

**THE QUEST FOR UNCONTESTED POWER: HOW PRESIDENTS' PERSONALITY
TRAITS LEAD TO CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

by

Ignacio Arana Araya

B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communication, Universidad Católica de Chile, 2002

M.A. in Political Science, Universidad de Chile, 2007

M.A. in Political Science, University of Pittsburgh, 2010

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Science in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2015

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
THE DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Ignacio Arana Araya

It was defended on

September 10, 2015

and approved by

John Carey, Chair, Department of Government, Dartmouth College

Silvia Borzutzky, Teaching Professor, Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University

Kevin Morrison, Associate Professor, Political Science, University of Pittsburgh

Scott Morgenstern, Associate Professor, Political Science, University of Pittsburgh

Dissertation Advisor: Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, Professor, Political Science, University of Pittsburgh

Copyright © by Ignacio Arana Araya

2015

THE QUEST FOR UNCONTESTED POWER: HOW PRESIDENTS' PERSONALITY TRAITS LEAD TO CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Ignacio Arana Araya, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2015

Does it matter *who* the president is? If so, *how* does it matter? Most political science research that analyzes the presidency treats the individual differences of presidents as “residual variance.” I challenge this approach arguing that presidents’ decisions are shaped by their individual differences. I test the argument examining which presidents attempt to make constitutional changes to increase their powers or relax their term limits. Considering presidents who were governing by 1945, thirty eight leaders of the Western Hemisphere have made such attempts forty eight times. I hypothesize that presidents who are risk prone and have an assertive personality are more likely to try to change their country's legal charter. I answer the research question using a novel dataset of personality traits and background characteristics for 315 presidents who governed between 1945 and 2012. The dataset integrates information from a survey distributed to 911 experts from 26 nationalities, the coding of 13 individual characteristics of the leaders and semi-structured interviews conducted with 21 former presidents. The empirical analyses support the two hypotheses in the cases of presidents that try to change their powers, while the leaders’ assertiveness also proves to be a relevant cause of their attempts to relax their term limits. Interestingly, the individual differences of presidents have a stronger explanatory

power than complementary explanations of constitutional reforms (i.e., institutional and contextual variables).

This study makes important contributions. First, it advances the frontier of studies on the presidency by revealing how the uniqueness of presidents explain political outcomes. Second, it helps to integrate the current divide between quantitative and qualitative studies on the presidency. Third, its interdisciplinary approach provides a deeper understanding of institutional change. Current explanations of this foundational question in the social sciences remain incomplete because they have neglected the role of powerful individuals. Finally, this study proposes to make significant progress in understanding the relation between represented and their elected representatives, by helping to show how the citizens can use the individual differences of political candidates to anticipate how presidents will perform in office.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	XI
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION	11
2.0 PERSONALIZING THE PRESIDENCY	15
2.1 THE DOWNFALL OF PRESIDENTIAL IDENTITY	18
2.1.1 The Quantitative Shift	24
2.2 CHIEF EXECUTIVES IN THREE DOMINANT APPROACHES	29
2.2.1 Quantitative Works	29
2.2.2 Game Theoretic Accounts of the Presidency.....	32
2.2.3 Historical Institutionalism and American Political Development.....	34
2.2.4 The Uniqueness of Presidents, an Uncomfortable Nexus.....	36
2.3 PRESIDENTS IN THE PSYCHOLOGY LITERATURE	37
2.4 WHAT PSYCHOLOGY CAN TEACH US ABOUT PRESIDENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE	43
3.0 PRESIDENTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS: WHO CHANGES THE RULES?.....	46
3.1 CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND PRESIDENTS	48
3.2 WHAT DO PRESIDENTS SAY?.....	64

3.2.1	Individual Differences and Governing.....	68
3.2.2	The Context	81
3.2.3	The Constitution.....	85
3.3	A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ATTEMPTS	94
3.4	CONCLUDING REMARKS	99
4.0	HOW TO STUDY THE PERSONALITY OF PRESIDENTS?	102
4.1	DIFFERENT APPROACHES.....	103
4.2	WHY AN EXPERT SURVEY?	107
4.3	EXPERT SURVEYS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE.....	110
4.4	THE SURVEY ON PRESIDENTS	112
4.4.1	The Search and Selection of Experts.....	117
4.5	CONCLUDING REMARKS	121
5.0	THE QUEST TO CONSOLIDATE POWER: SAMPLE AND DATA	122
5.1	WHO CHANGES THE CONSTITUTION?.....	123
5.2	THE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES	124
5.3	ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.....	129
5.4	PERSONALITY, INSTITUTIONS, AND CONTEXT REVISITED.....	135
5.5	METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES: ENDOGENEITY AND SELECTION BIAS.....	138
5.6	CONCLUDING REMARKS	142
6.0	THE INTIMATE RELATION WITH CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.....	143

6.1	ACCOUNTING FOR RATER SELECTION.....	145
6.2	PERSONALITY AND PRESIDENTIAL ATTEMPTS	147
6.3	ENDOGENEITY CONCERNS.....	158
6.4	ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES	160
6.4.1	Conditional Effects.....	160
6.4.2	Homogeneity Concerns.....	164
6.5	ALTERNATIVE SPECIFICATIONS	170
6.6	CONCLUDING REMARKS	175
7.0	PERSONALITY TRAITS IN ACTION	178
7.1	MANUEL ZELAYA AND THE COUP	182
7.2	HUGO CHÁVEZ AGAINST THE “OLD REGIME”.....	189
7.3	LUIS MONGE, THE POPULAR PRESIDENT.....	195
7.4	ERNESTO PÉREZ, THE FAILED ATTEMPT.....	197
7.5	CONCLUDING REMARKS	201
8.0	PERSONALITY TRAITS IN ACTION	203
	APPENDIX A	213
	APPENDIX B	216
	APPENDIX C	218
	APPENDIX D	220
	APPENDIX E	222
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	225

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Attempts of Constitutional Change	60
Table 3.2: President's Interviewed	68
Table 4.1: Risk Propensity	113
Table 4.2: Assertiveness	114
Table 4.3: Big-Five Inventory.....	116
Table 4.4: Dominance	117
Table 4.5: Presidents of the Americas Assessed.....	120
Table 5.1: Presidential Attempts.....	124
Table 5.2: Psychological Traits of Presidents.....	125
Table 5.3: Correlation between the Big-Five and Medium-Level Traits.....	127
Table 5.4: Big-Five Personality Traits Compared	128
Table 5.5: Alternative Explanations of Constitutional Change	132
Table 5.6: Robustness Checks	136
Table 5.7: Presidents' Characteristics.....	139
Table 5.8: Variables related to Presidential Assessments.....	141
Table 6.1: Probability that a President will be Assessed	147
Table 6.2: Presidential Attempts to Change the Constitution.....	151
Table 6.3: Substantive Impact of the Control Variables.....	156

Table 6.4: Presidential Attempts and Instrumental Variables	159
Table 6.5: Presidential Attempts and Interactions	162
Table 6.6: Presidential Attempts to Increase their Powers, Different Samples	167
Table 6.7: Presidential Attempts to Change their Terms, Different Samples.....	169
Table 6.8: Presidential Attempts to Increase their Powers, Alternative Specifications.....	171
Table 6.9: Presidential Attempts to Change their Terms, Alternative Specifications	174
Table B.1: Questionnaire Applied to Presidents	217
Table D.1: Relation with Presidents and Ideology	221
Table E.1: Presidential Legislative Powers	222
Table E.2: Presidential Non-Legislative Powers	223

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Presidents and Constitutional Attempts, 1945-2012	63
Figure 4.1: Geographic Distribution of Survey Experts	119
Figure 5.1: Risk Propensity, Before and During Term	125
Figure 5.2: Assertiveness Among Presidents.....	126
Figure 6.1.1: Risk and Powers	154
Figure 6.1.2: Risk and Term Limits.....	154
Figure 6.2.1: Assertiveness and Presidential Attempts.....	155
Figure 6.2.2: Assertiveness and Presidential Attempts.....	155
Figure 6.3.1: Marginal Effect on Powers.....	163
Figure 6.3.2: Marginal Effect on Term Limits	163
Figure 6.4.1: Marginal Effect on Powers.....	164
Figure 6.4.2: Marginal Effect on Term Limits	164
Figure A.1: Assertiveness by Country	214
Figure A.2: Risk-Propensity by Country	214

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation ended up being an unexpected product. On my second year of the doctoral program, when I was thinking on a topic for my dissertation, I started wondering on what we know about the most influential individuals on the Western Hemisphere. I knew back then that we know a lot of biographical information about presidents, but I soon discovered that there simple was no research that systematically analyzed how their behavior leads to relevant political outcomes. I thought that we as citizens need to understand better how presidential behavior impacts in our lives. I decided that it would be great to become an expert in presidents of the Western Hemisphere as a group. Since then, I started a path that had many turns. The research choice made me shift my focus of research from institutions to individuals, making me first a consumer and later a producer of research in political psychology. Previously I had no particular interest in the area, but now I found it fascinating, and tremendously important to understand political phenomena. That initial curiosity also led me to reuse some skills that I developed in my years as a journalist. Such experience helped me to reach 21 former Latin American presidents and interview them in Chile and in all of Central America. Meeting these unique characters reinforced my interest in presidential behavior. My research agenda also forced me to devote more time than expected to gather the necessary data to test the theory proposed in the manuscript: the *Presidential Database of the Americas* created by a team of researchers that I led

proved to be an extremely time-consuming, major challenge. But I am happy with the outcome: to my knowledge it is the largest existing database on presidents of the Western Hemisphere. After three years of research, I expect that this manuscript will be the beginning of a fruitful research agenda.

This manuscript has been possible because I count with the generous support of numerous individuals and institutions. My dissertation committee chair, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, made an enormous intellectual contribution to this project since its inception. He was a permanent source of theoretical and methodological guidance, and provided detailed comments in all stages of my work. I am also deeply grateful with the other members of my dissertation committee. Scott Morgenstern spent many hours providing me invaluable feedback, help and encouragement. John Carey sent me detailed comments for the manuscript, and he and Morgenstern helped to refine the argument with sharp and original comments. I am also grateful to Silvia Borzutzky and Kevin Morrison for their insights on the manuscript and many constructive criticism and suggestions.

The data collection challenge was so big that I could not have done it without the support of outstanding research assistants. María José Ojeda, Bárbara Veliz and Elsa Acuña helped me to code the biographies of heads of government and to identify experts that could participate in the survey on presidents. Their job was meticulous and efficient. My Brazilian colleagues Bruno Hoepers and Guilherme Coimbra were generous in helping me to translate the expert survey to Portuguese. I am also indebted to the 21 former Latin American presidents who reserved part of their active agenda to answer many questions. Although some questions may have sound very strange, especially those related to their personal traits, most of the leaders were generous, helpful and polite during the interviews. I am also indebted with the selfless help of the 361

experts in presidents who responded the questionnaire that I sent them. Some scholars went beyond answering the questions asked in the questionnaire and offered extensive insightful comments about presidents, demonstrating both intellectual generosity and passion on the topic.

I was lucky enough to present my work to colleagues in different instances. The project benefitted from the feedback received at the Latin American Social and Public Policy conference held at the University of Pittsburgh (2013) and the Midwest Political Science Association Annual meeting in Chicago (2014). I also received excellent comments in presentations made at the University of Sussex (Brighton, UK), the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (Mexico City), and the European University at St. Petersburg (Russia).

A project like this needs cannot be achieved without financial support and I received generous funds from the University of Pittsburgh. The Department of Political Science allowed me to spend an entire year conducting research granting me the *Social Science Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship*, and awarded me funds through the *Richard Cottam Memorial Prize Fund*. The Center for Latin American Studies also provided me funds to conduct one year of research, and also awarded me the *Latin American Social and Public Policy Dissertation Fellowship*. Finally, the University Center for International Studies funded part of my field research giving me the *International Studies Fund*.

Besides the academic support received during the PhD, I am very grateful to my family, both nuclear and extended. My parents Diego and Macarena and my siblings Sebastián and Carolina always offered me their love and encouragement to continue progressing. All of them visited me in Pittsburgh and, despite the distance, they were intimately close to my daily life. Besides my nuclear family, I am grateful for being connected from afar to my extended family in

Chile. During the PhD program I traveled six times to my country, and invariably they always reminded me where my home is in this world.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Astrid Burmeister, for her love, loyalty, and wonderful companionship all these years. She offered me tireless support to pursue doctoral studies since we were dating back in Santiago, several years ago. In Pittsburgh she has been my full support and been next to me every time I needed her. In these years we have travelled together through more than 20 American states and 12 countries, including all the countries where I did field research. We have lived together so many unforgettable experiences –from extremely positive to some few negative– that I can only view the conclusion of this manuscript as a joint achievement.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

No other human beings in any Western democracy attract more attention than the country's presidents. The press covers their daily agenda, almost all citizens have a strong opinion about them, and numerous scholars and pundits routinely assess their performance through different media and academic outlets. Such universal attention is not without cause. Presidents are the most powerful politician in the country, and their decisions have relevant political, social, economic and symbolic consequences.

Given the vast amounts of literature produced by political scientists dedicated to understand presidential behavior and performance, it may seem that there is little to add to this stream of research. This dissertation, nonetheless, proposes that despite the rivers of ink that have run on the study of presidents and presidencies, we still cannot answer confidently the following fundamental questions: does it matter *who* the president is? If so, *how* does it matter?

To understand why the answers to these questions remain unclear it is necessary to briefly review the current state of presidential studies.¹ The literature that studies presidents and presidencies is so rich and diverse that the sole purpose of long edited books has been to provide a broad perspective of the literature on American presidents and presidency (e.g., Edwards III and Howell, 2009). However, for the purpose of this study it is important to briefly trace how central the personal characteristics of presidents have been in analyses of executive politics.

¹ I mainly refer here to the literature on American presidents and the American presidency because they are the referential works on executive powers and heads of government in the Western Hemisphere.

Until the 1970s, most students of the American presidency paid significant attention to the individual who led the presidency. These were mainly qualitative studies that could be grouped in three main approaches. Since the first decades of the twentieth century, political scientists studied the legal structures and different roles of presidents (e.g., Corwin 1940, Koenig 1964). Later on, scholars started to pay attention to the actual exercise of presidential power and the organization within the executive (e.g., Neustadt 1960). A third group of experts examined the presidency deploying varied theoretical and methodological tools of political psychology (e.g., George and George, 1956, Barber 1972). With different degrees, in all of these approaches the presidents' behavior, decisions and personal characteristics were considered relevant to the understanding of executive politics.

Since the late seventies, several prominent scholars called for a remarkable shift in presidential studies (King 1975, Heclo 1977, Pika 1981, Edwards 1983, Wayne 1983, Lowi 1986, King 1993, Moe 1993). These scholars underlined that preceding works had failed to produce analyses with acceptable standards of scientific inquiry, and that the failure to produce falsifiable theories led presidential studies to lag behind other areas of political science. This intellectual movement had profound consequences; quantitative studies and game-theoretic works that built on rational choice theory became the mainstream approach to study the presidency. This transformation helped the discipline to overcome several of the methodological problems that earlier works had in attaining scientific standards. One author even called the changes on the subfield a "revolution" (Moe 2009).

