense of the other branches, it is also important to consider political and attitudinal factors. The three items of support for executive authority arguably tap into attitudes towards existing institutions and political actors in addition to attitudes towards somewhat abstract liberal-democratic principles. Hence, I include two predictors to capture support and respect for the institutions as an idea (political knowledge and respect for the country’s institutions); three predictors tapping into citizens’ political preferences (ideology, support for the incumbent, and trust in others); and three variables to measure evaluation of short-term regime performance (perception of the country’s economy as well as crime and corruption victimization). While I expect knowledge of politics and respect for the institutions to undergird less delegativeness due to deference to the democratic idea of horizontal accountability, there could also be some interference coming

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<sup>5</sup> These variables had either no missing data, or under 1% of missing data.

from citizens' own political preferences as well as from their experience with regime performance (if politicians are seen as corrupt, for example).

*Political knowledge* is measured by adding one point for each correct answers to a battery of questions about current politics (range 0 to 4, mean=2.12).<sup>6</sup> For *respect for the institutions*, respondents were asked to rate to what extent they respect the political institutions of their country on a seven-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “a lot” (mean=4.51). *Ideology* is self-reported on a ten-point scale ranging from “left” to “right”. Respondents were regrouped into 1 “left” (21% of respondents), 2 “center” (34% of respondents), 3 “right” (26% of respondents), and 4 “don’t know” (19% of respondents).<sup>7</sup> I do not include partisan identification per se, but *support for the incumbent* captures presidential support, which is more relevant here. Respondents were asked for which party they would vote if the next presidential elections were being held this Sunday, including 30% of respondents who said that they “would vote for the incumbent candidate or party” and 27% who “would vote for a candidate or party opposing the current administration”. Respondents who were undecided (“don’t knows”) as well as those who said that they “wouldn’t vote” or “would leave the ballot blank” were recoded into a third category (43% of respondents). *Trust* in others is measured with the usual question asking respondents whether “most people can be trusted” (7% of respondents) or “one can’t be too careful in dealing with people” (93% of respondents). Lastly, *country’s economy* is measured with the standard question asking respondents to describe the country’s economic situation, from “very good” to “very bad”. Answers were rescaled and regrouped to range from “very bad/bad” (45% of respondents) to “very good/good” (14% of respondents), with “neither good nor bad” as the middle category (41% of respondents). *Crime victimization* and *corruption victimization* are simple dichotomous variables capturing whether or not a respondent was a victim of some crime or asked for a bribe by any government employee during the past year (19% and 6% of respondents, respectively).

The expected effect of most of these variables is reasonably unambiguous, but it is important to clarify a few elements. First, political knowledge is intended as a measure of sophistication that is parallel to education, but also more specific. I expect politically knowledgeable citizens to be more aware of the mechanisms of representation and

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<sup>6</sup> I used four items. Respondents were asked to identify: the president of the US, the speaker of their national legislature, the length of the presidential term in their country, and the president of Brazil.

<sup>7</sup> Once again, although I did not use multiple imputation techniques, I was cautious about listwise deletion of missing data. In particular, whenever the percentage of missing values for a given variable exceeded 5% (e.g. ideology and support for incumbent), these cases were kept and regrouped in a relevant category.

accountability and of their importance to the functioning of liberal democracy, and thus less likely to have favorable attitudes towards unchecked executives. On the other hand, in contexts where institutions are weak or poorly functioning, more political knowledge might bolster cynicism and frustration. Second, concerning ideology, the empirical evidence about attitudinal support for democratic principles among the left and the right is mixed, but I would expect respondents identifying clearly with either the left or the right to be more likely to see politics as a zero-sum game as opposed to a pluralist contest, and as such, more likely to approve of a winner-take-all presidency. As Seligson remarked (2007), however, contemporary populist leaders in Latin America have been mostly left-leaning, and so support for executive authority could come from the left with the right acting in response by supporting an institutional balance of power. Finally, expectations about the effect of citizens' perceptions of the economic situation on delegativeness are unclear. On the one hand, following O'Donnell's original argument on delegative democracy closely, I would expect citizens to demand a strong executive when the economic situation is bad. On the other hand, the economic voting literature suggests that citizens reward or punish elected officials on the basis of their management of the economy, which has been shown to hold in Latin America as well by Roberts and Wibbels (1999) among others. Following this proposition, I would rather expect citizens to "reward" the incumbent by granting him extensive prerogatives when the economy is doing well, which is consistent with Carlin and Singer's (2011) findings.<sup>8</sup> A similar logic could apply to crime and corruption victimization.

