

Party representation in Latin America. To whom represent the parties?

(Preliminary draft, please do not quote)¹

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Abstract

Contemporary democracy rests upon the belief of political representation, that is, on the ideal that the “people” governs through their representatives. In this context, elections are the means through which all citizens can express their political preferences, and elect those who govern them. Political parties are key players in this democratic competition. Parties offer policies packages that are chosen by people according to the proximity of their political preferences (Dalton 1985), but the question is to whom are they offering this packages; to the general citizenry or just to their supporters? So, my aim is to determine the representational orientation of political parties in the parliaments of the region whose legislatures have begun between 2008 and 2012. To achieve this objective, I examine the ideological congruence of Latin American political parties concerning two possible groups of citizens: the median citizen and median party supporter. This question is relevant because it allow us to know to which group political parties are being responsive. It is also important because is a measure of the kind of representational link that exists in Latin American political systems. To do this, I utilize the Relative Citizens Congruence measure proposed by Golder and Stramski (2010). I use public opinion data collected by the Americas Barometer (LAPOP) from Vanderbilt University, and party data collected by the Latin America Parliamentary Elites Project (PELA) from University of Salamanca.

I. Introduction

Contemporary democracy rests upon the belief of political representation, that is, on the ideal that the “people” governs through their representatives. This is a key feature of any modern democracy; political representation (PR) means people electing politicians that have policy preferences similar to them, expecting to be implemented once in office. If these expectations are not fulfilled by representatives, people sanction them withdrawing their electoral support (Pitkin 1985; Manin 1998; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999; R. Dahl 2009).

This raw definition of PR contains two important and ongoing processes. On the one hand, it implies responsiveness, which means that representatives tend to implement policies that are demanded by their constituencies (Powell Jr. 2004a, 91). On the other hand, it also implies (electoral) accountability; democratic representation is more than office-seekers/holders offering and making policies desired by citizens, it involves the capability of people to evaluate their representatives' performance, and punishing them if they do not do what they were elected for (Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011). So, accountability means the process in which citizens control their representatives through elections periodically (Pitkin 1985; Manin 1998; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999).

Political representation can be summarized through principal-agent theory. Using this framework, Andeweg and Thomassen (2005) defines PR as “a delegation of power from a constituency or group of voters (the principal) to particular party or MP (the agent)” (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005, 510). Kitschelt et al. (2010) argue periodic election allows the principal keep accountable agent's action, the agent; anticipating this, attempt to be responsive to principals' preferences.

This definition places political parties as central players in the democratic process. In a broad sense, political parties guarantee pluralism, they represent the variety of interest existing in any modern society (Schattschneider 1964). They are organizations through which people can express and channelize their demands toward the political system (Sartori 2005). But also,

parties are the ones competing in the electoral arena seeking offices; and to succeed in this purpose they have to offer ideological and programmatic alternatives that are chosen by people according to the proximity of their political preferences (Dalton 1985). Thereby, political representation process cannot be understood without political parties; this is an inherent actor in any representative democratic and studying the way they link with their represented contribute to know one dimension of democratic performance.

This paper deepens in the capability of Latin American parties to represent the plurality of preferences in their societies. More specifically, it attempts to answer the following question: *to whom are Latin American political parties offering policies package, to the general citizenry or just to their supporters?* To achieve this objective, I examine the ideological congruence of Latin American political parties in the parliaments whose legislatures had begun between 2008 and 2012, concerning two possible groups of citizens: the median citizen and median partisan. This question is relevant because it allow us to know to which group political parties are being responsive to. It is also important because is a measure of the kind of representational link that exists in Latin American political systems.

There are some concerns about the performance of democratic representation in Latin America, and more specifically about the capability of political parties to be effective delivering the kind of policies that people expect. For instance, by 2012, trust in political parties is only 25%; being the institutions with less confidence among citizens.³ This lack of confidence in parties (and other representatives institutions) has been seen as a crisis of representation in the region; characterized by high levels of dissatisfaction with democracy, low levels of trust in the agents of representation, the choice of anti-system leaders, constantly changing voting preferences and a low turnout levels (Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro 2006). In a recent study, the United Nations Program for Development (UNDP) warns about the growing level of distrust and disaffection of Latin American citizens against some actors and institutions of the political system. At the same time, draws attention on the rising repudiation of the quality of political representatives and some important collective decisions implemented by the political system as well (Grey et al. 2011).

However, some voices moderate this overrated pessimistic approach on political parties in the region. Carreras (2012a; 2012b) argues that there some problems within the political system among Latin American countries, however, this lack of stability allow the insertion of some excluded groups (such as indigenous people), and also made possible the consolidation of some of the new democracies in the region during the third wave of democratization. Therefore, my aim is to contribute in the debate about the political parties and party system's capability to respond to people's demands.

To do this, I use the *Relative Citizens Congruence* measure proposed by Golder and Stramski (2010). The data used comes from public opinion polls collected by the Americas Barometer (LAPOP)⁴ Vanderbilt University, and political party data comes from the surveys collected by

³ The data was obtained from the Latinobarometro (2010) using the Online Data Analysis application. Avialble at <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latino/LATANalyze.jsp>.

⁴ I thank Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and its major supporters (the United State Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making this data available.

the Latin America Parliamentary Elites Project (PELA)⁵ from University of Salamanca. The paper is organized as follows. First, there is brief debate political representation studies and parties; focusing in Latin America. Second, an explanation of the data and indicators used to measure congruence. Third, the results are presented. Finally, I draw some remarks as discussion of the findings.