The shift toward quantitative research had, nonetheless, collateral damage: the identity of the presidents was analytically replaced by a mere one-size-fit-all rational actor. Researchers started to dismiss as irrelevant the background and personality traits of heads of government; the

individual differences of the leaders became to be treated as “residual variance” (e.g., Lowi 1985; Skowronek 2008; Moe 2009). Turning presidents into faceless individuals allowed researchers to think of the presidency as an institution and to avoid the fact that the small number of American presidents prohibited using them as units of analysis in statistical tests. Heads of government became soulless actors whose freedom to act was held in check by conflicting demands of their constituents and by institutional constraints on their power (Franck 1981; Neustadt 1960; Rose 1988). According to this approach, Barack Obama or George W. Bush would act identically under the same circumstances. In sum, quantitative research built on the unjustified assumption that the presidents’ individual differences have little to contribute to our understanding of political outcomes (Lowi 1985; Skowronek 1986).

The different characterization of presidents that qualitative and quantitative studies have persists and helps to maintain little connection between the two types of studies. Qualitative studies continue to consider the identity of leaders as necessary to explain their actions (e.g., Neustadt 1960; Barber 1972; Greenstein 2004), while quantitative works center the explanations of presidential behavior on the institutions that surround heads of governments (e.g., Moe 1990; Dickinson 2003; Lewis 2008, Canes-Wrone 2006).

I contend that both qualitative and quantitative studies have failed to understand the relation between presidents and relevant political outcomes. The assumption in which most quantitative political science builds is untenable because the literature on differential psychology has shown that all individuals have stable personality differences and that these differences strongly explain their behavior (Judge et al. 1999; Goldberg 1990; McCrae and Costa 1997; Costa and McCrae 1992). The assumption that the identity of presidents is irrelevant to understand their behavior is bluntly contradicted by a vast corpus of evidence gathered during

nearly 130 years of psychological research.² Although research on differential psychology is not in conflict with rational choice theory, it suggests that theoretical models that describe presidents as rational actors would also gain analytical capacity by examining the psychological motivations of the heads of governments.

Although many qualitative studies have centered their attention on the personal characteristics of presidents, they have done it with little attention to developments in psychology. Qualitative works in political science have failed to recognize that 1) on personality psychology there is a broad consensus of human personality is; that personalities tend to be stable over time (see Corr and Matthews 2009: 23), and that 3) American presidents are among the most studied group by personality researchers. Researchers have assessed presidential traits such as narcissism (Deluga 1997), proactivity (Deluga 1998), psychodynamics (e.g., Elovitz 2003), power, achievement, and affiliation motives (Winter 1987), intelligence (Simonton 2002), and general personality traits (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004). This literature has also related personality traits with presidential performance (Simonton 1988; Rubenzer et al. 2000).

This dissertation proposes that the individual differences of presidents can be associated with relevant political phenomena. By individual differences, research on differential psychology refers to how individuals differ from each other in every conceivable area, including personality, intelligence, attitudes, and abilities.³ Studies in psychology have examined how personality traits are related to the willingness of individuals to change the status quo, and have even created scales to measure the propensity to change the status quo (Oreg 2003).⁴

² Psychologists trace the origins of formal psychological research to the opening of the Institute for Experimental Psychology at the University of Leipzig in Germany in 1879, by Wilhelm Wundt (see Fuchs and Millar 2003).

³ The study of individual differences is ubiquitous in psychological research; it is a topic studied at least in experimental, clinical, physiological, pharmacological, medical, genetical, statistical and social psychology.

⁴ Among other traits, researchers have identified as predictors of willingness to change self-discipline, orientation toward creative achievement, and a lack of defensive rigidity (Mumford et al. 1993); openness to experience,

The study of individual differences is not new in political science. Most research has focused on mass behavior (e.g., Mondak 2010; Hetherington and Weiler 2009), but recently some studies have paid closer attention to leaders. Research by Goldgeier (1994) and Horowitz and Stam (2014) suggests that the background of leaders shapes their behavior in office, while Congleton and Zhang (2013) find that the career path and education of American presidents drives their economic policy judgment.

This dissertation argues that the individual differences of presidents shape their decisions, and that they explain relevant political outcomes. Incorporating recent advances in personality research, I test the argument by examining the relationship between the individual differences of presidents and their attempts to make constitutional changes to increase their powers or relax their term limits in the Western Hemisphere.

Constitutional change has been frequent in Latin America. On average, since independence each Latin American country has replaced its constitution 10.1 times. This record contrasts with the average of only 3.2 constitutions for Western European countries between 1789 and 2001 (Negretto 2012).

Latin American presidents have been protagonists of many constitutional changes, but the literature has tended to neglect their role as chief constitution-makers (an exception is Negretto 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013). Among the politicians who decide when and how to change a constitution, presidents have by far the greatest incentives to reform it. Constitutions determine how presidents are elected, for how long they may hold office, and are the source of most presidential powers. As the most powerful politician in the country, presidents are also the most capable actor to achieve reforms.

tolerance for ambiguity, risk propensity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and positive affectivity (Judge et al. 1999); optimism and perceived control (Wanberg and Banas 2000).

Presidents have particularly strong motivations to increase their powers or relax their term limits. Since presidents are accountable to a national constituency, they are interested in having greater powers to provide public policies demanded by the electorate and to overcome gridlocks with Congress. Presidents are also interested in exercising power for a longer period, in order to have more time to achieve their policy goals. Presidents who hold office for longer spans enjoy a larger influence over Congress, due to their higher capacity to enforce promises and threats in inter-temporal negotiations (Negretto 2011).

A large number of presidents has been willing to increase their privileges via a constitutional change. Between 1945 and 2012 38 leaders of the Americas made 48 attempts to change the constitution to increase their powers or relax their term limits. The presidents' attempts have occurred across all of Latin America, except Mexico. These attempts reveal how strong the presidents' inclinations are to increase their power and exercise it for more time.

Among the presidents who have attempted to consolidate their power via a constitutional change are the most prominent leaders that have emerged in Latin America. Leaders such as Fidel Castro, Augusto Pinochet, Juan Domingo Perón, Hugo Chávez, Getúlio Vargas, José María Velasco Ibarra and Joaquín Balaguer dramatically changed the political paths of Cuba, Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, respectively.

To understand why some presidents try to change the constitution to consolidate their power and others do not I conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 former Latin American presidents from eight countries between June 2011 and May 2012.⁵ Presidents discussed three types of questions. First, they were asked about their individual differences and whether their

⁵ I interviewed Efraín Ríos Montt and Vinicio Cerezo from Guatemala; Antonio Saca and Armando Calderón Sol from El Salvador; Rafael Callejas, Manuel Zelaya and Roberto Micheletti from Honduras; Arnaldo Alemán and Enrique Bolaños from Nicaragua; Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, Rafael Calderón, Óscar Arias, Abel Pacheco and Luis Alberto Monge from Costa Rica; Abdalá Bucaram from Ecuador; Nicolás Ardito Barletta, Ernesto Pérez and Francisco Rodríguez from Panamá and Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle and Ricardo Lagos from Chile.

personal attributes can be related to their performance in office. Second, former presidents discussed the political context in which they governed. Finally, the leaders were asked about their relation with the constitution, and the reasons they might have had to attempt to change it to consolidate their power.

These interviews served to develop two hypotheses that propose which kind of presidents are more likely to attempt a constitutional change to consolidate their power. First, I claim that the presidents' individual propensity to take risks influence their decision to attempt to change the country's legal charter. Risk taking entails the willingness to lose something of value weighted against the potential to gain something of value. Undoubtedly, presidents have much to gain by increasing their powers or extending their term. On the other side, the attempts to change the charter can fail and even mark the end of a government. For instance, Guatemalan President Jorge Serrano was ousted in 1993 due to his attempt to consolidate his power via a self-coup that indefinitely suspended the constitution. Different levels of individual risk taking should explain why some leaders have attempted constitutional changes in risky circumstances, while others have not tried to do so even in promising circumstances.

Second, I propose that more assertive presidents are more likely to change the constitution to consolidate their power. Psychologists have proposed different definitions of assertiveness (e.g., Rathus 1973; McCormick 1984; Mauger and Adkinson 1993). I follow the operational definition used in the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006).⁶ Through eleven statements, the scale captures the characteristics of individuals who are highly motivated to succeed, know how to convince and lead others, feel comfortable taking control of things and do it promptly. This scale fits the profile of leaders who

⁶ The IPIP scales (<http://ipip.ori.org/newPublications.htm>) are the source of nearly 500 academic publications.

try to change the constitution to consolidate their power. Given that a constitutional reform entails a large bargaining process in which presidents need to make a big effort to succeed, the leaders should be strongly oriented toward success. Moreover, presidents need to have the ability to persuade other political actors that their project to reform the charter is something that they should support. Additionally, presidents who want to increase their powers or extend their terms should feel more comfortable enjoying more responsibilities.

The main challenge of assessing presidents is that subjects may have died or may avoid psychological inquiry. To overcome this challenge, psychologists have developed methods to study subjects “at a distance.” These methods have allowed to study the individual differences of exceptional individuals, such as American presidents (Simonton 1988; Winter 1987) and creators (Cassandro 1998). Expert surveys are increasingly used and are the most popular technique among researchers that assess American presidents (Schlesinger 1948 Sulloway; 1996; Rubenzer et al. 2000; Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004). This study builds on this line of inquiry, which allows us to compare leaders across time, cultures, and countries. The expert survey also allows to compare the results with preceding studies that assess presidents.

This study makes significant theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions. This work helps to build bridges within and across disciplines. Within presidential studies, it helps to integrate qualitative studies that have failed to acknowledge the developments of psychological research and quantitative works that assume that the individual differences of presidents are irrelevant to understand their behavior. This study shows that the individual differences of presidents can be studied in a systematic and empirical way, and demonstrates that the uniqueness of the leaders is associated to relevant political outcomes, like constitutional changes that consolidate the position of the head of government.

This dissertation also builds a bridge between presidential studies in political science and the literature in psychology that examines personality traits. Political scientists and psychologists have researched presidents for several decades with little disciplinary, theoretical and methodological interaction. This study contributes to connect both literatures, building on the developments of psychology to answer research questions of interest to political scientists.

Demonstrating the role of presidents as forces behind constitutional changes provides a deeper understanding of a foundational question in the social sciences: institutional change. Current explanations of institutional change remain incomplete because they have neglected the role of powerful individuals. Traditionally, studies of institutional change have assumed that institutions are exogenous and constrain the behavior of political actors. Most of the models of legislatures, bureaucratic politics, executive-legislative relations, and judicial appointments are driven by this assumption. However, in the last years substantive research in comparative politics has advanced the argument that institutions are endogenous. Two main research trends, historical institutionalism (HI) and rational choice institutionalism (RCI), claim that institutions are endogenous because elites create and modify institutional rules to satisfy their short-term goals. Although this dissertation agrees that institutions are endogenous, it shows that both HI and RCI have underestimated the individual differences of decision makers as one of the major forces driving institutional transformation.

Understanding how the individual differences of presidents are related to political outcomes has the potential of reducing the information asymmetries that voters and political organizations have when selecting leaders. Currently we do not know how the personality traits and background characteristics of presidents are related to their performance. This study is a step forward in allowing citizens and organizations such as political parties to make more informed

decisions when deciding who to support for office, because they will be able to assess if certain characteristics of the leaders are desirable or not to reach the presidential office.

The study conducted by Rubenzer et al. (2004) sheds some light on this area. The authors measured the personality traits of American presidents and examined which type of leaders were more likely to be considered “great” presidents, as ranked by expert surveys. The authors found that scoring low in straightforwardness was key to success. (Rubenzer et al., 2004: 59). Being honest, they found, is detrimental for presidents. This type of counter-intuitive result (suggesting that certain behaviors that may seem appropriate in certain contexts may lead to undesirable outcomes) provides relevant information when deciding to select a leader.

By increasing the information available to constituencies that select political leaders, we could observe the electoral arena resembling a widespread practice in the private world. Many organizations select their personnel after delivering them a test on individual differences, because they know that certain attributes are related to employee’s performance. Beagrie (2005) estimates that two thirds of medium to large organizations use some type of psychological testing in the United States, including aptitude as well as personality, in job applicant screening. The most prevalent reason given for using personality testing was their contribution to improving employee fit and reducing turnover between 20% (Geller 2004) and 70% (Wagner, 2000). Companies invest in personality tests because people who perceive things differently behave differently; those with different attitudes respond differently to directives, and individuals with dissimilar personalities interact differently with others. Among other things, individual differences help explain why some people embrace change and others are fearful of it and why some workers learn new tasks more effectively than others (Ivancevich et al. 2013).

The dissertation makes a methodological contribution validating a measurement procedure that can be used to generate data for the study of all international leaders, historical and contemporary. In doing so, it makes a methodological contribution to the cross-disciplinary research on leadership, institutions, and international relations. Scholars and policy makers will be able to employ the theory and data generated by my research to explore the role of leaders in domestic policymaking and international conflict. This information will be especially relevant for explaining the behavior of leaders that enjoy broad discretionary powers, such as politicians of developing countries with low levels of institutionalization.

Finally, the dissertation has generated a unique biographical database about presidents of the Western Hemisphere that is likely to boost a new array of scientific inquiries in disciplines such as economy, sociology, history and psychology. For instance, economists can be interested in exploring the relationship between the presidents' individual differences and the economic policies that they pursue.

1.1. PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION

The second chapter analyzes the mainstream literature in political science that has studied the presidency, and also presents how psychology research has studied American presidents. This chapter shows that presidents have been studied through the eyes of political scientists and psychologists with little communication among the two disciplines. While quantitative studies have analytically beheaded the presidencies, qualitative research has overlooked how psychologists have analyzed the individual differences of the leaders. Chapter 2 proposes that

quantitative presidential studies can incorporate developments from psychology literature to study the heads of government. In particular, how presidents relate to institutional change.

Chapter 3 presents the theory. Conventional research proposes that the main causes of constitutional change are institutional variables, but presidents have had a highly active role in changing charters in Latin America. This chapter examines the roles of chief executives in the constitutional reforms, proposing that current explanations of institutional change do not help us to understand the causes that explain the changes to the charters. To reveal the motivations that presidents have to change the constitution, I present the information gathered during the semi-structured interviews conducted with 21 former Latin American presidents in seven countries. These interviews shed light on important topics, such as the relevance of the constitution to the presidents and their potential motivations to reform it. Building on the interviews, I hypothesize that presidents who are more risk prone and assertive are more likely to change the charter to benefit their careers.