## Analysis

Table 1 below shows the results of the multi-level analysis. Model 1 includes ENPS at level two, whereas model 2 includes the index of polarization. I first consider the effect of the variables at the individual level. Note that there are some differences across model 1 and model 2, in all likelihood because some countries are not included in model 2. Starting with socio-demographic variables, the effect of gender, age, and wealth is inconsistent across models, although it generally goes in the expected direction. Older, wealthier, and female respondents are less supportive of executive authority. Urban respondents, on the other

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<sup>8</sup> This does not necessarily contradict O'Donnell's argument, however; consider the example of Menem's initial stabilizing successes in Argentina in the 1990s. To address this conundrum, one would arguably need to engage the cycles of delegativeness as theorized by O'Donnell, or the temporal dimension (retrospective, prospective) of economic voting, which falls beyond the scope of this paper.

hand, are more delegative than their rural counterparts, but the exact mechanism at play is somewhat unclear. All in all, the effect of higher education seems to be the most substantive: respondents with some higher education have on average 0.33 point less on their delegativeness score than respondents with no education or some primary education.

**Table 1: Support for executive authority, AmericasBarometer 2008 (HLM, on estimation sample)**

	Country-level variable:			
	Model 1: ENPS		Model 2: IP	
	Coef.	s.e	Coef.	s.e
<b>Opposition X Country-level variable</b>	-0.00296	(0.0174)	0.00024	(0.0028)
<b>President X Country-level variable</b>	-0.0323	(0.0244)	-0.000162	(0.00559)
<b>Country-level variable</b>	0.0855+	(0.0477)	0.0144**	(0.00544)
<b>Support for incumbent (Ref.: Don't know/blank/abstention)</b>				
Opposition	-0.155	(0.0982)	-0.208+	(0.114)
President	0.453***	(0.13)	0.363	(0.228)
<b>Individual-level variables:</b>				
<b>Gender (1=Female)</b>	-0.0213	(0.0274)	-0.0634**	(0.0209)
<b>Age (Ref.: 16 to 25 years)</b>				
26 to 55 years	-0.0796+	(0.041)	-0.0261	(0.0522)
56 years and over	-0.142**	(0.0528)	-0.125	(0.0776)
<b>Education (Ref.: None/Primary)</b>				
Secondary	0.0113	(0.0509)	-0.0283	(0.0705)
Higher	-0.291***	(0.0847)	-0.376***	(0.0954)
<b>Wealth</b>	-0.0273	(0.0192)	-0.0568***	(0.0147)
<b>Place of residence (1=urban)</b>	0.129**	(0.0396)	0.148**	(0.0536)
<b>Political knowledge</b>	-0.125***	(0.0226)	-0.103***	(0.0261)
<b>Respect for institutions</b>	0.0517**	(0.0161)	0.0447**	(0.0168)
<b>Ideology (Ref.: Left)</b>				
Center	0.00198	(0.0536)	-0.0185	(0.0549)
Right	0.144*	(0.0656)	0.0889	(0.0654)
Don't know	-0.193**	(0.0637)	-0.159*	(0.0804)
<b>Economic situation(Ref.: Very bad/Bad)</b>				
Regular	0.168***	(0.0366)	0.153***	(0.0398)
Good	0.202**	(0.0778)	0.136	(0.083)
<b>Crime victimization</b>	-0.0524	(0.0371)	-0.0269	(0.048)
<b>Corruption victimization</b>	0.016	(0.0517)	0.0173	(0.0519)
<b>Trust</b>	-0.0675	(0.109)	-0.161	(0.135)
<b>N =</b>	22, 544; 17 countries		15, 428; 11 countries	