II. The study of political representation and the political parties in Latin America

One way to study political representation has been through the analysis of the links between political elites and citizens. Since Miller and Stokes' (1963) seminal work, a vast number of studies have been conducted analyzing whether representatives meet the demands of those represented by them, especially in the United States and Western Europe. Eulau and Karps (1978, 63) called this type of analysis *policy responsiveness*, which main objective is to observe how representatives' attitudes or actions are close to the preferences of those who elect them, and the causes that explain the gaps between both groups. Similarly, Powell (2004b) define this analysis as *substantive representation*, distinguishing it from *procedural representation*. The first one focus on the preferences of elected representatives and how links with constituents' preferences; the second one analyze how the electoral rules transform vote into seats.

A difficulty in such studies is to identify who are the subjects of representation and which actors or institutions are called to represent them. The aforementioned Miller and Stokes' (1963) study, and some others that followed it, focused on observing how congressional representatives' preferences were closed to the positions of his own constituency (i.e Achen 1977; 1978; Erikson 1978; Converse and Pierce 1986; Herrera, Herrera, and Smith 1992) . However, as noted by Powell (2004b), this logic of representation is based on the features of U.S. electoral design. This approach makes little or no sense in contexts where voters elect a large number of representatives within the same electoral district, in which political parties play a central role as mechanisms of aggregation of interests and preferences. Therefore, the study of representation outside the North American context necessarily involves political parties (Dalton 1985).

One the other hand, some analysis were concerned about whether the outcomes of the political process are congruent with people's demand (Weissberg 1978; Hurley 1982; Page and Shapiro 1983; Wlezien 2004; Kang and Powell Jr. 2010). As well as, how the congress or government as a collective body have similar preferences to voters (i.e. Huber and Powell Jr. 1994; Powell Jr. 2000; 2009; 2010; Blais and Bodet 2006; Golder and Stramski 2010; Warwick 2011).

Nevertheless, the study of political parties as representative actors is not as vast as the aforementioned approaches. This type of studies attempt to observe if parties represent their partisans' preferences. Dalton (1985) argues that outside United States the representation model is based on the responsible party model. Representation occurs not directly citizen-legislator but rather party-citizen dyad. This model has three core assumptions. First, there are political parties offering different policy programs; second, parties' internal cohesion is enough to guarantee that the program is going to be implemented once in office; third, voters are rational and choose the party closer to their own position. Finally, elections serve as control mechanism in which citizens evaluate whether the parties fulfilled most of promises in the

⁵ Manuel Alcántara (dir.). Latin America Parliamentary Elite Project (PELA). University of Salamanca (1994-2012). Sec95-0845. I thank to the Latin America Parliamentary Elites Project (PELA) and Cristina Rivas from Instituto de Iberoamérica of University of Salamanca for providing access to data.

program or not (APSA 1950; Stokes and Miller 1962; Dalton 1985; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999).

This model sees parties as «policy seekers», because they are structured according to their program and ideology, and pursuing to implement it once in office (Ruíz 2007). Aldrich (1995) criticizes this model arguing that it has a normative bias, and because of this is easy to conclude that political parties are in crisis. In addition, the model minimizes the differences within the electorate and parties themselves.

Another way to look at political parties is as «voter seekers». Anthony Downs (1973) stated that politicians are rational actors, whose main objective is to maximize the number of votes. According to this approach, political parties are defined as people gathering together seeking to control the government through elections, and this objective is what keeps them together (Downs 1973). Ruíz (2007) points out that this conception of political parties has evolved into parties as «office seekers», and the main objective is to seize political influence in government, reason why they form coalitions with other parties in the case of multiparty systems. According to this rational choice point of view, ideology is only a means to winning elections; it serves as a cognitive shortcut that reduces information costs for both citizens and parties.

Some critics to this model focus on some of its main assumptions, Montero and Gunther (2007), summarize some of these criticisms. First, they argue that political parties are not as unified as the model claims. Second, the motivations of politicians could be different from power, status and incomes. Third, policies and ideology are more than mere means to seize office. Finally, the model does not take into account the parties as meaningful actors and putting them as residual categories in their analysis. Briefly, this economical view of political parties puts aside important factors that explain the interaction of political elites with voters.

Softer versions of rational choice approaches relax some of these assumptions. Aldrich (1995, 19) proposes looking at parties as endogenous institutions, which means that is “the actions of political actors that created political parties in the first place, and it is the actions of political actors that have shaped and altered them over time”. In this context, the strategy of the political actors shapes the organization, the ideology and its institutional features (Montero and Gunther 2007). Aldrich (1995) also states that the existence of political parties allows politicians to resolve three problems: the problem of ambition, the problem of collective action and the social choice problem.

The ambition problem refers to how to manage the fact that there is more than one aspirant for each office. Parties “regulate the access to those offices” (Aldrich 1995, 22). The collective action problem is related with mobilizing resources and voters in order to achieve the objective of seeking office (organization infrastructure). Finally, the social choice problem occurs when parties, once in office, have to form and implement policies. According to Aldrich (1995) parties are «enduring institutions» that allow politicians to resolve the decision making process when there exist different preferences and interests (program). Parties allow politicians to achieve policy majorities and maintain them.