Chapter 4 discusses the different alternatives that psychologists have used to measure the individual differences of prominent individuals at a distance. This study follows the line of inquiry that has become the most popular technique among researchers that assess American presidents and develops an expert survey. The survey is composed of three main types of questions. In one group, the raters filled out standard psychometric tests that capture two measures of risk propensity, assertive personality, dominance, and a complete personality test. In a second group, raters assessed background variables that can motivate presidents to challenge the status quo, including their socialization into politics and decision-making style. A third battery of items asked questions that capture the raters' bias when filling out the survey (e.g.,

ratery reported their ideology and feelings toward the president). This chapter also presents the participants in the online survey, which was distributed to 911 experts from 26 nationalities.

Chapter 5 describes the sample and the data used in this study. The sample encompasses 315 presidents who governed one of the 19 Latin American countries and the United States between 1945 and 2012 for at least six months. Data about constitutional change, presidential powers, and presidential electoral rules was taken from existing databases and from national constitutions. Biographical data about presidents was gathered from 68 (mainly biographical) books reviewed, online sources and material gathered during field research. The information about the presidents' personality traits and other individual characteristics not taken from the biographies comes from the expert survey. The outcome of the data collection process is the *Presidential Database of the Americas*, the most complete and extensive biographical source about presidents in the Western Hemisphere.

Chapter 6 tests the hypotheses. I conduct several discrete-time duration models in which the unit of analysis is president-year. The results demonstrate that the presidents' assertiveness is strongly related to their attempts to consolidate their power via a constitutional change. Presidents who engaged in politics at a later stage on their careers are also more likely to attempt a constitutional reform. Alternative explanations, which consider institutional and other contextual variables, have a weaker explanatory power. Therefore, the results confirm the need to include the individual differences of powerful leaders as a cause of institutional change. This chapter also shows that the results do not vary much when the dependent variables that capture the presidential attempts to change the constitution are replaced with variables that capture the presidential successes in modifying the charter.

The findings hold under different samples and model specifications. I test the theory using as subsamples models that exclude leaders from the United States, dictators, and those who served as puppets or interims. The different model specifications test for alternative explanations of constitutional change, and take into consideration explanations based on constitutional features, characteristics of Congress, economic variables, and spatiotemporal factors.

Chapter 7 presents case studies that shed light on how the assertiveness and risk taking of presidents become a leading force behind the presidential attempts. It presents the different behavior of presidents in both promising and unpromising states of the world. While most leaders who faced a minority in Congress and were not particularly popular did not try to change the constitution to consolidate their power, Presidents Manuel Zelaya of Honduras and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela did try. The difference with most of the leaders who did not try, I argue, is that Zelaya and Chávez had high levels of risk taking and assertiveness. When facing promising circumstances to change the charter, most presidents did not try to change the constitution either. That is the case of Costa Rican President, Luis Alberto Monge, who did not try to change the constitution despite wanting to do so. In contrast, Panamanian President Ernesto Pérez Balladares, who had a majority in Congress and enjoyed popularity, tried to change the charter. The main difference between Monge and Pérez Balladares, I argue, is that the second is more assertive and risk taker than the first.

Chapter 8 discusses the results and the theoretical and methodological implications that this research has to the cross-disciplinary research on leadership, institutions, and international relations. It sets an active research agenda for presidential studies and for the analysis of the behavior of international leaders.

2.0 PERSONALIZING THE PRESIDENCY

This chapter discusses how presidents have been studied by mainstream research in political science and psychology. For several decades, the personal characteristics of presidents was central to most political scientists who studied the presidency. Despite the numerous excellent contributions of this research stream, these studies have failed to produce falsifiable theories that could be tested and therefore lead to the systematic accumulation of knowledge. In the second half of the 1970s, some renowned scholars launched a strong intellectual movement aimed to improve the scientific standards of the field, considered then to lag behind other fields of political science. The call had profound consequences. The most prominent is that a plethora of studies that built on rational choice theory started to be published in the 1980s. These works have relied mainly on large-N quantitative analysis and game theory to develop numerous research programs that overcome the shortcomings of earlier, qualitative works. The advances in the study of the presidency, nonetheless, produced one notorious collateral damage: the presidents.

Scholars that promoted the shift toward large-N quantitative studies thought that, to succeed in the endeavor, researchers inevitably needed to disregard presidents as units of analysis. The number of heads of government was considered simply too small to conduct statistical analyses, while the presidents' personalities seemed to be too volatile, and therefore, meaningless to compare. Therefore, an important consequence of the turn toward quantification in presidential studies was that the most influential works on the American presidency

increasingly depersonalized the most important political position in the world. The individual differences among presidents became to be disregarded as random variance, and the dominant view was that the unique characteristics of presidents were both unimportant and pointless to compare. For analytical purposes, the chief executives were conceptualized as rational actors whose personal characteristics were irrelevant to understand their behavior.

More than three decades after the shift in presidential studies started, the depersonalized presidency is the dominant paradigm in mainstream quantitative studies. To be sure, political scientists and historians have never stopped publishing biographies, papers, opinion columns and all sorts of texts in which all the important aspects of the leaders, including their actions, decisions, omissions and surrounding have been thoroughly described and analyzed. However, political scientists have excluded the individual differences of the leaders when using quantitative methods to study the presidency.

While political scientists have generally failed to quantitatively study American presidents, for several decades psychologists have used qualitative and quantitative techniques to study an almost unlimited number of individual differences of the leaders. In fact, arguably no other group of human beings –except undergraduate students– have been so thoroughly examined by psychologists as American presidents.

Shockingly, mainstream political science research has comprehensively ignored the advances made in psychology. Several classic pieces in presidential studies have discussed psychological attributes of the presidents and created theories based on the leaders' personalities, but they have ignored the accomplishments of scientific personality research.

Although it is not uncommon that different social science disciplines study the same topics without much interdisciplinary interaction, the way students of the presidency have

ignored the developments in personality research is highly surprising. Using a variety of methods and theoretical approaches, psychologists have demonstrated that the individual differences of presidents have played a relevant role in their performance in office.

Nevertheless, since their subjects of analysis are individuals, the dependent variables to which psychologists have tried to causally connect the individual differences of the leaders differ from the political and social outcomes in which political scientists are normally interested. Illustrative of this point is that a central motivation in psychology research is to explain why certain leaders are considered to perform better than others in office, scoring higher in rankings of presidential performance or “greatness.” These type of studies certainly shed light on important issues, but are far from providing satisfactory explanations to the type of more detailed questions in which students of the presidency are interested.

In this chapter I propose that political scientists who study the presidency can use the theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions of the psychology literature to reposition the personal characteristics of the leaders as a central topic of study in the subfield. Doing so, I argue, will strongly help to develop a deeper understanding of how the presidency works.

The chapter is organized as follows. First I review how political scientists have studied the individual differences of presidents over time. The identity of the chief executives was a core topic on presidential studies for a long epoch, but the shift toward quantification at the end of the seventies increasingly depersonalized the presidency from mainstream research. In a second section I review the main contemporary approaches to study the presidency –quantitative works, game theory, and historical institutionalism and political development–, showing how each of these approaches have dealt with the individual differences of the heads of state. After surveying presidential studies in political science, a third segment presents how presidents have been

studied by the specialized psychology literature. I conclude by discussing how research on psychology validates the use of presidents as units of analysis in quantitative studies, opening numerous research opportunities to have a deeper understanding of presidential behavior in particular and executive politics in general. I also discuss how the individual differences of leaders can be associated to institutional change.

2.1 THE DOWNFALL OF PRESIDENTIAL IDENTITY

Until the 1970s, studies on the American presidency were mainly of a qualitative nature and could be grouped in three broad approaches. The first wave of scholarship focused on the legal structures and roles of the presidency. With time, a second set of works centered on the exercise of presidential power and the operation of the White House. A third group studied the presidency from a political psychology approach.

The first group can be exemplified by the work of Edward S. Corwin. His book “The President: Office and Powers” (1940) is considered a classic on the constitutional law of the American presidency. Corwin analyzes topics such as different conceptions of the office, the role of the president as administrative chief and interpreting and enforcing the law. The work of Corwin was later developed by authors such as Louis Koenig, who saw presidential roles as responding to external conditions and therefore expanding beyond strictly legal definitions. For instance, in “The Chief Executive” (1964), Koenig describes how different presidencies were slowed down by congressional, court, interest group and bureaucratic opposition.

Scholars who studied the legal structures and roles of the presidency tended to consider presidents as protagonists of the executive branch. “What the Presidency is at any particular moment depends in important measure upon who is President,” said revealingly Corwin (1940:

338). The leaders, with their character, behavior, and decisions helped to shape the institution in which they operated.

The authors in the second group went beyond studying the legal structures and roles of the chief executive, putting the actions and decisions taken by the president at the center of action within the presidency. Perhaps the most prominent author in this group is Richard Neustadt. He worked in the White House under President Truman and served as an advisor to presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Clinton. While in the 1950s numerous academic works extensively analyzed the powers of the presidency and the variety of the president's roles, Neustadt took an original view, advancing the proposition that presidents who lead by persuasion are more successful than those who rely on the formal executive powers. That is precisely his central proposition in "Presidential Power" (1960), a classic updated several times.

A third group of scholars went one step beyond and considered presidents the nucleus of the presidency. These authors examine how the identity of the presidents is related to their performance in office. Given that the works of this group is directly connected to the topic of this study, I devote more space to analyze them.

In an effort to understand presidential behavior and compare presidents, scholars have analyzed the leaders creating typologies, conducting operational code analysis, and conducting psychobiographies.

The most influential endeavor in creating typologies was the seminal study of David Barber (1972), who categorized American presidents according to their orientation toward their role as either passive or active and positive or negative. The intersection of these two sets of traits defined a president's leadership style, reflected aspects of their character, and predicted their performance. Although this is still a widely cited work, the typologies were theoretically

vague. They produced controversy, but not falsifiable hypotheses. A more recent (and sophisticated) example is the work of Margaret Hermann (2003), who created typologies to assess the personality traits of presidents based on interviews. The author used explicit coding rules to measure different traits of the leaders, which she later used to propose eight general leadership styles.

Related to the typologies, for some decades a number of scholars have tried to get inside the heads of political leaders to capture their worldview through operational code analysis (e.g., Walker, Schafer, and Young 1998; Renshon 2008). This theoretical framework was first introduced by Nathan Leites in “The Operational Code of the Politburo” (1951). The operational code examines the personal characteristics of politicians –such as their values and beliefs about political strategy– to understand their behavior and decisions. Recently, the refinement of this analysis tool includes quantitative-statistical studies of almost every American president. For instance, Renshon (2008) developed data on the strategic and operational beliefs of George W. Bush. The operational code analysis theory, nonetheless, has been marginal in both international relations and presidential studies. The theory is not falsifiable because researchers usually implement it to understand what is in the leaders’ mind, not to make predictive statements about future behavior. Moreover, as Barber’s typologies of presidents, operational code analysis is not based on psychological research.

Psychobiographies are the only technique used by presidency scholars that has also been used by psychologists to study personalities at-a-distance. The most famous psychobiography conducted in political science is “Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House” (George and George 1956). In this work, the authors argue that President Wilson was consistently dogmatic in trying

to have his decisions prevailing, whether he was dealing with Congress or with faculty members at Princeton University.

Psychobiographers use psychological constructs to analyze particular events in the life of individuals, in order to understand the reasons for their behavior and decisions (I discuss this technique in more detail in Chapter 4). Despite its validation by the psychology literature, this research approach never became much popular among political scientists because it demands knowledge of psychological theories and concepts. More importantly, it was never a research program that could challenge the criticism that led to the shift in presidential studies, given that the analyses are qualitative in nature and highly subjective (Elms 1994).

Most of the research that centers on the individual differences of presidents focuses on few leaders and few decisions made by them. Naturally, these small-N studies have been unable to provide generalizable empirical evidence, making them an inevitable target to the criticism that emerged in the late seventies. But that is not the main limitation of this group of studies.

The central problem in political science studies that try to explore the individual differences of leaders is that, except for psychobiographies, they largely ignore how works in psychology conceptualize and measure psychological constructs. Political scientists have once and again tried to create typologies and proposed alternatives such as the operational code analysis to measure the uniqueness of political actors disregarding the discipline responsible of studying the human mind. Consequently, the outcome has been a collection of works that have failed to develop a coherent theoretical and methodological approach.

The division between political scientists and psychologists is visible when examining the arbitrary ways in which presidency scholars have studied presidents. An example is revealing. In 1969, Fred I. Greenstein, a leading presidency scholar, published “Personality and Politics:

Problems of Evidence, Inference, and Conceptualization.” This work made a profound mark on the analytical study of the presidency. Greenstein proposed that personality characteristics influence political behavior, and made an attempt to lay out conceptual and methodological standards for carrying out personality-and-politics inquiries. He forcefully claimed that the identity of presidents is relevant to understand instances such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and Woodrow Wilson’s failure to obtain ratification of the Versailles Treaty. Four decades later (2009), Greenstein published “Inventing the Job of President: Leadership Style from George Washington to Andrew Jackson,” in which he assessed six leadership qualities of the first seven chief executives: public communication, organizational capacity, political skill, policy vision, cognitive style, and emotional intelligence.

Greenstein is unquestionably a prominent expert on the American presidency, but it is revealing that after four decades of his seminal work he did not offer any significant methodological innovation. In his 2009 piece, he assessed presidents based on leadership qualities that are his own creation, disregarding the literature on personality research.

There are at least three facts about psychological inquiry that presidential studies have thoroughly overlooked. First, there is a consensus on what the core of human personality is. Thus, any attempt made by political scientists to innovate in this area is likely to be unproductive. The reigning paradigm in psychology since the 1990s is that there are five core personality traits; neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. The “Big Five” personality dimensions became the reigning paradigm after decades of research

that analyzed the language that people uses to describe themselves and others. One of it values is that it can represent various systems of personality descriptions under a common framework.⁷

Second, some decades ago mainstream research in psychology reached a general consensus that personality traits tend to be stable over time (see Corr and Matthews 2009: 23). The study of traits has been boosted by a relative consensus among researchers on the nature of the major traits, and also by advances in genetics and neuroscience, and by increasing integration among various fields of mainstream psychology (Matthews, Deary, and Whiteman 2003). Unfortunately, it seems that several prominent presidency scholars ignore that personality traits tend to be stable. For instance, Walker (2009: 552) discusses “whether personality characteristics are best conceptualized as stable traits or transitory states. A closer examination of this question suggests that the answer depends partly on the design and purpose of the research.”

Finally, the most surprisingly overlooked fact is that, besides undergraduate students, the American presidents are the most studied group by personality researchers. As will be discussed below, almost every individual difference of American presidents has been studied.

Arguably, the inability of students of the presidency to absorb the psychology research on individual differences contributed to disregard the analysis of the personal characteristics of presidents. Many of the works on the American presidency contained potential hypotheses to be investigated but tended to shy away from explicit efforts to develop and test them consistently. Instead, political scientists trained in scientific techniques chose to hone their methodological skills on other topics such as legislative politics, where theoretical formulation and systematic data seemed more accessible.