+p<0.10 \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

Turning to political and attitudinal variables, respondents who do not situate themselves on the left-right spectrum are less delegative than respondents who identify with the political left. This suggests, per Seligson (2007), that support for executive authority might be coming from the left in the region, though self-identified right-wingers are more delegative than left-wingers in model 1. Consistent with Carlin and Singer's (2011) findings, respondents who feel that the economy is doing well, or neither good nor bad, are more delegative than their economically pessimistic counterparts.<sup>9</sup> Crime and corruption victimization, however, the two other variables capturing short-term regime performance, have no statistically significant impact on delegative attitudes. Trust does not either. Respect for the institutions has a substantively small effect, but interestingly, respondents who report respecting the country's institutions are in fact more supportive of the executive bypassing said country's institutions. This suggests that the measure might partly capture attitudes toward the executive. Finally, as expected, politically knowledgeable respondents are less delegative, on average and all else being equal.

Last, looking at the cross-level interaction between support for the incumbent and party system fragmentation and polarization; counter to the expectations, neither opponents nor supporters of the incumbent are found to be more or less delegative as fragmentation and polarization increase. Fragmentation and polarization, however, have a small but nonetheless noteworthy effect on undecided, abstainers and blank voters, whose support for executive authority increases by 0.09 point with each unit increase in ENPS ( $p=0.07$ ) and by 0.01 point with each unit increase in the index of polarization. While unexpected, this finding is theoretically consistent and empirically interesting, as it suggests that this group of citizens might be up for grabs by a strong executive when the party system is more chaotic.

## Discussion

Sociodemographic and attitudinal attributes such as evaluation of regime performance and political outlook go a long way in explaining support for executive authority, but focusing exclusively on differences between individuals incurs the risk of overlooking meaningful differences across countries. Each country has its own historical, cultural, and institutional

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<sup>9</sup> There are theoretical reasons to expect that one's perception of the country's economic situation is related to his or her willingness to support the executive. That being said, economic optimism is potentially endogenous to a respondent's evaluation of the incumbent, i.e. respondents who disapprove of the incumbent might be more likely to judge the economic situation unfavorably, and vice-versa.

specificities, and these specificities mediate individuals' political experiences and opinions. Understanding who supports delegative governance and under what circumstances citizens are more or less likely to embrace a strong executive demands that we pay attention to both individuals and the political context in which they are embedded. This paper made an important, albeit exploratory, step in this direction.

Since electoral winners show higher levels of support for executive authority than electoral losers, and since different political institutions arbitrate the relationship between winners and losers, I hypothesized that support for executive authority varies systematically among winners and losers in different party systems. While I found bivariate relationships between fragmentation, polarization, and average support for executive authority at the country level, initial empirical evidence using multi-level analysis failed to support the hypothesized interaction between party systems, citizens' status as electoral winners or losers, and their willingness to delegate authority to the executive. Instead, it appears that it is the so-called non-aligned voters – undecided, abstainers and blank voters – who are sensitive to the political gridlock that fragmentation and polarization tend to generate.

This paper generates important insights into the role of support for delegative governance and for delegative governance proper. On the one hand, the apparent absence of a relationship between mass support for delegative governance and delegative democratic outcomes at the country level suggests that popular support for executive authority, in and of itself, may not be a necessary or sufficient condition for delegative democracy. It suggests that delegative governance may be a purely institutional story, or alternatively, there might be a value-action gap between the opinions that citizens report and how they behave at the polls, a possibility that would be worth further exploring. Either way, it seems crucial to develop a better understanding of the relationship between attitudinal support for delegative governance and political institutions; if the results reported in this paper are correct, then further power sharing and institutional checks and balances, the intuitive solution to the issue of overreaching executives, might in fact exacerbate frustration and willingness to support delegative governance among certain groups of citizens.

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