Kitschelt (2000) points out that, political parties «may or may not» resolve the collective action problem and the social choice problem through three types of linkages. First, the charismatic one, in this linkage the leader's authority resolves the three dilemmas; the leader's persuasive skills are enough to keep the party together and there is no reason to invest neither in infrastructure nor in program. Second, the clientelistic one, that means politicians making an effort to construct an infrastructure that allows them to make a trade-off with constituents in exchange of votes

(Kitschelt 2000). Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, 7) defines clientelism as “a particular mode of "exchange" between electoral constituencies as principal and politicians as agents in democratic system. This exchange is focused on particular classes of goods, though the feasibility and persistence of clientelistic reciprocity is not determined by the type of goods exchanged”

Finally, the programmatic one, in this type of linkage politicians seek built both, organizational infrastructures, and a policy program. Parties offers programs that are supposed to be implemented one in office. There is not an direct an selective exchange as in clientelistic linkage, but rather an indirect compensation, an universal trade-off between the party in government and the principals (Kitschelt 2000; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

How does it connect with political representation? As stated before, PR means responsiveness and electoral accountability. Clientelistic and programmatic linkages fulfill both characteristic of representation, but the problem with the first one is that voters are rent-seekers and their policy preferences are not important as long as they receive their selective incentives. In this type of linkage responsiveness and accountability processes implies politicians delivering the selective goods, the key issue is party as an organization that allows monitoring whether the client is voting for the party (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

One the other hand, in the programmatic linkage responsiveness and accountability depends on whether the party in government is able to deliver the policy programs offered during the campaign. In this type of linkage, “[p]rincipals are represented by their agents through programmatic linkage if there is *congruence* between the policies preferred by each party's voters and its corresponding politician and if there is between-party *divergence* such that each party appeals to a different subset of voters” (Kitschelt et al. 2010, 16).

Even though Kitschelt (2000, 872) claims that these two type of linkage should be treated as mechanism of democratic responsiveness and accountability; in this paper I focus in the programmatic one. If political parties are meaningful institutions for democracy, political representation goes beyond the client-patron practices. I am no denying the fact that parties uses mixed strategies to achieve their objectives, but rather that democracy perform better when the dominant strategy is based in an universalistic programmatic appeals instead selective and unequal allocation of goods.

In Latin America this approach seems to be inappropriate, due to the fact that in some countries parties implement policies completely opposite from those they promise (Stokes 1999). Also, because the nature of the presidential system undermine the assumption that the electoral competition is based in the programmatic dimension, other factors such as personalization of politics, the double legitimacy nature of presidentialism and the existence of strong clientelistic linkages also undermine programmatic representation. Despite these, political parties still have major influence in Latin American politics; they still offer programs when doing campaign, and the left-right scale allow to predict policy preferences and political cleavages between parties (Rivas 2006; M. Alcántara and Rivas 2007) and in citizens (Colomer and Escatel 2005).

II.1 The study of PR in Latin America

The study of substantive representation is recent in Latin America (Luna 2007; Otero-Felipe and Rodriguez-Zepeda 2010). Mainwaring *et al.* (2006), point out the most research on PR in Latin America look at the legislative branch, the legislators, or how parties and party system perform. In the same vein, Luna (2007) states that the aims of most of these investigations

focus on the conditions for a real substantive representation and not in substantive representation itself.

The causes behind this poor development of PR research agenda rest on the instability of the party system in the region, the fact that the consolidation of democracy occurred in mid and late 90s, and due the absence of enough data for comparing policy positions between politicians and citizens (Luna 2007; Otero-Felipe and Rodriguez-Zepeda 2010).

Is only in the last decade when several research projects have managed to accumulate enough polls information on elites, citizens and experts; allowing comparisons between representatives and citizens' preferences and positions. These studies have focused on observing how institutional designs or party system features in each country have effects on congruence in a collective way (Luna and Zechmeister 2005; 2010; Otero-Felipe and Rodriguez-Zepeda 2010; España-Najera and Martínez-Rosón 2010; Zechmeister and Corral 2011).

A precedent analysis about PR in the region was made by Susan Stokes (1999). She conducted a study about *policy switches* in Latin America in the eighties and nineties. She finds out that in twelve of fourteen campaigns conducted in Latin America between 1982 and 1995 candidates offered policies for economic growth, job creation and higher wages, but once in office implemented neoliberal austerity policies. Stokes argues that PR is retrospective in predominantly *ex-post* accountability mechanisms rather than *ex-ante* accountability mechanisms in Latin America (Stokes 1999, 100). Consequently, representation is not consummated because citizens do not get what the politicians have offered, that is, there is not responsiveness.

Luna and Zechmeister (2005) offer a path breaking study on substantive representation in Latin America. They observe that programmatic representation in nine Latin American countries and identify the causes behind the differences among cases. The main contribution of the study is that combines surveys from political elites and citizens for analyzing political representation in the region. Luna and Zechmeister (2005) find out a positive relationship between the party system institutionalization, economic development and levels of representation.

Five years later, Luna and Zechmeister (2010), using the same data of 2005, inquire about the nature of political representation in Latin America and its consequences. This analysis was made using as framework the concept Programmatic Party Structuration (PPS) proposed by Kitschelt et al. (2010). These authors state that congruence is an important dimension of PPS, it allows programmatic linkages between parties and voters. Their findings in the nine countries are heterogeneous. On the one hand, there are countries in which party elites are capable to represent constituents' interests; these countries show strong tradition of party competition (i.e. Chile and Uruguay). On the other hand, countries in where party competition is traditionally weak, programmatic linkages are also weaker (i.e. Ecuador and Bolivia).