⁷ Numbers are revealing. A survey of publication trends over the last 25 years using the PsycINFO database revealed that by the late 1990s the Big Five had overtaken alternative models of personality, and by 2009 the number of Big Five publications exceeded 300 per year (John, Naumann, and Soto 2010).

Until the later part of the seventies, presidency studies seemed tied either to an unchanging subject such as formal powers, or to a supposed “random” one, that is, presidents. The persistent qualitative nature of presidential studies caused increasing dissatisfaction among leading scholars on the American presidency. Something was going to change in the field.

2.1.1 The Quantitative Shift

While Jimmy Carter was the incumbent, several prominent researchers started to openly complain that presidential studies were lagging behind other areas in political science that were more theoretically and methodologically sophisticated. It was the beginning of a strong intellectual movement towards a quantification of presidential studies.

Everything started with harsh assessment of the state of the field. Anthony King complained that “to read most general studies of the United States presidency... is to feel that one is reading not a number of different books but essentially the same book over and over again. The same sources are cited; the same points are made; even the same quotations...In addition, the existing literature is mainly descriptive and atheoretical: general hypotheses are almost never advanced, and, when advanced, almost never tested” (King 1975: 173). In a report for the Ford Foundation, Hugh Heclo claimed that “to a great extent, presidential studies have coasted on the reputations of a few...classics...and on secondary literature and anecdotes produced by former participants” (Heclo 1977: 30). He added that the field was focused on “history for its own sake” instead of developing an “understanding of how central government performs and how it might perform better” (Heclo 1977: 38).

Criticism raised in the 1980s. Pika (1981: 18) complained that studies on the presidency were notorious for being “empirically and theoretically impoverished.” Edwards (1983) claimed

that presidency scholars focused too much on complex arguments, nuances, anecdotes and stories. He noticed that scholars from other subfields of American politics developed falsifiable theories that led to clear predictions, which could be tested using large datasets and cutting-edge econometric techniques. “Research on the presidency too often fails to meet the standards of contemporary political science, including the careful definition and measurement of concepts, the rigorous specification and testing of propositions, the employment of appropriate quantitative methods, and the use of empirical theory to develop hypotheses and explain findings” (Edwards 1983: 100). Similarly, Stephen Wayne complained that “by concentrating on personalities, on dramatic situations, and on controversial decisions and extraordinary events, students of the presidency have reduced the applicability of social science techniques” (Wayne 1983: 6).

This strong intellectual movement was particularly influential because several of the proponents for change were leading scholars. More and more researchers felt the need to anchor the study of the presidency in broader theoretical contexts, and that there was a need of data-gathering and hypothesis-testing. Slowly but progressively, scholars started to differentiate the areas in which presidents act (e.g., as a decision-maker, as a public speaker, as a negotiator with Congress, their relation to the press) and to develop falsifiable theories.

Sooner rather than later, the criticism to qualitative research became the mainstream position in presidential studies. In fact, it never stopped. A decade after Edwards and Wayne, Gary King lamented that “presidency research is one of the last bastions of historical, non-quantitative research in American politics” (King 1993: 388). Reminding the original debates that took place, King commented that “the question was why the congressional literature is systematic and theoretically and empirically advanced, whereas the presidency literature seems to lag so far behind...In my view, what accounts for the difference between the congressional

and presidential literatures is that in the former, but not the latter, scholars spent considerable time recording systematic, but descriptive, patterns” (1993: 394).

In this movement toward theory development and testing, the main collateral damage were the presidents. Soon in the debate, Lowi (1986: 20) claimed that “an institutional approach does not deny the relevance of individual psychology but treats it as marginal in the context of the tremendous historical forces lodged in the laws, traditions and commitments of institutions.” Many scholars proposed the need to abandon the idea of considering the heads of state as units of analysis, because the small number of American presidents did not allow for hypothesis-testing. In words of King: “The common practice of using the president as the unit of analysis for causal inferences is extremely unlikely to yield reliable empirical conclusions” (1993: 403). He added that “it is almost certainly true that individuals are important and that presidents can be studied systematically. However, it is clear that the systematic study of individual presidents should not continue in the tradition of using the president as the unit of analysis” (King 1993: 406).

Some calls were more extreme. Terry M. Moe, for instance, argued that the presidency should be viewed as an institution, stating that all presidents, irrespective of their personalities and background, should exhibit the same behavior (i.e., make similar decisions) in office. He even called students of the presidency “to stop thinking about presidents as people and to start thinking of them generically: as faceless, nameless institutional actors whose behavior is an institutional product” (Moe 1993: 379). According to Moe, an institutional approach is “entirely impersonal, based on conceptual building blocks -structure, authority, incentive, and other institutional variables- that treat presidents and other actors as generic types rooted in an institutional system. Presidents are not individual people, by this reckoning” (Moe, 2009: 704).

Therefore, institutional presidency scholars replaced the traits of the presidents by models derived from rational choice, under the assumption that the context in which presidents are immersed strongly conditions the choices made by the leader of the executive (Cameron 2000).

All the criticism led to what Moe (2009) called a “revolution” in presidential studies. “Over the past decade or so, there has been a revolution in the study of the presidency. Part of this revolution is that quantitative studies are much more common than in the past, and there is far greater attention to hypothesis testing, measurement, research design, and other ingredients of scientific methodology” (Moe 2009: 702). According to Moe, the main revolution was in theory development: “In just a few short years, a field mired in isolation and traditionalism has been catapulted into a new scientific realm through a seismic shift in the scope, power, and analytical rigor of its theories” (Moe 2009: 702). The mechanism of this transformation, he added, “has been rational choice theory.”

Notoriously, Moe has been criticized by other renowned presidency scholars (Rockman 2009; Wood 2009). Among other things, these researchers claim that the diversity of approaches and methods used to study the presidency is a strength, not a weakness. Therefore, rational choice works should not be regarded as the best and unique approach to study the presidency. Rockman also criticizes the role assigned to presidents by Moe. “Moe believes that theorizing and research in presidency studies ought to proceed without presidents and that ‘the revolution’ in presidential studies has succeeded precisely because it has” (Rockman 2009: 787). Although Rockman criticizes leaving presidents out of analyses, he nonetheless claims that:

I sympathize with Moe’s view that a focus on people is apt to go nowhere if we begin with it. People are the residue left over from what it is we can explain in more coherent theoretical ways. Psychologists and biologists often use the language of ‘individual differences’ when they have no theoretically coherent explanation of why some seemingly like individuals, be they mice or men, respond differently to similar treatments or stimuli.

As aforementioned, Rockman's misconception of what psychologists refer to as individual differences is ubiquitous among presidential experts.

Interestingly, despite the obsession of some presidency scholars to catch-up with the avant-garde research, studies on the presidency have lagged behind other subfields of political science that examine the role of personality traits and other individual differences as explanatory factors. Although most of this research has focused on mass behavior (e.g., Mondak 2010; Hetherington and Weiler 2009), recently some studies have started to pay closer attention to the individual differences of leaders, exploring how their background shape their behavior once in office. Congleton and Zhang (2013), for instance, examine the extent to which human capital improves the economic policy competence of American presidents. The authors find that the career path and education of chief executives drive their economic policy judgment. In the same vein, Horowitz and Stam (2014) analyze the background characteristics of more than 2,500 heads of state from 1875 to 2004, finding that the leaders most likely to initiate militarized disputes are those with prior military service but no combat experience, as well as former rebels. Although these studies from political economy and international relations do not focus on personality traits, they demonstrate the usefulness of paying attention to the individual differences of the heads of state.

In the following section I briefly present how the leader of the executive has been studied by the three current dominant approaches used to examined the American presidency; quantitative studies, game theoretic research, and historical institutionalism and political development. Dividing presidential studies in this manner can seem unnatural, given that a single work can include the three approaches. However, each of the approaches tends to develop a relatively stable list of research programs, with its own school of thought and theorists.

Therefore, for analytical purposes it is useful to examine them separately, with the understanding that they are in continuous development, fluent interaction, and have a considerable overlapping.

2.2 CHIEF EXECUTIVES IN THREE DOMINANT APPROACHES

Quantitative and game theoretic works treat presidents as strategic and rational actors, whose individual differences are mainly considered as residual variance. In contrast, research on historical institutionalism and political development has centered mainly on the idiosyncratic characteristics of the American presidents. This section offers a brief survey of the three dominant approaches to study the presidency, highlighting how they have improved our understanding of the presidency while at the same time leaving in the dark the uniqueness of heads of government. I show that none of the approaches fundamentally challenges the usefulness of studying the uniqueness of chief executives. On contrary, I propose that the three approaches would strongly benefit their research programs if they start including the individual differences of presidents as a potential explanation of political phenomena.

2.2.1 Quantitative Works

The intellectual movement that called to increase the number of quantitative studies to meet desirable standards of scientific rigor led to a significant rise in the use of statistical techniques in presidential studies.⁸ Progress occurred along different topics. Some important streams of research examined aspects related to presidential behavior, including how leaders try to control

⁸ The shift was not massive, nonetheless. According to Howell (2009), between 1980 and 2004 only one in ten research articles published in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, the premier journal on the subfield, used quantitative methods. The publication patterns were different in the top three journals in American politics, where most of the research on the presidency was quantitative.

the bureaucracy, make public appeals to advance their legislative agendas, and turn to different resources to overcome constraints that Congress imposes on them.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Terry Moe published influential articles in which he described how chief executives have politicized the appointment process and centralize authority within the Executive Office of the President (e.g., Moe 1985, 1990). These initial contributions were tested in subsequent works by other authors (e.g., Dickinson 2003; Lewis 2008). Lewis (2008), for example, developed the largest dataset of presidential appointees contributing to explain the conditions under which the heads of state use appointments to advance their policy and patronage interests.

Some works have discussed the increasing propensity of presidents to sidestep Congress and make public appeals on behalf of their legislative agendas (Kernell 1997). The argument builds on the fact that, with time, the number of political actors with whom presidents have needed to bargain has increased (e.g., interest groups, committees and subcommittees). Given that bargaining with Congress has become more difficult, presidents have opted to look for support in the broader electorate. The initial work by Kernell has led to other research agendas, including how changes in the media have increased the difficulty of presidents to reach their audiences (Cohen 2008) and the examination of the conditions under which presidents make public appeals. Canes-Wrone (2006), for example, argues that chief executives make public appeals when doing so leads to clear policy rewards. Another author that has paid close attention to how presidents use public appeals is Wood (2007), who shows that presidential optimism and confidence about the economy affect the attitude of actors toward taking risks. Wood reaches such findings after reviewing presidential speeches given in the states of the Union, news releases, conferences, interviews and other documents.

Given that the American Congress is probably the most studied legislature in the world, the stream of research that scrutinizes the relationship between the presidency and Congress has become one of the most prolific in the subfield. Focusing on different aspects of the relationship, numerous works have shown that presidents have an enormous capacity to influence what happens in Congress. Presidents have resources to convince legislators to support their legal initiatives or to oppose congressional bills. Consequently, scholars have studied topics such as the presidents' capacity to set Congress' legislative agenda (Edwards and Barrett, 2000), presidential vetoes (Cameron 1999), how different political alignments impacted the enactment of presidential initiatives (e.g., Peake 2002), and the success of chief executives in different policy domains (e.g., Wildavsky and Oldfield 1989).

A more recent line of research has studied how the heads of state use unilateral powers to exercise influence beyond the congressional arena. Scholars have studied, for example, how presidents use executive orders and executive agreements and other mechanisms to influence the content of public policy (e.g., Marshall and Pacelle 2005; Lewis 2005). These studies suggest that presidents use their unilateral powers strategically, trying to anticipate when they will succeed and when other branches of state (i.e., Congress and the judiciary) will dismantle their attempts.

Despite the calls to depersonalize the presidency, the research discussed has in fact mainly examined how the most powerful individuals on earth strive to improve their performance. Researchers have notably advanced our understanding of the presidency by analyzing the efforts made by American presidents to increase their control of the bureaucracy, advance their legislative agenda through public appeals, and increase their leverage on policy making strategically using their unilateral powers.

The assumption that underlies all of these studies is that presidents are mere rational actors. I contend that these studies can gain significant explanatory power by exploring how the unique characteristics of the leaders explain the same presidential behavior that they have examined. For instance, the research agenda on public appeals could examine how the identity of presidents is related to the timing and content of their public appeals. Some presidents might be more inclined than others to make public appeals (e.g., extroverts), while traits such as personal levels of aggressiveness may shape the content of the appeals.

2.2.2 Game Theoretic Accounts of the Presidency

Quantitative studies have built on the theory development facilitated by game theoretic research. The use of game theory to study the presidency has evolved since the 1980s. Researchers that use this approach have studied numerous topics that involve the president, including presidential appointments, executive orders, speech making, vetoes, agenda formation, and reputation (Canes-Wrone 2009: 31). Among all these topics, game theorists have paid more attention to presidential vetoes. Arguably, this occurs because vetoes are central to legislative politics, and much of what has been produced in game theory comes from students of Congress.

While most qualitative and quantitative studies have focused on the exercise of vetoes, game theorists have centered their attention on topics such as how presidents influence Congress through the use of vetoes (Krehbiel 1998; Cameron 2000). In doing so, they have helped to improve empirical and qualitative studies contributing to distinguish if the vetoes respond to institutional pressures or they are more a consequence of the personal style of the president. For instance, Cameron (2000) builds on formal models of veto bargaining to reexamine legislative battles between chief executives and assemblies through a narrative analysis. Moreover,

McCarty (2009) uses a case study to prove his game theory finding that the lack of vetoes that characterized the pre-1829 presidents is not equivalent to a lack of veto power.

The essence of game theoretic models is that it involves strategic interactions among actors. Although one of the main critiques of game theory is that it is simplistic because it only assumes rationality on the part of all actors, the truth is that it can incorporate alternative assumptions of human behavior. Such is the case of Butler (2007), who used a model that includes assumptions taken from prospect theory to explain political and strategic phenomena. Therefore, this research tool does not discard the possibility of studying the individual differences of the leaders.

In fact, a number of individual differences could be included in game theoretic models associating them to attitudes toward cooperation, rule-obedience, and free-riding. Researchers could explore, for instance, if the religiosity of the leaders affects their willingness to cooperate, as the “supernatural punishment theory” proposes (Johnson and Kruger 2004).⁹

Game theoretic models could incorporate more realistic assumptions about presidential behavior to gain explanatory capacity. However, in practice such path has not been well-explored because it demands high technical skills and the dominant view is that the individual differences of the leaders are not relevant. Consequently, most game theoretic works assume that presidents are mere rational actors.

⁹ According to this theory, religion increases cooperation because religious people fear the retributions they may receive if they do not follow religious norms (Johnson and Kruger 2004).

2.2.3 Historical Institutionalism and American Political Development

Historical Institutionalism (HI) analyzes institutions to find sequences of social, political, and economic behavior and change across time. HI emphasizes the relevance of the temporal origin and subsequent evolution of political institutions, studying the explanatory power of rules, routines, and procedures that enables and constraints political action (James 2009). HI emphasizes that institutions interact with a multitude of other institutions, engaging in a battle for authority and autonomy. In this approach, institutional reforms are always “partial” because they rarely lead to a complete institutional transformation (Schickler 2001).

American Political Development (APD) refers to major political changes that lead to a permanent shift in governing structures, producing new modes of political interaction (Orren and Skowronek 2004). APD attempts to identify macro-level factors that have transformed fundamental characteristics of American politics, including the party system, regional voting patterns, Congress and the federal bureaucracy, the labor movement, and interest groups. Among other contributions, APD scholarship has highlighted the importance of taking into account the historical contingency of research findings in American politics.

Many APD researchers have centered on the presidency given its role in producing change in the polity. While non-APD research focuses on the strategic behavior of presidents within a stable institutional context, APD scholarship strives to understand how and why the governing relations within which presidents are embedded become disturbed and break down. APD also tries to understand how presidential action leads to such breakdown, whether by facilitating it or impeding it. In fact, most of the times presidential action is considered to be at the center of the explanations of systemic changes (James 2009).

APD researchers have called attention to the fact that, since its inception, the American presidency has grown in functions, responsibilities and power. Researchers have examined why different episodes of political development have reinforced the relative authority of presidents. Some authors have pointed out that, given its constituency and unitary structure, the presidency is the only institution capable of representing the entire nation (e.g., Roelofs 1992; Abbott 1990).

Students of APD have also examined the increasingly personal relationship between presidents and citizens, a relationship that has been associated to processes of regime change and transformations in the basic modalities of governance. Stephen Skowronek revived an interest in the history of presidents by focusing on the positions of the leaders in cycles of “political time.” In *The Politics Presidents Make* (1993), Skowronek developed a theory according to which the president’s behavior is decisive in leading to regime change. Skowronek proposed that only leaders historically positioned to practice “the politics of reconstruction” enjoy the preconditions necessary to become regime founders, although all presidents would like to exercise such privilege.

As quantitative research on the presidency, works on HI and APD have centered their attention on presidents who have made a significant effort to assert greater institutional control over the bureaucracy. Nathan (1983) coined the concept of the “administrative presidency,” identifying presidents Nixon and Reagan as sources of presidential efforts to increase their control of the federal bureaucracy. Nathan proposed that the “administrative presidency” was a strategy to revert the New Deal and Great Society programs using the bureaucracy in circumstances where presidents could not get congressional approval.

Researchers have noted that the presidents’ control of the bureaucracy has, among other things, led to an increased centralization of bureaucratic oversight within the White House, and a

growing politicization of the civil servants and officials who act on behalf of the president. Scholars have studied the instruments used by presidents to control the bureaucracy, such as strategic presidential appointments, executive orders, and signing statements (Howell 2003; Mayer 2002; Weko 1995). Through the use of these instruments of unilateral executive action, presidents have challenged the traditional balances of power among them and the bureaucracy, Congress, and interest groups.

Among the different main approaches that study the American presidency, HI and APD studies explicitly grant more importance to the uniqueness of presidents. However, these studies regard presidents mainly as political actors motivated to produce purposeful political change through their actions. Although this branch of the literature recognizes that presidents have caused a relevant impact on the direction of American politics, it has not led to a systematic analysis of the individual differences of the leaders.

2.2.4 The Uniqueness of Presidents, an Uncomfortable Nexus

A brief review of the three dominant approaches in the study of the presidency reveals that none of them a priori suppresses the possibility that the individual differences of the heads of state are related to relevant political outcomes. Quantitative studies and game theoretic works can be compatible with the systematic study of the individual differences of presidents despite they commonly build on the assumption that heads of government are mere rational actors. APD and HI researchers go one step further by giving prominence to presidential behavior, but still do not dig into the systematic analysis of the personal characteristics of presidents.

In spite of mainstream quantitative research having beheaded the presidency, many researchers do not feel comfortable with such a situation. “The prominence of the presidency as a

topic of commentary lies, to some extent, in its ability to be personalized. It seems that we are never far from thinking of the presidency as merely the president” (Edwards III, Kessel, and Rockman 1993: 3). “Many political scientists are uncomfortable with the conclusion that leaders matter, because the analysis of individuals is thereby required” (Hargrove 1993: 71). Even Canes-Wrone (2009: 31), a leading game theory author, recognizes the difficulty of separating the personal presidency from the institutional presidency: “Scholars also face the challenge of distinguishing presidents’ personal proclivities from institutional or structural phenomena.”

These statements suggest that several scholars who regularly work on the assumption that presidents should be considered solely as rational actors are not necessarily convinced that the identity of the presidents is incidental to their actions and decisions. In other words, these researchers do not fundamentally oppose to consider the individual differences of the heads of state as valid causes of presidential behavior. The problem, so far, has been the alleged methodological impossibility of quantitatively analyzing the individual differences of presidents. Such a problem, however, is not insurmountable. Fortunately for students of the presidency, psychologists have developed a very rich line of inquiry in which they have used a range of quantitative techniques to analyze multiple factors that make presidents unique. In the next section I present how presidents have been studied in the psychology literature.

2.3 PRESIDENTS IN THE PSYCHOLOGY LITERATURE

People who have excelled in certain domains are unlikely to be available for personal scrutiny or may have passed away, but they have attracted psychologists for decades. Researchers have been interested in exceptional individuals because that allows them to show the generalizability of

findings derived from samples of non-exceptional individuals. Moreover, exceptional individuals are unique in attributes such as leadership, intelligence, and creativity (Song and Simonton 2007). This distinction certainly applies to the study of American presidents, one of the most studied group in personality research. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, psychologists have developed different qualitative and quantitative techniques to study exceptional individuals at a distance. Several of these techniques meet the social scientific standards that were demanded during the “revolution” in presidential studies.

The central goal in most psychological inquiries has been to identify the characteristics associated to presidential leadership and performance. As this section shows, researchers have measured almost every possible individual difference of the heads of government.

It is easy to understand why researchers have been obsessed with assessing presidential performance. Scientists have tried to find the profile of the individual best prepared to hold the most powerful position on earth. Psychologists have tried to understand whether great achievers have certain intrinsic characteristics that make them particularly fit for the position, or whether the circumstances explain who will be considered a great leader (Simonton 1994). Identifying which individuals are best equipped to be a president would allow political parties and voters to select “the right person” for one of the positions that have more consequences on others’ lives than any other.

In this section I do not assess the studies that have ranked presidential performance (Schlesinger, Sr. 1948; Maranell 1970; Murray and Blessing 1988; Schlesinger, Jr. 1997; Ridings and Mciver 1997; Felzenberg 2008). As with most concepts in social science, defining presidential success and how to measure it is highly complex and debatable. Instead, my goal is

to provide a general overview of the studies that have tried to capture the uniqueness of chief executives.

The works that have captured the individual differences of the American presidents can be grouped in seven broad categories. First, several authors have tried to predict presidential performance measuring a diverse set of objective individual differences, such as the presidents' birth order, height, age when reaching office, and religious affiliation (Holmes and Elder, 1989; McCann, 1995; Simon and Uscinski, 2012; Simonton, 1981). Other studies have considered variables such as the presidents' family size, whether they were an orphan, socioeconomic status, parental participation in politics, and even the personal characteristics of the presidents' wives (Baltzell and Schneiderman, 1988; Barry, 1979; Holmes and Elder, 1989; Stewart, 1991; Simonton, 1981, 1986, 1996; Wagner and Schubert, 1977; Wendt and Light, 1976).

Among these studies, some are more theoretically driven than others. The work of Holmes and Elder (1989) represents one end. The authors compared the best twelve and worst twelve American presidents in terms of thirty-eight indicators, some objective, such as the age presidents had when their mothers died, but others subjective variables, such as "being positive." Holmes and Elder (1989) found that nearly half of the indicators that they test to differentiate between best and worst presidents are statistically significant. However, the results seem to be an exercise in finding correlations more than a theory-driven analysis.

On the other end, Simon and Uscinski (2012) thoroughly examined the relationship between the presidents' experience before reaching office and their performance. They argue that prior experiences similar to the presidency will positively predict performance in general, while experiences similar to an aspect of the presidency will positively predict performance in that particular domain, and experiences dissimilar to the presidency will either be negatively

correlated or uncorrelated to presidential performance. The authors find empirical evidence in support for their argument. For example, they find that certain forms of military service and being a governor of a big state are strong predictors of presidential performance.

A second group of researchers have measured the Big Five personality traits of presidents. Among these authors are Kowert (1996), Rubenzer, Faschingbauer, and Ones, (2000), and Simonton (2006). Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004) asked experts on American presidents to assess the leaders on the Big-Five, and then used the scores to predict presidential greatness, as measured by Murray and Blessing (1983). The authors find that, compared to the general population, presidents score lower in agreeableness, are less open to experience, more neurotic, extraverted, and conscientious. The authors also find that twentieth-century presidents are much more extraverted and more variable on conscientiousness and character than their nineteenth-century counterparts. Moreover, presidents ranked more “successful” by historians tend to score high on assertiveness and achievement striving and low on straightforwardness.

A third group of studies have focused on personality traits related to the motivation of the leaders. Authors have tried to capture the leaders’ power, achievement, and affiliation motives (Donley and Winter 1970; Holmes and Elder 1989; House, Spangler, and Woycke 1991; Winter 2002, 2005). By “motives”, researchers refer to the purposes for which personal skills and resources will be mobilized and directed, being power, achievement, and affiliation motivations the core dimensions of several human motives (Winter 2002: 25).

Winter (2002) conducted a content analysis of the inaugural addresses and other documents of all American presidents and found that power, achievement, and affiliation motivations are related to a variety of presidential actions and outcomes, playing a significant role in presidential leadership. For instance, the level of power motivation in a president’s first

inaugural address is significantly correlated to the level of “greatness” he will attain (as measured by ratings based on the judgment of historians). Winter also found that presidential power motivation predicts the entry of the United States into war.

A fourth group have centered more on the types of leadership the leaders exercised, such as the charismatic, interpersonal, creative, and deliberative styles (Deluga 1998; Emrich et al. 2001; House, Spangler, and Woycke 1991; Simonton 2009). Emrich et al. (2001) analyzed two sets of speeches given by American presidents to unearth whether their propensities to convey images in words were linked to perceptions of their charisma and greatness. The authors find that leaders who engage in more image-based rhetoric in their inaugural addresses are rated higher in charisma, while heads of state who engage in more image-based rhetoric in highly significant speeches are rated higher in both charisma and greatness. These findings suggest that the ability of leaders to draw verbal pictures is a crucial asset for a successful performance in office.

A fifth group of researchers have analyzed the decision-making style of presidents, using as reference one of the most used constructs in political psychology: “integrative complexity.” This concept refers to the degree to which thinking and reasoning involve the recognition and integration of multiple perspectives and their interrelated eventualities. The construct has two components: differentiation and integration. Differentiation refers to the ability to distinguish different viewpoints on an issue and to acknowledge them, while integration relates to the conceptual connections among differentiated dimensions. In sum, this construct captures how individuals process information and make decisions. People who score low in integrative complexity engage in “black-or-white” thinking, being unable or unwilling to accept uncertainty

and divergent viewpoints. On the other end, people who score high tend to accept uncertainty and have the ability to synthesize opposing viewpoints.

Some researchers have tried to measure the integrative complexity of presidents, given that how complexly they think could be related to their ability to perform successfully (e.g., Tetlock 1981). Thoemmes and Conway III (2007) studied the integrative complexity of 41 American presidents, examining the first four State of the Union speeches for each. The authors find that the integrative complexity of the chief executives tends to be higher at the beginning of their first term and drop at the end. This pattern was particularly pronounced for presidents who became reelected. According to Thoemmes and Conway III, the changes in integrative complexity may occur due to the exhaustion produced given the continued stress that presidents experience and because the attention of the leaders becomes divided between governing and achieving reelection in electoral periods.

In a sixth category are studies that examine the intellectual capacities of the heads of state. Given that cognitive capacity is the best single predictor of job performance in a range of occupations (Ones, Viswesvaran, and Dilchert 2004), Simonton (e.g., 2002, 2006) examined the relationship between the intellectual capacity of presidents and their performance. Simonton (2006) used measures of the intelligence quotient (IQ) and the intellectual brilliance of 42 American presidents, from George Washington to George W. Bush, based on biographical information of the leaders. In line with the literature, the author finds that IQ and intellectual brilliance correlate with presidential performance.

In the final group I put together all measurements of the personality traits of the leaders that do not fit in a simple category. Researchers have examined a large number of presidential traits, including their moderation, friendliness, Machiavellianism, achievement drive,

forcefulness, wit, conservatism, inflexibility, pacificism, activity inhibition, narcissism, organic brain disorder, pessimistic rumination, and psychopathy (Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Simonton 1986; Davidson, Conner, and Swarrz 2006; Deluga 1997; Gottschalk, Uliana, and Gilbert 1988; House, Spangler, and Woycke 1991; Zullo and Seligman 1990).

Lilienfeld et al. (2012) recently conducted a controversial study building on the literature that has proposed that certain features of a psychopathic personality can be an asset in positions of leadership. Taking the personality measures of 42 American presidents from Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004), they test whether certain psychopathic characteristics are associated with greater presidential performance. The authors found that “Fearless Dominance” is associated with positive outcomes such as better rated presidential performance and leadership. In contrast, they found that “Impulsive Antisociality” and related traits of psychopathy correlate to indicators of negative performance, such as congressional impeachment resolutions.

2.4 WHAT PSYCHOLOGY CAN TEACH US ABOUT PRESIDENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The preceding sections show that the literature in psychology has studied almost all of the individual differences of presidents at a distance. The research reviewed in this chapter forcefully demonstrates three well established facts in psychological research. First, presidents can be used as units of analysis in quantitative studies. Research can explore the individual differences of a single leader, or can make comparisons across time and countries. Second, as most individual differences, personality traits are stable and explain the behavior of individuals. Third, individual differences can be studied at a distance, using both qualitative as well as quantitative techniques.

Despite the extensive number of studies that have examined the individual differences of presidents in psychological research, they are not very useful to answer the type of questions that political scientists often ask about the presidency. As discussed, the main question that psychological studies have tried to answer is which individual differences are good predictors of presidential performance. Undoubtedly, this is a highly relevant topic. Identifying the best individuals for the most powerful position on earth can be a desirable goal for many reasons. Nonetheless, there is an almost unlimited number of questions about the presidency that have attracted political scientists that go well beyond rankings of presidential performance. Political scientists could include the individual differences of presidents as explanatory factors of relevant political outcomes to improve our understanding of the presidency.

One of the areas in which presidency scholars can examine the relation between the individual differences of presidents and political outcomes is in the study of institutional change. Recent scholarship on institutional change has called the attention to how political institutions change over time, suggesting that many relevant changes occur gradually and through small adjustments that can lead to significant institutional transformations (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Given that institutions often present gray areas subject to interpretation and different levels of enforcement, interested agents can use those vacuums to adjust the institutions in their favor. Under this analytical approach, institutional instability or change is caused by an active, political mobilization in which institutions are a permanent subject of change caused by powerful actors. These actors can be other institutions, groups, or single, powerful individuals –such as the most powerful individuals on the Western Hemisphere, presidents.