Another analysis on PR is the one proposed by Mainwaring et al. (2006). These authors study programmatic representation dimension within democratic representation. They observe whether programmatic representation has effects on the levels of distrust and political parties in Latin America. The main hypothesis is that in countries with greater convergence program, trust in politicians and political parties will be greater. For analyzing this, they observed ideological voting in eighteen Latin American countries and Spain. The main finding is the existence of a weak substantive representation due to absence of leftist parties; according to

these authors, it occurs especially in the Andean region. Mainwaring et al. (2006) stated that the representative bonds in the region is clientelistic or personalistic rather than programmatic.

Other studies try to find out how politician consider their own role as representatives in Latin American parliaments (Marenghi and García Montero 2006), or how is substantive representation in women (Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Others analyze whether exist a mandate representation in the region (Zechmeister and Corral 2011) or if there is a collective representation in the some regions such as Central America (España-Najera and Martínez-Roson 2010) or country level analysis regarding to the satisfaction with democracy (Siavelis 2009).

However, there are few studies that focus on the capability of political parties to represent peoples' demand in Latin America, as stated before, most of these studies deal with representation in an systemic way. Otero and Rodríguez-Zepeda (2010) are the first ones to address political representation at party level in Latin America. Their main objective is to examine how close the ideological positions of the representatives are from their voters. To do this, they use ideological congruence as an indicator of PR and analyze it in seventeen countries by comparing data from PELA and LAPOP between 2004 and 2008. Contraire to what they expected, Otero and Rodríguez-Zepeda (2010) found that the parties have strong ideological ties with voters A second finding is that the partisans show less extreme ideological positions that show the party that they voted for.

As it can be seen in this brief summary of PR research, the question about who is the target of the programmatic appeals has not be addressed yet in the region. This paper focus on the programmatic linkage, it is an exploratory study on how political parties approach to the constituencies in Latin America. So, studying to who are responding political parties is a first step for understanding the political representation process in the region. But also, allows to grasp whether political parties orient their ideological positions toward the median citizen or the median partisan is helpful in the analysis of their electoral strategies (Ezrow et al. 2011).

III. The measure, the data and the cases

II.2 The measure

Measuring political representation is not an easy task. It involves some theoretical and methodological problems that have to be addressed in order to understand the concept. In this paper, operational definition of PR used is the one proposed by Luna and Zechmeister (2010); they define PR as “the extent to which political parties and voters consistently agree on the preferences of a relevant set of dimensions of public policy”(Luna and Zechmeister 2010, 120).

This definition of PR leads to think it in terms of congruence. Congruence means “the coincidence of ideological and/or programmatic positions between citizens and political elites, or more specifically, between the parties and their voters”(Otero Felipe 2011, 37). As long as this study attempts to analyze whether political parties represent the preferences of the general citizens or only their supporters, the concept of congruence is a reliable indicator to achieve this goal.

But the question that arises is, how the congruence can be measured. Golder and Stramski (2010) point out that the measurement of congruence is influenced by the objective of the investigation. Besides, Powell (2009) states that the measure is also affected by the type of data used. So, there are several ways to measure congruence; some authors used correlations (i.e.

Miller and Stokes 1963), others authors propose more sophisticated indexes (i.e Achen 1977; 1978).⁶

Golder and Strasmki (2010) proposed three types of measures of congruence according to the kind of relationship is explored. The *One-to-one relationship*, this type of congruence measures the distance between an individual representative and one citizen. But, as stated by these authors; this kind of relation is almost inexistence in reality because the representative represents multiple preferences. The *Many-to-one relationship*, in this type of relationship congruence is measured looking at the distance between multiples citizens and one representative. In this case, there are several strategies to grasp the congruence. Looking at the absolute distance between median citizen and the representatives most preferred position. Also, it can be addressed looking at the average of distances between citizens and the representative. Finally, looking at the distances between citizens and representatives but taking into account the dispersion of citizen's preferences. The third kind of bond proposed by Golder and Strasmki (2010) is the *many-to-many relationship*, that focus on the analysis of whether the preferences' distribution among representatives and constituencies are similar or not.

This paper assumes the Relative Citizen Congruence (RCC) measure conceptualized by Golder and Strasmki (2010) in the *many-to-one relationship*. As stated above, this measure captures the effect of preferences dispersion among citizens. According with this approach, “the measure captures the average distance of a citizen from the citizens’ most preferred position (*MC*) relative to the average distance of a citizen (*C_i*) from the government (*G*)” (Golder and Strasmki 2010, 96). The measure ranges from 0 to 1; congruence is better when the score is close to 0 and is worst when is near to one.

$$RCC_i = 1 - \frac{\sum_{=1} |C_i - MC_i|}{\sum_{=1} |C_i - G_i|}$$

It is worth noting that this measure refers to government position, but here I substitute it for party position. In addition, in the citizens case, I use median citizen as is in the original formula but also y calculate the RCC only for partisans of each country analyzed. Therefore, there are two types of congruence, one between parties and median citizen (MC) and the other between parties and median partisan (MP).

As substance for measuring congruence I use the self placement in the left-right scale. Ideology is a cognitive shortcut that allows people reduce information gathering cost, helping them to understand politics throughout an spatial metaphor (Downs 1973; Hinich and Munger 1997). As stated by Zechmeister (2010, 96), “ideological labels are one type of heuristic that citizens and political elites may use to discriminate easily and efficiently among parties, candidates, and issues”. Alcántara (2004) points out the left-right scale is clearly differentiated within countries, allowing structure the political competition in such terms in Latin America. However, there are some doubts about the capability of this label to address party competition among citizens (Zechmeister 2010; Zechmeister and Corral 2011); but one latent objective of this paper is also to know whether the PR in the left-right dimension is telling us something about political process in Latin America.

⁶ Achen (1977; 1978) criticized the uses of correlations a measure of congruence because it does not allow make comparisons between groups due the different sizes of the samples. He proposes three measures *proximity*, *centrism* and *responsiveness*. Other authors such measures (Dalton 1985; Otero-Felipe and Rodriguez-Zepeda 2010; Otero Felipe 2011). For more information see Achen (1977; 1978).

As stated at the beginning of the paper, the congruence is observed in two groups; the citizens in general and in those that vote for specific political parties. So, the RCC is calculated using (1) the median citizen, which is that is most preferred by all respondents of the self placement in the ideological scale. (2) The median supporter, that is, ideological position most preferred for those who in LAPOP's survey answer to the question «Do you currently identify with a political party?» and after that indicated which political party they identify with.

III.2 The data

In a different vein, the source of the data is also an important element when capturing congruence. Powell (2009) shows that there are three types of data that are often used in PR analysis. First, *citizens survey/expert survey*, this type data is based on the self-position made by citizens in the left-right dimension (median voter), and the position of political parties are based on the position in the left-right scale assigned by experts of each country. Second, *party vote/party manifesto*, in this source the positions of political parties are estimated using the data from Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and calculating the median legislator position in the left-right scale or others dimension of political competition. Citizens' positions are based on the voting behavior in the ballot box; the median citizen is calculated using the CMP positions. Finally, the *citizen identification/citizen perception*, in which people is asked to place themselves and political parties in the left-right scale. Both, median citizen and median legislator come from the same source, the persons surveyed.⁷

However, Powell (2009) does not take into account data from political elites. This paper uses surveys conducted by Latin America Parliamentary Elites Project (PELA) of University of Salamanca to congressmen in Latin America since mid nineties (Alcántara 1994-2013). This survey collects information about socio-demographic characteristics, political attitudes, opinions and preferences of members of parliament on Latin America. In the citizen side, the source is the American Barometer conducted by Vanderbilt University. This project collects public opinion polls about several subjects in Latin American countries since mid 2000s.

One advantage of using these sources is the fact that they share the same ten-point left-right scale. This allows make comparisons not only within countries but between them as well. In the case of PELA the wording of the question is as follows

«As you know, when we speak about politics the expressions “left” and “right” are often used. On this card there is a series of boxes that goes from left to right. According to your political leanings, in which box do you place yourself?»

In American Barometers surveys the questions says:

«On this card there is a 1 to 10 scale that goes from left to right. One means left and 10 means right. Nowadays, when we speak about political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those of the right. According to the meaning that the terms “left” and “right” have for you, and thinking about your political leanings, where you place yourself on this scale?»

III.3 The cases

⁷ For more information about this see: Powell Jr., G.B. (2009) ‘The Ideological Congruence Controversy The Impact of Alternative Measures, Data, and Time Periods on the Effects of Election Rules’, *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(12), 1475–1497.

The case selection is delimited to electoral cycle between 2008 and 2012, during this period 18 presidential and legislative elections were held in Latin America.⁸ The countries selected were those in which data from both sources is available. The units of analysis are the political parties that have at least 5% of representation inside the low chamber, also the parties that have five respondents of elite survey as minimum. On the other hand, these parties have to reach at least ten respondents in LAPOP's surveys. Using these criteria, it was selected 24 parties from nine countries in Latin America⁹, this represents 555 representatives; 8,344 voters and 12,283 citizens (see table 1).

Table 1: Countries and parties selected

COUNTRY	PARTY NAME (in Spanish)	PA	Deputies	Partisan	Citizens
Argentina	Frente para la Victoria-PJ	FPV-PJ	55	165	1281
Argentina	Unión Cívica Radical	UCR	10	26	
Chile	Unión Democrática Independiente	UDI	26	14	1528
Chile	Partido Demócrata Cristiano	PDC	13	23	
Chile	Partido por la Democracia	PPD	13	26	
Chile	Renovación Nacional	RN	13	64	
Ecuador	Movimiento Alianza País	MPAIS	44	244	2112
Ecuador	Partido Sociedad Patriótica 21 de Enero	PSP	14	17	
El Salvador	Alianza Republicana Nacionalista	ARENA	26	93	1464
El Salvador	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional	FMLN	28	385	
Guatemala	Unión Nacional de la Esperanza	UNE	31	42	1148
Guatemala	Gran Alianza Nacional	GANAN	14	13	
Guatemala	Partido Patriota	PP	18	42	
Panama	Partido Revolucionario Democrático	PRDP	23	129	1206
Panama	Cambio Democrático	CD	14	134	
Panama	Partido Panameñista	PANP	20	43	
Paraguay	Asociación Nacional Republicana	ARN	27	264	864
Paraguay	Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico	PLRA	24	105	
Paraguay	Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos	UNACE	14	75	
Peru	Unión por Perú	UPP	26	25	1316
Peru	Partido Aprista Peruano	PAP	24	66	
Uruguay	Frente Amplio	FA	40	659	1364
Uruguay	Partido Nacional Uruguayo	PNU	24	173	
Uruguay	Partido Colorado	PC	14	75	
Total parties (PELA)		24			
Total representatives (PELA)			555		
Total partisans (LAPOP)				2902	
Total surveyed (LAPOP)					12283

Source: elaborated by the author using data from PELA and LAPOP

⁸ See annex 1

⁹ At this moment I have data from the rest of the countries with the exception of Venezuela, but still processing the information from congressmen's surveys.