There is a growing literature in psychology that has paid attention to how individual differences can be associated with supporting (or challenging) the status quo. In fact, a frequently

asked question in behavioral sciences is why people accept the status quo even when it is not in their best interest (e.g., Kluegel and Smith 1986). As an answer, Jost and Banaji (1994) introduced “system justification theory”, which proposes that people want to and tend to believe that the social systems in which they live are just and legitimate, offering structure, coherence and meaning to their lives. Since then, hundreds of studies have found evidence in support of this theory (for a review, see Jost et al. 2004). A preference for the status quo can be perfectly rational; the alternatives for change may outweigh present conditions. However, according to Eidelman and Crandall (2012), people also lean toward the status quo due to several non-rational mechanisms rooted in personalities, such as loss aversion, regret avoidance, repeated exposure and rationalization. Moreover, the authors argue that people also tend to lean in favor of the status quo because they assume that it is better than the alternatives.

The system justification theory offers an interesting approach to the study of political leaders and institutional change. Incoming presidents assume a position in which they can pursue a wide range of actions and make decisions that are highly consequential. As the most powerful politician in the country, presidents have the capacity to transform institutions. Which presidents are more likely to attempt an institutional change? Which type of institutions can presidents be interested in changing, and why? In the next chapter I develop a theory according to which the personality traits of presidents explain which leaders of the Western Hemisphere try to change the constitution to consolidate their power.

3.0 PRESIDENTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS: WHO CHANGES THE RULES?

Chapter 2 showed that research on psychology has demonstrated that the individual differences of presidents are relevant to understand their behavior. I stated that political scientists would gain significant leverage exploring how the individual differences of powerful individuals might be related to political outcomes, such as institutional transformations. This chapter proposes a theory that relates presidential behavior to a type of institutional change that has left an indelible imprint on the politics of most countries of the Western Hemisphere in the twentieth century: presidential attempts to consolidate their power through a constitutional reform.

Numerous heads of government have made significant efforts to increase their powers or relax their term limits since the inception of the modern democratic era. A total of 38 presidents have made such attempts 48 times since 1945, succeeding in 36 opportunities. Leaders from all Latin American countries –except Mexico– have decided to face considerable challenges to consolidate their power via a constitutional change. These attempts have been interspersed in the last seven decades, and have allowed many heads of government to raise as some of the most prominent political figures in the history of the Western Hemisphere.

Constitutional changes that allow presidents to cling to power can have devastating consequences for democracies, but political scientists have not examined how chief executives have adapted the constitutions to boost their careers. As Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori

demonstrated in 1992, leaders can use a constitutional change to turn a consolidating democracy into a plain dictatorship. The reasons are not difficult to understand. More powerful presidents can produce political instability because they have incentives to confront or by-pass Congress and the judiciary, promoting tensions in the regime that increase the risks of polarization and plebiscitarianism (Linz 1990; Shugart and Carey 1992). Presidents who can retain office for a longer period have more capacity to use public resources to build an electoral majority, which may decrease power alternation. Therefore, presidents who increase their powers and stay for a longer time in office can lead to a personalization of politics and submit other state powers and political institutions under their leadership. Highly powerful leaders can weaken the rule of law and the legitimacy and representativeness of democratic institutions, such as Fujimori did.

This chapter proposes a theory to answer why certain leaders (and not others) try to consolidate their power by increasing their constitutional powers or by relaxing their term limits. To understand the relevance of the research question, the second section examines the role of presidents in the constitutional changes. It shows that heads of government have been very active in trying to adapt the charter to their preferences, and that such pattern of behavior has been frequent across time, countries, regimes, and institutional and political contexts. Despite the prominent role of chief executives in the constitutional reforms that consolidate their power, preceding works that have studied constitutional reforms in the Western Hemisphere have failed to examine the behavior of the most powerful politician.

The third section describes my efforts to gain an understanding of presidential behavior. I decided that the best way to understand the motivations that leaders have to change the constitution was to ask them. Therefore, I did field research in six Central American countries – Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, and Costa Rica– and in Chile, where I

conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 former Latin American presidents. The interviewees significantly helped to clarify the relation between heads of state and the constitution and the importance of the leaders' individual differences to govern. Building on the examination of the presidential attempts, the information gathered in the interviews, and the specialized literature on individual differences, I propose a psychological explanation of the presidential attempts. I hypothesize that presidents who are more risk prone and assertive are more likely to try to change the charter to increase their powers or relax their term limits. The last section concludes.

3.1 CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND PRESIDENTS

Constitutions are the most important political document in any country. They commit political elites to play by the same rules over time and guarantee a protection for the minorities that do not exert power (Sunstein 2001). Charters provide countries a set of inviolable principles, limit the government's behavior, and define who belongs to the nation.

Constitutional changes are intrinsically intertwined with the political life of a nation, often reflecting and sometimes causing instability. Preceding research has causally connected constitutions to a variety of relevant political outcomes, such as quality of democracy (Lijphart 1999; Powell 2000; Colomer 2001), economic policy and economic performance (Persson and Tabellini 2003; North and Weingast 1989), the rate of policy change in political regimes (Tsebelis 1995; Cox and McCubbins 2001), political reconstruction (Arjomand 2007) and foreign policy (Elkins et al. 2008; Feldman 2005). Some scholars have also argued that democratic stability is affected differently when the charters are parliamentary or presidential,

the electoral rules are restrictive or inclusive, and whether executives are weak or strong (Linz 1994; Shugart and Carey 1992; Jones 1995; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997).

Constitution makers write the charter without an expiration date: constitutions are expected to permanently provide the basic rules for national political interactions. However, this goal is almost never achieved. Elkins et al. (2009) published a groundbreaking work in which they tried to understand the logics of constitutional endurance examining 935 constitutions for every independent state from 1789 to 2005. The authors revealed that the average life span of constitutions is 19 years, with both environmental and design factors influencing their mortality.¹⁰ Constitutional mortality varies strongly by country: while the 1789 US constitution still frames the political life of American citizens, since independence Latin American countries have on average replaced their constitutions 10.1 times. Such pattern of change contrasts with the average of only 3.2 constitutions for Western European countries between 1789 and 2001 (Negretto 2012).

In contrast to constitutional replacements, most charters include rules establishing procedures for their own amendment, something fundamental for constitutional survival (Lutz 1994; Negretto 2008). Charter amendments serve the purpose of adapting a constitution to new political, economic, or social circumstances without affecting its legal continuity. The reasoning is that the easier it is to adapt a constitution to changing contexts, the more it lasts.¹¹

Given that constitutions rarely contain procedures to be replaced, to substitute the charter involves a more dramatic and infrequent transformation than to amend it. Elkins et al. (2009), for

¹⁰ The authors find empirical support for their hypotheses that the inclusiveness and flexibility in the design of the charters explain their durability, and mixed results for their hypothesis that the specificity of the constitutions is related to their lifespan.

¹¹ That explains why some preceding research has found that there is a positive correlation between constitutional endurance and constitutional amendments (Lutz 1994).

instance, find that, on average, amendments change 3% of the charters while replacements do it in 19%.¹²

While Elkins et al. (2009) certainly provide a general understanding of constitutional endurance, their work is limited due to their particular focus on the effect of constitutional design on constitutional mortality. Environmental issues are used as mere control variables in their empirical analysis, while the role of powerful political actors behind the institutional transformations is left aside altogether.

To understand the role of important political actors during constitutional change in Latin America, the undeniable reference is the work conducted by Negretto (2003, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013). He has systematically explored the changes in powers and terms of Latin American presidents. Negretto (2010) has shown that since 1978 two thirds of the changes introduced to presidential legislative powers have consolidated the power of the leaders. He also revealed that from 1978 to 2008 there were 16 constitutional changes to the presidential electoral rules, 9 of which relaxed term limits (Negretto 2009).

In his latest contribution, Negretto (2013) develops a two-level theory to understand constitutional choice. At the higher level, political actors share an interest to reform the charter, while at the lower level, constitutional negotiations benefit some actors more than others. Negretto (2013) proposes that the balance of power among legislative parties conditions changes in presidential powers and in electoral formulas to elect presidents and members of Congress. He argues that changes in the charter depend on the institutional preferences of powerful actors (i.e., parties and the presidency), motivated by their expected electoral support and their normative concern for “good” institutional performance.

¹² Although constitutional amendments are usually less dramatic than constitutional replacements, they are a more frequent type of institutional change. In the last decade, at least 11 out of 19 Latin American countries reformed their constitutions.

In Negretto's explanation of changes in presidential powers, presidents are considered secondary, institutional actors. I contend that such an approach understates the prominent role of presidents in the reforms that amend the powers of their offices and their term limits. Therefore, this study proposes to center the explanation of constitutional changes that directly affect the office of the heads of state on presidential behavior.

The absence of studies devoted to examining the role of presidents in the constitutional reforms that directly affect their office is surprising given that many presidents have been active constitution-makers. Among all politicians, the heads of state have the most intimate relation with constitutions. The charters determine how presidents are elected, for how long they may hold office, and are the source of most presidential formal powers. Therefore, the heads of government should be the most interested politicians in changing the constitution. And, in fact, presidents are the most powerful single politician able to decide when and how to change a charter.

Since presidents are accountable to a national constituency, they are the most interested actors in having more constitutional powers to provide the public policies that they crave for and to overcome gridlocks with Congress. The heads of state are also highly interested in retaining power for a longer period, in order to have more time to achieve their policy goals. Presidents that hold office more time are able to have a larger influence over Congress, because they have more capacity to enforce their promises and threats in an inter-temporal negotiation (Negretto 2010). Staying in power may even become more important for the leaders than the responsibilities of actual government. In sum, presidents have more incentives than any other actor to adapt the constitution to consolidate their power.

As the most powerful politician in the nation, presidents are also the most capable of leading constitutional changes. At a minimum, heads of government play an important role conditioning the content, timing and scope of constitutional changes, influencing the success or failure of the reforms. At a maximum, presidents can make all of the substantive decisions involving constitutional change.

There is cross-national evidence that the executive is formally engaged in the constitutional changes most of the times. Ginsburg, Elkins and Blount (2009) analyze the actors and the processes involved in 460 of the 806 constitutions promulgated in the period 1789–2005. They find that the executive was an explicit bargaining actor in more than half of the charter replacements. Given that the authors did not distinguish between parliamentary and presidential systems, the numbers should increase sharply if only the later are taken into account. In any case, when the executives were not explicit bargaining actors, their involvement was indirect through public campaigning, influencing the selection of constitution-makers, and then negotiating with them. Therefore, even in situations where the executive formally plays a secondary role, the president has an unmatched capacity to overturn potential dissenters offering pork or political positions that increase the incentives of constitution-makers to follow presidential guidelines.

Presidents have different types of powers according to the functions that they perform: party or coalition leader, head of state, head of government and co-legislator. Usually the charters grant all of these powers except those related to the role as party or coalition leader (which is nonetheless conditioned by the other functions).

In a forthcoming study, Doyle and Elgie present an exhaustive list of 28 measures of presidential powers that have been proposed by researchers. So far, scholars have proposed only two methods to measure presidential powers. One is a checklist, whereby presidents are coded

with 1 if they hold a power and 0 otherwise. This is the method used, for instance, by McGregor (1994), Frye (1997) and the East European Constitutional Review. An alternative measurement is proposed by Shugart and Carey (1992), who list 10 presidential powers that are measured on a scale from 0 to 4. Such measurement has been refined further (Metcalf 2000; Negretto 2008, 2013). Negretto (2013) introduced principal component analysis, a measurement technique that allows to weight the relative importance of each presidential power.

All of these works have divided presidential powers along two lines; legislative and non-legislative. In the first group usually falls the president's veto powers, decree authority, exclusive initiative on important financial or economic legislation, ability to convoke Congress for extraordinary sessions, submit urgency bills, issue decrees of legislative content in emergencies, ability to submit a bill to referendum, and whether Congress can increase governmental spending. The non-legislative powers usually refer to variables such as the authority of chief executives over the cabinet, influence in appointments (e.g., constitutional court magistrates), and whether there are temporal limits to the declaration of emergency and restrictions to the rights that the authority can suspend. These powers also embrace the constraints on leaders due to congressional powers, such as the ability of the assembly to interpellate or censure ministers, impeach the chief of state, and declare/ratify the president's declaration of emergency (a complete description of presidential powers is displayed in Appendix E).

While they do vary somewhat, most measures agree on the central components of presidential powers. Substantively, these studies have tried to measure the powers that the constitution grants to heads of state because such powers set what leaders can do in office.

All Latin American constitutions establish the rules to elect the president, determining who governs and for how long. The most permissive laws allow presidents to be reelected

indefinite times (as in Venezuela since 2009). Less permissive rules, in decreasing order, allow reelection for one term followed for one term out; allow it consecutively but just one time; accept reelection after one term; after two terms; and, finally, forbid reelection.

While historically Latin American chief executives have been active constitution-makers, political scientists have not systematically analyzed the numerous presidential attempts to consolidate their power via a constitutional change. The lack of research on the topic is surprising, because several of the leaders who were governing in 2012 were doing so only because they managed to consolidate their power through a constitutional change. Such were the cases of presidents Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), Evo Morales (Bolivia), Rafael Correa (Ecuador), and Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua). In fact, Chávez is the only of these leaders who had left power by 2015, and did it involuntarily –he passed away. Critics of these leaders have accused them of eroding the democratic institutions in their countries, and it remains unclear until when they intend to stay in power.

To have a thorough understanding of the relevance of the presidential attempts, I systematically documented one particular aspect of presidential behavior. To do so, some questions needed to be answered: How can we recognize a presidential attempt to change the constitution? What is the starting point for such attempts? Which countries, presidents and historical periods are relevant for a statistical analysis?

All of these questions pose some difficulties and demand making some sensitive decisions. First is the question of identifying a presidential attempt: neither the successful nor the unsuccessful cases are obvious. Many cases are dubious because presidents are not so clear about their intentions toward the constitution. Such was the case of President of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo (2008-2012). During all his term, he made ambiguous comments about the possibility of

changing the charter to be reelected. He often said that he did not want to be reelected, but could give it a second thought. Only after his supporters gathered 100,000 signatures to promote his reelection did he come to support changing the constitution. However, Congress voted against the initiative. As Lugo, President of Honduras Manuel Zelaya never openly stated that he wanted to change the constitution to be reelected, but he took all the necessary steps to achieve it. Despite multiple warnings from his own party, the political opposition and even the judiciary, Zelaya continued with his plans to introduce on the ballot of the 2010 presidential election a question asking whether citizens approved the convocation of a constitutional assembly to change the constitution. Critics of Zelaya feared that if the answer to the question was “yes,” Zelaya would initiate a process that would allow him to remain in power.¹³ Zelaya continued with his plans and was ousted by the military five months before his term ended.