IV. Ideological congruence in Latin America: to whom are parties representing?

The first step of this analysis is to locate the ideological position of the median citizen, voter and supporters. The table 2 reports the mean and median position of citizens in the selected countries. As can be seen in this table, in most of the countries the citizens place themselves in the center of ideological scale, only Guatemala and Panama are to the right in the political scale, but not too much. This finding allows arguing that electoral competition in these countries is centripetal; if most of people are in the center it can be expected that parties also have moderate positions in the ideological scale. Besides, comparing the median citizen and the parties' median voter in each country the difference are not great¹⁰. In fact, in 13 of 24 parties the median position of voters and citizens is the same

Table 2. Mean and median ideology by country

Country	Mean Ideology	Median Ideology
Uruguay	4.69	5.00
El Salvador	5.22	5.00
Ecuador	5.43	5.00
Chile	5.48	5.00
Peru	5.48	5.00
Argentina	5.52	5.00
Paraguay	5.52	5.00
Guatemala	5.79	6.00
Panama	6.08	6.00

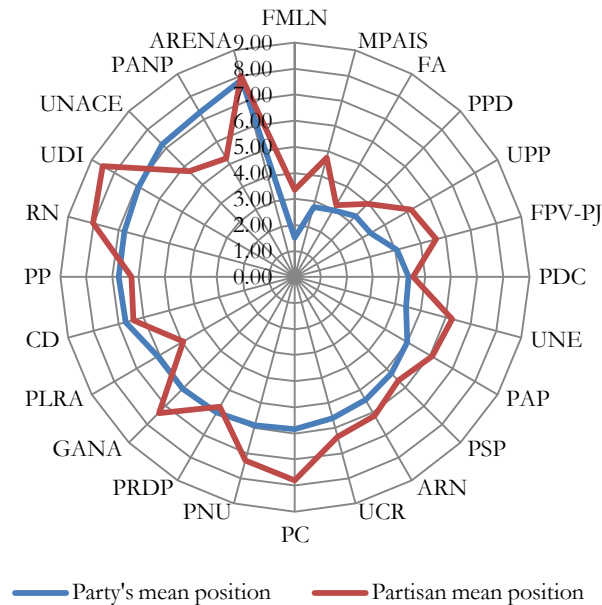
Source: elaborated by the author using data from PELA and LAPOP

The Figure 1 provides the ideological mean position of analyzed parties and their followers. It is clear that, the FMLN in El Salvador is the party further to the left (1.50), followed by the MPAIS in Ecuador (2.79) and as the third more leftist the FA in Uruguay. Conversely, the Salvadorian ARENA is the party more to the right (7.85); behind this are PANP from Panama (7.30) and the Paraguayan UNACE (7.21). In the case of the partisans, those self-placed in the left of the ideological scale are not as extreme as their preferred party is. Those that voted to FA (3.20) in Uruguay show the leftmost position in the ideological scale, followed by FMLN (3.36). However, this does not occur in the case of rightist partisans, who seem to be more extreme than their own parties like ARENA's case (7.99), or even further to the right as UDI (8.51) and RN (8.01) in Chile.

It is worth noting that in 9 out of 24 parties analyzed, the median position of their supporters coincide with the median citizen. This means that the partisans' ideological preferences are not different from the common citizen; also, it might be telling that the electoral competition is not based on the ideological scale but rather in another political dimension.

¹⁰ To see all ideological means and median position of parties, their followers and citizens go to annex 2.

Figure 1: Parties and follower mean ideological position



Source: elaborated by the author using data from PELA and LAPOP

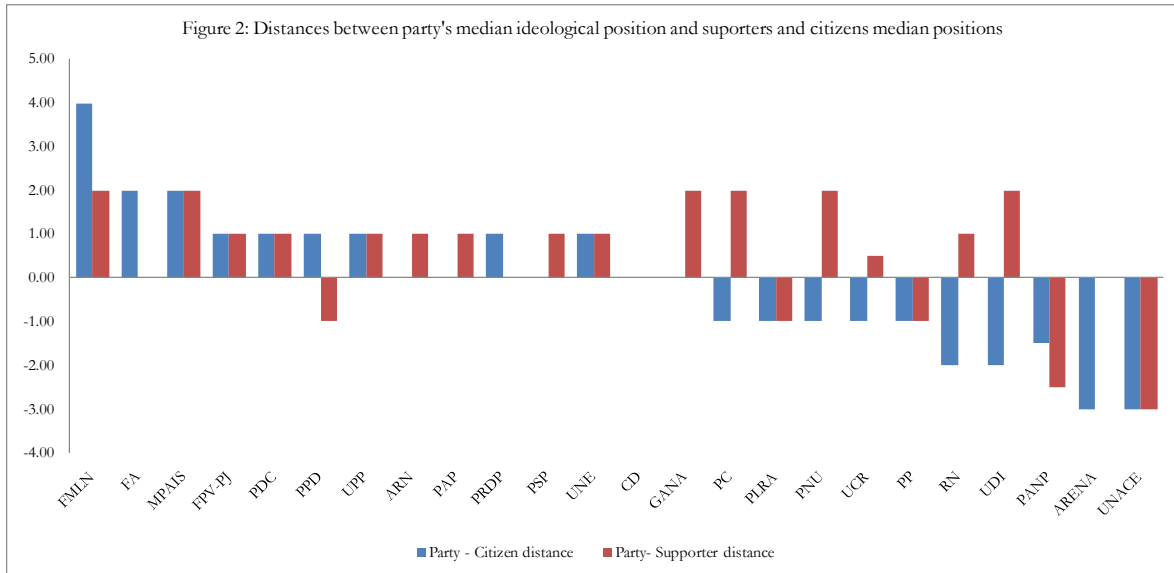
Observing the mean position of parties and their supporter gives us a clue about the kind of relationship that is established between the groups. However, mean position could be misleading because is an average, and is affected by outliers. This is a technical reason for using the median position when calculating congruence, but there a theoretical one as well. Dahl (2002) states that democracy is based in the majority rule, and the median voter is the position closer to all possible positions and cannot be defeated by any other one. In the same vein, Powell (2000) argues that this position is the one that is going to be preferred above all possible options.

Figure 2 shows the simple distance between the median legislator position in each party, the median partisan and the median citizens. Using this measure, we can grasp whether the political parties are more are more extremist (to the left or to the right) than their supporters. Comparing with the position of the median citizen, we find out that 9 out of 24 parties are to the left of MC. The FMLN shows the greatest difference regarding to MC position, also, the FA in Uruguay and the PSP in Ecuador show a left-gap between its position and the median citizen in their countries.

Conversely, political parties are to right of MC position in eleven countries. ARENA shows the most important gap in this regard, followed by UNACE. It is worth noting that the other two parties that have right breach are Chilean, UDI and RN. Finally, five parties have a perfect coincidence between their median position and the MCs. Some of them perform well in with both, citizens and voters. These cases are ARN in Paraguay, PSP in Ecuador, GANA in Guatemala and CD in Panama.

In supporters' case, 14 out of 24 parties are to the left of their voters. Six parties show the greatest difference concerning to its follower, but the distance in not greater than two-scale point; these are UDI, PNU, PC, MPAIS, GANA and FMLN. On the other hand, only five

parties are to the right to their voters, being UNACE the one with the widest gap, behind it PANP in Panama.



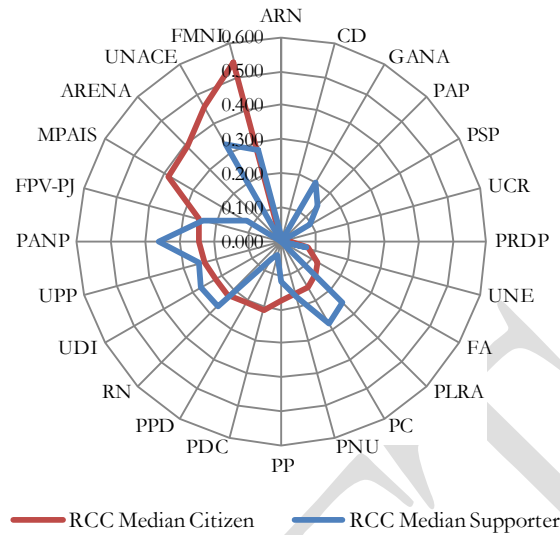
Source: elaborated by the author using data from PELA and LAPOP

Finally, figure 3 displays the comparison of *Relative Citizens Congruence* scores between parties, the median citizen and median party voters. Regarding to the median citizen congruence, the performance of the parties is positive. The average congruence score is 0.177; this means high congruence of ideological preference among the analyzed parties and MCs. Being the highest congruent parties ARN in Paraguay, CD in Panama, GANA in Guatemala, PAP in Peru and PSP in Ecuador. These parties have a perfect match with the median citizen (RCC = 0). On the other hand, the extremist parties showed more distances between their positions and the median citizens. FMLN shows the lowest congruence, followed by UNACE and ARENA.¹¹

When the RCC is observed for the median supporter, the findings are also good. The average is 0.149 and all the parties are below 0.4. In this case, the parties with the highest congruence (RCC = 0) are UCR in Argentina, ARENA in El Salvador, CD and PRDP in Panama, and FA in Uruguay. The less congruent parties are PANP in Panama and UNACE in Paraguay.

¹¹ See annex 4

Figure 3: RCC median voters and supporters



V. Discussion (preliminary discussion)

What is this data telling us about political representation in Latin America? A first finding is that, the competition in Latin America is centripetal. Median citizen are mostly in the center of the ideological scale, and parties tend toward the center as well. Some exceptions arise such as FMLN, MPAIS on the left, and ARENA and PANP on the right. But in general terms parties place themselves close to the center.

In some cases, there is no real difference between the positions of party median supporter and the median citizen. This lack of difference might be drawing two different conclusions: first, the electoral competition is centripetal and the citizens prefer moderated ideological or, second, the electoral competition is not about the ideological position but rather another conflict dimension within the society.

A second result that can be highlighted is the good performance of PR in the analyzed cases. This means that the crisis of representation is not as deep as some authors claim. Political parties use ideological labels to identify themselves in the political arena, and it seems to be that this is working in the region. As expected, the congruence is better among the supporters than in general citizenry. Supporters have a better knowledge about their own party position. Therefore, some programmatic linkages exist between the parties and those who identify with them. The assumption of clientelistic bonds as the main nexus between parties and their supporters has to be moderated. However, I am not arguing that the clientelism is not a important practice in the region, but rather that ideological representation is also present in the analyzed parties.