This study considers the cases of Lugo and Zelaya as unsuccessful attempts. The criterion is that they made a noticeable, recorded attempt to change the charter to consolidate their power (in this case, to relax their term limits).¹⁴ At a minimum, these attempts require heads of state to publicly announce their intentions to change the constitution. Fortunately, the press and presidential biographies identify unsuccessful attempts.¹⁵

To identify successful attempts is not straightforward either. First, heads of state may not have been the protagonists of some reforms that altered their powers (e.g., when reforms are imposed by a powerful Congress). To avoid including those cases, I identified as successful attempts cases in which heads of state were the clear protagonists of the reforms. Second,

¹³ How this was supposed to happen, it is unclear, since voters would be choosing Zelaya’s replacement in the same election.

¹⁴ Zelaya’s case is less evident. His attempt is discussed further on section 3.3.

¹⁵ A leader that made two unsuccessful and one successful attempt to be allowed to be reelected was Óscar Arias. However, the former head of state of Costa Rica is not coded as trying to change the constitution, given that his three attempts were done while he was not in office.

adjustments that do not affect the incumbent –that only affect subsequent leaders– cannot be counted as self-interested attempts to change the constitution. Third, not all modifications in presidential powers are meaningful. Small adjustments are usually the outcome of a broader reform in which the targets were other changes. Therefore, I excluded changes of less than 5 points in Negretto’s 0-100 scale of powers.¹⁶

To identify the presidential attempts to relax their term limits I use the same criterion used to classify the leaders’ attempts to change their powers. This criterion requires heads of government to make a public and recorded effort to reform the charter. To classify variation in term limits, I used data taken from Pérez-Liñán et al. (2015). The countries in the sample have had six types of rules regarding reelection. In decreasing order, the less permissive rules establish that reelection is (1) not allowed, (2) allowed after two terms out, (3) allowed after one term out, (4) limited to one term, (5) allowed for one term followed for one term out and (6) unrestricted.

To decide which countries, presidents, and historical periods to include in the study is not straightforward either. It could be argued that including countries that have constitutions that are too rigid or nations that have a story of major political instability (i.e., frequent institutional change) may introduce noise to the analysis. Similarly, some presidents may have governed for too little time to attempt to change the charter, been puppets of satraps who governed from the shadows, or been dictators without much need of changing the constitution. It could be argued

¹⁶ In Chapter 5 I argue that Negretto’s measurement of presidential powers is the best available, which explains why I use it. The decision of disregarding changes of less than 5 points in Negretto’s 0-100 scale led to marginalize only four cases. As expected, in these cases the changes in presidential powers were not central to the reforms. In 1943, the government of Juan Antonio Ríos led a packet of reforms that seek to grant constitutional rank to the Comptroller General, created the emergency decree, and slightly increased the legislative powers of the Chilean president. In 1965, a constitutional assembly approved a new charter under the authoritarian government of Honduran Oswaldo López Arellano, whose non-legislative powers were marginally increased. The 1996 constitutional reform led under Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo was mainly an electoral reform, in which the non-legislative powers tangentially decreased. The reforms in Nicaragua in 2000 were mainly an agreement between the two main parties to benefit themselves from a change in the electoral rules. As part of the reforms, President Arnoldo Alemán saw a minor reduction in his powers.

that considering these leaders as part of the sample would be misleading. In the same vein, if there was an excessive concentration of presidential attempts in a specific historical period –e.g., the Cold War–, then it could be misleading to include a broader historical epoch.

On the other hand, arbitrarily leaving out nations, leaders and époques may lead to an unrepresentative sample of the presidential attempts. To avoid the mistake of not including subjects and historical periods that may reveal patterns of presidential behavior, this study analyzes the largest possible sample, for the largest possible historical period.

The end of World War II is chosen as the starting period of analysis because it represents the beginning of the most extensive democratic era in the Western Hemisphere, with two “waves” of democratization; 1956-1962 and 1978-1992 (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005: 19).

Presidents who governed for less than six months are excluded because they were all transient leaders –mostly interim presidents, but also victims of coups or leaders who passed away– without time to reform the constitution.¹⁷ This criterion leads to the exclusion from the sample of 76 leaders.

Non-democratic leaders are included in the sample for two main reasons. The first is that, although autocrats and semi-democratic leaders depend less than democratic presidents on the rule of law, they have also actively tried to change the charter and have faced strong difficulties to change the constitution. Non-democratic leaders have tried to change the constitution to provide a cloak of legitimacy to their regimes, and as a signal that their governments are both legitimate and legal. Although most non-democratic leaders do not need to bargain with Congress to change the constitution, to succeed in their attempts many times they have needed to

¹⁷ The 6 juntas that governed in the period in which no member was identified as president were also excluded from the sample. Six presidents that governed less than six months were included because they also governed their country more than half year in other terms. These heads of state are Hernán Siles and Alfredo Ovando from Bolivia, Fabián Alarcón and Lucio Gutiérrez from Ecuador, Ricardo Pérez from Perú and Roberto Chiari from Panamá.

negotiate with elites and interest groups. The second reason is that to assess if it is misleading to conflate democratic with non-democratic presidents is ultimately a question that needs to be answered with empirical evidence (i.e., not a priori). In Chapter 6 I address such challenge.

Finally, all Latin American countries and the United States are examined because a larger sample will allow to reveal universal patterns of presidential behavior. If including all these countries embraces societies with different cultures, levels of democracy, political stability, and constitutional rigidity, then such differences will add nuances to the analysis. Studying such diversity of nations will uncover if there are factors that explain the presidential attempts across different cultural, institutional and social contexts.

To sum up, I documented all the attempts made by presidents who have governed for at least six months in one of the 19 Latin American countries and the United States between 1945 and 2012. The criteria delineated leads to a sample consistent of 315 presidents.

Fortunately, to document the powers of the presidents is not problematic given that existing databases have already done it (remember the Doyle and Elgie compilation). As is explained in Chapter 5, I recur to these databases and also consulted national constitutions when the available information was ambiguous or absent.¹⁸

To identify which heads of government have tried to change the charter to consolidate their power, I examined presidential biographical data. This information was gathered from 68 books and the online biographies existing in www.wikipedia.org (in English and Spanish), www.cidob.org, and www.biografiasyvidas.com, plus material gathered during field research

¹⁸ I gathered information on national constitutions mainly from the Comparative Constitutions Project (www.comparativeconstitutionsproject.org), the Political Database of the Americas at Georgetown (pdba.georgetown.edu), and the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (www.cervantesvirtual.com). In some cases, constitutions were downloaded from other sources, such as Chile's National Congress Library (www.bcn.cl).

conducted in seven countries. The extensive review of the biographies allowed me to confidently document the successful and unsuccessful presidential attempts.

Following the criteria outlined, Table 3.1 presents a detailed list of the presidential attempts at constitutional change. The table identifies whether such attempts were successful or not, if the leaders tried to change their legislative or non-legislative powers, or if they tried to extend their terms in office. The table also specifies the means used to reform the charter (i.e., whether the charter was amended, replaced, or reinterpreted).

The table reveals several interesting facts. First, the number of presidents who have tried to change the charter is astoundingly high. Following the criterion described for identifying the presidential attempts, 38 chiefs of state tried 48 times to adapt the constitution to their preferences (26 to adjust powers and 40 to relax term limits). The numbers reveal that, after reaching office, 12% of the subjects in the sample struggled to consolidate their power.

Second, in all the presidential attempts the preference of the leaders was to increase their powers or extend their term. No president of the Americas, between 1945 and 2012, led a single campaign to reduce their powers or shorten their term limits. This simple fact reveals how strong the leaders' inclinations to consolidate their power are.

Third, most of the heads of state succeed in their attempts to modify the constitution: 28 leaders out of 38. This reveals that most of the times the leaders are skillful in making the reforms happen. On the flip side, the percentage of failed presidential attempts (26%) is not negligible, especially considering that presidents can end up being overthrown for trying to consolidate their power, as occurred to Manuel Zelaya in 2010 and Jorge Serrano in 1993.

Table 3.1: Attempts at Constitutional Change

Country	Name	Year	Powers	Leg.	Non Leg.	Term	Extend	Means
Successful								
Argentina	Juan Domingo Perón	1949	X	X	X	X	X	Amendment
Argentina	Carlos Menem	1994	X	X		X	X	Amendment
Bolivia	Gualberto Villarroel	1945	X	X		X	X	New
Bolivia	Víctor Paz Estenssoro	1961	X	X		X	X	New
Bolivia	Evo Morales	2009				X	X	New
Brazil	Getúlio Vargas	1934	X	X		X	X	New
Brazil	Getúlio Vargas	1937	X	X	X	X	X	New
Brazil	Fernando Henrique Cardoso	1997				X	X	Amendment
Chile	Augusto Pinochet	1980	X	X		X	X	New
Colombia	Carlos Lleras Restrepo	1968	X	X	X			Amendment
Colombia	Álvaro Uribe	2004				X	X	Amendment
Cuba	Fidel Castro	1976	X	X	X	X	X	New
D. Republic	Joaquín Balaguer	1966				X	X	New
D. Republic	Hipólito Mejía	2002				X	X	New
D. Republic	Leonel Fernández	2010				X	X	New
Ecuador	José María Velasco Ibarra	1945	X		X	X	X	New
Ecuador	José María Velasco Ibarra	1946	X	X				New
Ecuador	Rafael Correa	2008				X	X	New
El Salvador	Óscar Osorio	1950				X	X	New
Guatemala	Carlos Castillo Armas	1956	X		X	X	X	New
Honduras	Tiburcio Carías Andino	1936	X		X	X	X	New
Honduras	Tiburcio Carías Andino	1939				X	X	Amendment
Nicaragua	Anastasio Somoza García	1939	X	X		X	X	New
Nicaragua	Anastasio Somoza Debayle	1974	X			X	X	New
Nicaragua	Daniel Ortega	1987	X		X			New
Nicaragua	Daniel Ortega	2011				X	X	Jud. Review
Paraguay	Alfredo Stroessner	1967				X	X	New
Paraguay	Alfredo Stroessner	1977				X	X	Amendment
Peru	Alberto Fujimori	1993	X	X		X	X	New
Peru	Alberto Fujimori	1996				X	X	Amendment
Uruguay	Alberto Héber	1967	X	X		X	X	New
Venezuela	Rómulo Betancourt	1945	X	X				New
Venezuela	Marcos Pérez Jiménez	1953	X		X	X	X	New
Venezuela	Rómulo Betancourt	1961	X	X				New
Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	1999	X	X	X	X	X	New
Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	2009				X	X	Amendment
Unsuccessful								
Colombia	Laureano Gómez	1950	X	X				New
Colombia	Álvaro Uribe	2010				X	X	Amendment
Costa Rica	Miguel Ángel Rodríguez	2001				X	X	Amendment
Ecuador	Sixto Durán Ballén	1994	X	X				Amendment
Guatemala	Jorge Serrano Elías	1993	X	X		X	X	New
Honduras	Manuel Zelaya	2009				X	X	New
Panama	Ernesto Pérez Balladares	1998				X	X	Amendment
Paraguay	Nicanor Duarte Frutos	2006				X	X	Amendment
Paraguay	Fernando Lugo	2012				X	X	Amendment
Uruguay	Jorge Pacheco Areco	1971				X	X	Amendment
Uruguay	Juan María Bordaberry	1975	X	X				New
Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	2007				X	X	Amendment

SOURCE: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

Fourth, one of the most consequential facts revealed by the table is that in the list are several of the most prominent leaders that have ever emerged in Latin America. The career ambitions of these presidents strongly influenced the history of their countries. In most cases, these leaders were able to leave a mark in history thanks to the constitutional changes they led.

Fifth, presidents have more often chosen to replace rather than to amend the constitution to consolidate their power. This seems to happen for two reasons. On one side, many chief executives replace the constitution to avoid the institutional constraints designed to limit the amendments to an existing charter. On the other, given that presidents usually attempt to consolidate their power as part of a broader reform in which they need the acquiescence of other political actors, the constitutional replacements allow the leaders to make larger concessions than simple amendments.

The attempt of Guatemalan President, Jorge Serrano, is a revealing case of the first argument (the second argument is developed on Chapter 7). On May 25, 1993, he suspended the constitution, dissolved Congress and the Supreme Court, imposed censorship and tried to restrict civil freedoms. Serrano announced that he would convoke an election of a constituent assembly within sixty days to replace the constitution and argued that it was necessary to increase executive powers to free the state from corruption (Christensen Bjune and Petersen 2010: 169). Serrano was playing all-or-nothing; among other things, he planned to increase his powers and extend his term in office, something that he could only do by force given that the constitution prohibits to amend term limits.¹⁹ In the end, he got nothing. The Constitutional Court ruled against the attempted takeover and the army enforced the law. Serrano resigned on June 1 and fled the country. What would have happened had Serrano succeeded? Perhaps something similar

¹⁹ Article four states that “the alternation in the office of the Presidency of the Republic is mandatory. Violation of this rule constitutes crime of treason to the homeland.” Article 237 establishes that the four-year’s presidential term cannot be changed.

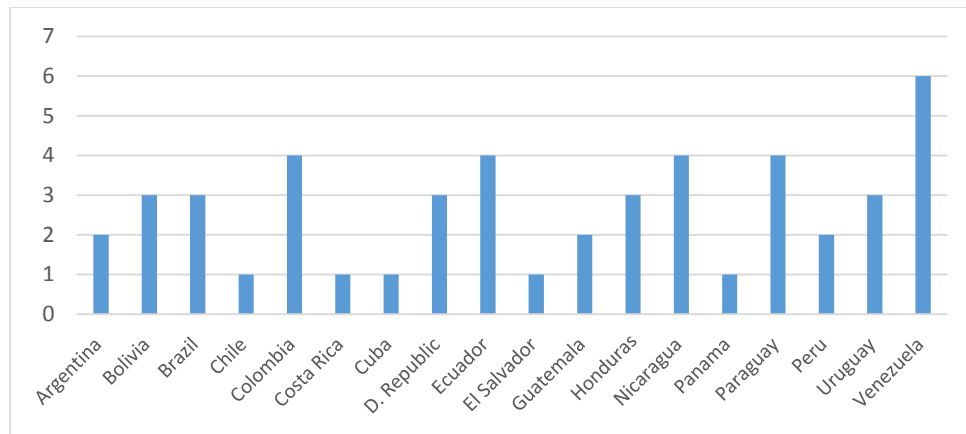
to his source of inspiration: On 5 April 1992, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, in an effort to overcome his minority position in Congress, led a self-coup with the help of the military. In the *autogolpe*, Fujimori shut down the legislature, purged the judiciary, and suspended the constitution. After the first measures were taken, he called for legislative elections, got a subservient legislature, and led a constitutional replacement to consolidate his power. Among other things, the new charter increased Fujimori's powers and allowed him to be reelected. The self-coup can be considered as a benchmark of how a democratically-elected president can replace the charter to legitimize an authoritarian regression, turning a democracy into a competitive authoritarian regime (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013).²⁰

Sixth, 38% of the times presidents attempted to increase their powers and relax their term limits simultaneously. This suggests that the leaders tend to see the two types of reforms as intimately related in their broader attempt to consolidate their power. Given that retaining power should antecede the attempt to increase it, presidents have also been more inclined to relax their term limits (40 times in the sample) than to increase their powers (26 times).²¹

Finally, the presidents' attempts to consolidate their power have occurred interspersed since 1945, and in all countries except Mexico and the United States (exceptionality discussed in Appendix A). Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of the attempts by country.