Another finding that is worth noting is positive correlation between congruent parties.¹² This means that those parties that are congruent to their supporters also are congruent to the median citizen. This shows parties that represents something to people, the ideological label is telling something about their identity and those with higher congruence could be constructing the basis for a long-term strategy that allows them connect to people through ideas.

¹² The pearson's correlation is 0.463, and the significance is < 0.05 . See annex 6.

Finally, it is striking that two of the parties that show the greatest differences between their ideological position and the median citizen are from El Salvador. This shows the polarization existing among political elites after the civil conflict, but also it could explain why Mauricio Funes was the better option to run for presidency in 2009. If he was seen as a moderated candidate people had more incentives to vote for him because is closer to their preferences. In this case, the connection of this party with the society is different from the program. Among their people ARENA perform better than the FMLN, but in any case, the programmatic bond with the rest of the society is weak. Further research has to be made to find an answer to this puzzle.

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VII. Annexes

Annex 1

Presidential and legislatives election in Latin America between 2008-2012

Country	Presidential election date (ballotage)	Legislative election date
Paraguay	April 20, 2008	April 20, 2008
El Salvador	November 18, 2009	November 18, 2009
Ecuador	April 26, 2009	April 26, 2009
Panama	May 03, 2009	May 03, 2009/July 1, 2012
Uruguay	October 25, 2009 (November 29, 2009)	October 25, 2009
Honduras	November 29, 2009	November 29, 2009
Bolivia	December 6, 2009	December 6, 2009
Chile	December 13, 2009 (January 17, 2010)	December 13, 2009
Costa Rica	February 7, 2010	February 7, 2010
Colombia	May 30, 2010 (June 20, 2010)	March 14, 2010
Brazil	October 3, 2010 (October 31, 2010)	October 3, 2010
Argentina	October 23, 2011	April 28, 2009/October 23, 2011
Peru	April 10, 2011 (June 5, 2012)	April 10, 2011
Guatemala	September 11, 2011 (November 6, 2011)	September 11, 2011
Nicaragua	November 6, 2011	November 6, 2011
Dominican Republic	May 20, 2012	May 16, 2010
Mexico	July 1, 2012	July 05, 2009/ July 1, 2012
Venezuela	October 7, 2012	September 29, 2010

Source: Alcántara y Tangina (2011), updated by the author with data from de la OAS.¹³

¹³ <http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/calendario.asp>

Annex 2: Mean and median ideological position of parties and their supporters

Party Name	Party ideological mean position	Party ideological median position	Partisans ideological median position	Partisans ideological mean position	Citizens median position
ARENA	7,85	8,00	8.00	7.99	5.00
ARN	5,44	5,00	6.00	6.14	5.00
CD	6,71	6,00	6.00	6.42	6.00
FA	2,95	3,00	3.00	3.20	5.00
FMLN	1,50	1,00	3.00	3.36	5.00
FPV-PJ	4,06	4,00	5.00	5.62	5.00
GANA	6,07	6,00	8.00	7.38	6.00
MPAIS	2,79	3,00	5.00	4.75	5.00
PANP	7,30	7,50	5.00	5.26	6.00
PAP	5,00	5,00	6.00	6.09	5.00
PC	5,83	6,00	8.00	7.81	5.00
PDC	4,38	4,00	5.00	4.55	5.00
PLRA	6,08	6,00	5.00	4.95	5.00
PNU	5,88	6,00	8.00	7.30	5.00
PP	6,76	7,00	6.00	6.26	6.00
PPD	3,31	4,00	3.00	3.96	5.00
PRDP	6,00	5,00	5.00	5.75	6.00
PSP	5,23	5,00	6.00	5.61	5.00
RN	6,77	7,00	8.00	8.01	5.00
UCR	5,60	6,00	6.50	6.35	5.00
UDI	6,92	7,00	9.00	8.51	5.00
UNACE	7,21	8,00	5.00	5.73	5.00
UNE	4,42	5,00	6.00	6.26	6.00
UPP	3,36	4,00	5.00	5.16	5.00

Source: elaborated by the author using data from PELA and LAPOP

Annex 4: RCC for Median Citizen and Median Supporter by Party

PARTY	RCC Median Citizen	RCC Median Supporter
ARN	0.000	0.017
CD	0.000	0.000
GANA	0.000	0.200
PAP	0.000	0.150
PSP	0.000	0.096
UCR	0.020	0.000
PRDP	0.026	0.000
UNE	0.077	0.073
FA	0.123	0.000
PLRA	0.136	0.252
PC	0.155	0.281
PNU	0.155	0.167
PP	0.177	0.116
PDC	0.208	0.044
PPD	0.208	0.062
RN	0.225	0.268
UDI	0.225	0.272
UPP	0.236	0.250
PANP	0.243	0.361
FPV-PJ	0.252	0.239
MPAIS	0.382	0.120
ARENA	0.392	0.000
UNACE	0.456	0.329
FMNL	0.541	0.277

Source: calculated by the author using data from PELA and LAPOP

Annex 5: Correlations

		Median Citizen	Median Supporter
Median Citizen	Pearson's Correlation	1.00	.463*
	Sig. (two-tailed)		0.02
	N	24.00	24.00
Median Supporter	Pearson's Correlation	0.463*	1.00
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.02	
	N	24.00	24.00

*. < 0.05 (two-tailed)

Source: calculated by the author using data from PELA and LAPOP