²⁰ According to Polity IV's 21-point scale (which ranges between 10 and -10), Peru passed from being a democracy in 1991 (scoring 8) to an "anocracy" in 1992 (scoring minus three).

²¹ The heads of government have also tried to increase their legislative powers two times as much as their non-legislative powers. Arguably, presidents prefer to extend their legislative powers to increase their control over the legislative branch and minimize the problems associated with being a minority leader, a common problem faced by Latin American leaders (Amorim Neto 2006; Martínez-Gallardo 2010).



SOURCE: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

Figure 3.1: Presidents and Constitutional Attempts, 1945-2012

To sum up, presidents from every Latin American country except Mexico have actively tried to change the constitution to consolidate their power in the last 70 years. Further, most of the presidents who try to change the charter succeed in their attempts, and in the select group of successful leaders are several of the most prominent politicians that Latin America has ever seen.

The information contained in Table 3.1, nonetheless, does not clarify the presidents' motives for changing the constitution to consolidate their power. The heads of state that have tried to change the charter cannot be easily classified; they belong to different countries and historical periods, and some leaders reached power through the ballots while others did it by force.

A conventional explanation of why some presidents try to change the charter would propose that leaders are mere rational actors and therefore try to consolidate their power once the circumstances favor such behavior. However, such a statement is not only an untested assumption, but also seems a-historical. It does not help our understanding, for example, of why some presidents have tried to change the constitution in unpromising scenarios and others did not try to change it even in promising contexts. Zelaya tried to change the charter despite an environment that suggested he would be very unlikely to succeed. On the other end, presidents

who were popular and enjoyed a majority in Congress, such as Luis Alberto Monge of Costa Rica, did not try to change the constitution despite facing a promising state of the world. In Chapter 7 I analyze both presidencies in detail.

Another assumption that may be challenged is the constraining role of institutions on presidential behavior. The reality is that presidents do not always follow the rules. As shown in Table 3.1, most of the times presidents choose to replace rather than to amend the constitution. In such cases, most of the times the heads of government openly violate the rules that are supposed to constrain them (remember that constitutions rarely contain rules for their replacement).

In an effort to understand the relation between presidents and constitutions, and the motivations to change them, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 former Latin American presidents. The interviews allowed me to start covering the gap in the literature, since no preceding study has addressed presidential attempts to change the constitution from a comparative perspective.

3.2 WHAT DO PRESIDENTS SAY?

To conduct field research some choices had to be made: which presidents should be interviewed, former or incumbents? How many leaders should be interviewed? From which countries? I decided to try to interview only former presidents, for substantive and pragmatic reasons. The substantive reason is that former presidents are more likely to express their true opinions than incumbents. Given that their statements are thoroughly covered and may have profound consequences, incumbents are unlikely to say potentially polemic things (like revealing their interest in changing the constitution). In contrast, former presidents often do not hold important

political positions and therefore should be less hesitant to share their thoughts. From a pragmatic perspective, it is easier to access former heads of state than incumbents: they have a more open schedule.

With respect to the number and nationality of the potential interviewees, I decided to meet as many former presidents as possible. The Latin countries of Central America were chosen because they are logistically convenient; Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama offer a high number of leaders in a comparatively small area. I also tried to interview former presidents during a trip to Chile.²²

There were 56 former heads of government alive in the six Central American countries and Chile when I conducted field research. Some potential interviewees were a priori discarded because they were unreachable (Alfonso Portillo was in prison), lived in other countries (Michelle Bachelet, José Figueres), were too old (Óscar Mendoza and Roberto Suazo), incumbents (Daniel Ortega) or did not belong to the sample (former junta members from El Salvador). I tried to interview the remaining 39 politicians. To reach the leaders, I called the main newspapers of each country and asked journalists for contact information. Most of the times, the journalists contacted were very generous in providing the information requested (phones or emails).²³

I was unable to gather the contact information of several leaders and some efforts to contact former presidents never received a reply. Three politicians contacted declined to be interviewed (Ricardo Maduro, Violeta Chamorro, and Óscar Berger), while one leader who

²² Given that the purpose of the interviews was to conduct an exploratory analysis, there was no need to select the interviews trying to have a representative sample of the leaders under study.

²³ I am indebted with the generous help of the journalists Conié Reynoso, Mario Cordero, Rubén Cabrera, Efrén Lemus, Jaime López, Javier Sánchez, Juan Arévalo, Andrés Corrales, Sandra González, and Carlos Vargas.

previously agreed to be interviewed was unable to be in the city where the interview was going to take place (Mireya Moscoso).

The resulting sample of 21 interviewees is the largest and more diverse collection of presidential opinions ever captured on a single topic for a single study. This exercise allowed me to access highly valuable information that is not available in any other source –information that could only be gathered through interviews.

The leaders were asked three types of questions (the questionnaire asked is presented on Appendix B). In a first group of questions the leaders were asked about their individual differences and if their personal traits could be related to their performance in office. The politicians were asked about their risk propensity, the risks they faced in office, their religiosity, socioeconomic origin, decision making style, political ideology, and if they would mention any life experience that influenced their understanding of politics. The leaders also discussed whether the individual differences of presidents are relevant to rule in general, and their countries in particular. The politicians also responded if being lawyer, the marital status, age when reaching the office, entrepreneurial experience, time in office, and socialization in politics are relevant to understand presidential performance.

In a second group of questions, presidents were asked about the political context in which they governed. The purpose of these questions was to try to appreciate, from the perspective of the leaders, the most important constraints on their mandates. Consequently, the leaders were asked whether they thought they could make a significant difference for their country or they felt bound by political, social or institutional limitations, if the electoral support with which they reached the presidency conditioned their performance, and how different groups that opposed (supported) them influenced their government.

The last group of questions tried to unearth the relation between the heads of state and the constitution, and the reasons that the leaders may have to try to change it. Former presidents were asked about the importance of the charter to them, about the relevance of the presidential powers, and whether the constitution is enforced in their countries. Presidents who changed the charter were asked why they did it and if the outcome represented their preferences or they would have preferred a different product. Leaders who did not try to transform the charter were asked if they would have preferred to change it, and if so, what they would have changed.

Table 3.2 presents the presidents who were interviewed, their terms in office, date and length of the interviews, and whether they attempted a constitutional reform (and if so, of which type). The resulting group is highly diverse; it includes a military dictator (Ríos Montt), puppet heads of state (F. Rodríguez and Barletta), democratic leaders (most), convicted politicians (Calderón Sol, M.A. Rodríguez, and Ríos Montt), an exile (Bucaram), a Nobel Peace Prize winner (Arias), highly educated leaders (most) and an autodidact (Monge). Their time in office also varied: while F. Rodríguez governed less than four months, Arias was in power for eight years (in two non-consecutive terms). Most relevant to the theory, it includes four chief executives who attempted to change the charter to benefit their careers (Arias, Pérez, Zelaya and M.A. Rodríguez), although just one succeeded (Arias, although he was not in office when he tried).

Table 3.2: President's Interviewed

President	Country	Term	Date	Length	Reform Type	Success
Óscar Arias	Costa Rica	1986-1990				
		2006-2010	8/09/11	34'	Yes, term	Yes
Ernesto Pérez Balladares	Panama	1994-1999	8/16/11	30'	Yes, term	No
Rafael Callejas	Honduras	1990-1994	7/28/11	48'	No	
					Yes, powers & term	No
Manuel Zelaya	Honduras	2006-2009	7/29/11	38'		
Miguel A. Rodríguez	Costa Rica	1998-2002	8/12/11	66'	Yes, powers	No
Nicolás Barletta	Panama	1984-1985	8/17/11	65'	No	
Francisco Rodríguez	Panama	1989	8/16/11	45'	No	
Antonio Saca	El Salvador	2004-2009	7/26/11	56'	No	
Roberto Micheletti	Honduras	2009-2010	8/03/11	55'	No	
Rafael Calderón	Costa Rica	1990-1994	8/11/11	55'	No	
Vinicio Cerezo	Guatemala	1986-1991	7/20/11	54'	No	
Armando Calderón Sol	El Salvador	1994-1999	7/25/11	82'	No	
Efraín Ríos Montt	Guatemala	1982-1983	7/19/11	79'	No	
Luis Alberto Monge	Costa Rica	1982-1986	8/09/11	88'	No	
Arnoldo Alemán	Nicaragua	1997-2002	8/06/11	70'	No	
Enrique Bolaños	Nicaragua	2002-2007	8/05/11	80'	No	
Abdalá Bucaram	Ecuador	1996-1997	8/16/11	78'	No	
Abel Pacheco	Costa Rica	2002-2006	8/10/11	57'	No	
Patricio Aylwin	Chile	1990-1994	11/09/11	84'	No	
Ricardo Lagos	Chile	2000-2006	01/18/11	55'	No	
Eduardo Frei	Chile	1994-2000	5/03/12	64'	No	

SOURCE: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

3.2.1 Individual Differences and Governing

The interviews revealed many powerful insights.²⁴ Former presidents were categorical when discussing the relation between their individual differences and their performance. “In any country the personal characteristics of the leaders are important to govern,” said Ricardo Lagos, President of Chile between 2000 and 2006, in what can be considered a standard response.

²⁴ Given that the topics addressed with the interviewees exceed the scope of this study, for convenience I present only the information directly related to the theory about presidential attempts.

One interview was particularly revealing. Abdalá Bucaram, President of Ecuador between 1996 and 1997, claimed that his personality was a major decisive factor in his political achievements: “I honestly think that it was my personality what led people to take me to the presidency.” Bucaram described what aspects of his personality attracted the electorate: “I think people do not care whether your thoughts are positive or negative, but (they care about) the clarity and authenticity with which you express them.” Popularly nicknamed “El loco” (the crazy) due to his unconventional behavior, Bucaram used his exotic persona as an electoral advantage: “People recognizes Bucaram as a folkloric character, and I have contributed significantly to that, because you have to look to the vote/cost relation. If Mr. Nebot is going to spend 50 million dollars and I only have four, then I have to use all my abilities to reach the news and capture the vote at the lowest possible cost.²⁵ There is no demagogy in that; it is political ability.”

Similarly, the President of Costa Rica between 1998 and 2002, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, distinguished between the attributes necessary to win the presidency, and the ones needed to succeed in office. “To win the election you must be a very good actor and to rule you must be a very good author. The personalities of one and the other are very different. The one who is more convinced of himself and has more confidence on what he says, who believes that he has the whole truth on his head, convinces more people. The one who is a bit more scientific, more calmed, knows that has many fields of ignorance, recognizes the need to listen to others, balance criteria, seek knowledge to make decisions, does not transmit a very strong image of confidence in the campaign. The first is very good to win elections but the second is very good to govern,” said M.A. Rodríguez.

²⁵ Jaime Nebot was the leading contender of Bucaram in the 1996 presidential elections.

Although Bucaram seemed to assign more electoral importance to his public persona than other politicians, most leaders interviewed had no problems in elaborating their own “laundry list” of characteristics that a president needs to have to rule *their* country. For instance, the President of Guatemala between 1986 and 1991, Vinicio Cerezo, said that only certain individuals are able to reach the presidency in his country: “The social position, gender, and probably the socio-economic background may be influential because Guatemala has high levels of social exclusion and ethnic marginalization.” Cerezo also stated that the level of education and professional experience matters, adding that a president needs “at least a serious understanding of politics, laws, and the effects of economic decisions.”

Notably, some of the main attributes that presidents mentioned as necessary to govern were “character,” “charisma,” and “ability to negotiate.” The President of Panama between 1994 and 1999, Ernesto Pérez Balladares, said that “I evidently think that certain virtues are better to govern Panama. We demand honest rulers, capable, with a clear vision of the country that they want, and with the character to especially cope the main pressure groups.” The President of Panama between 1984 and 1985, Nicolás Barletta, stated that in presidential systems “things are quite personalistic. Personal leadership is very important, the charisma too, the attitude.” Rafael Callejas, President of Honduras between 1990 and 1994, also mentioned “charisma” as a specific valuable attribute: “To combine the strength of leadership and charisma with a policy proposal is vital... Charisma is relevant because it allows to count on the support of the electorate. Without the ability to convene, the presidency becomes very fragile, very weakened by interest groups. A president leads in a country like ours with a series of completely heterogeneous groups that gather under one banner. Once in power, unions, economic groups and the electorate tend to separate again. Therefore, the president needs his charisma to make sure that unity is kept to

reach the goals. If a president lacks the capacity to lead the group that supported him and brought him to power and keep alive his proposal, he will become weakened and that is when ungovernability comes.”

Some presidents also commented on other characteristics. Antonio Saca, President of El Salvador between 2004 and 2009, observed the need of being persistent and open to alternative points of view, claiming that presidents need to “be patient and understand that you cannot win all battles. You have to be able to listen because to govern you must listen and let people tell you. And you need the ability to get out of the bubble of the presidency, because many people tell you what you want to hear.” Abel Pacheco, President of Costa Rica between 2002 and 2006 and a professional psychiatrist, stated that some degree of aggressiveness can also help to govern: “Aggressiveness is a force that can be very positive. Well-conducted, it is like a river that moves, a generator. If aggressiveness is dispersed, it becomes hostility and stops being a productive force. It becomes destructive.” Related to destructive attitudes, Patricio Aylwin, President of Chile between 1990 and 1994, remarked that “if a man comes to power with authoritarian political orientations, he will feel bad in any democracy and will always feel that democracy limits his leadership and that the powers of Congress are excessive.”

When the interviewees were asked whether they believed they needed to be strong leaders to govern, most agreed that presidents should not be very “soft.” The answers revealed two predominant visions. Some interviewees said that presidents should invest a significant part of their energies negotiating and persuading their allied and rival forces. Other politicians remarked that, in addition to deploying negotiation skills, chief executives need to use their ability to retaliate to implement their agendas.

Within the first group were former presidents who emphasized being persuasive and attentive to the needs of others. “A president needs a strong personality, which does not mean you can do things according to your taste and whim,” said Saca. “I always tried to reach legislators and tried to convince them that a project was worth,” he stated. Rafael Calderón, President of Costa Rica between 1990 and 1994, said that being a soft bargainer allowed him to enjoy a “very strong leadership.” In support of his statement, he recalled his management of a rebel deputy: “I used to call him, give him affection: ‘solve the problems in your community. What do you want? How can we help you?’ In this country you need to treat people with a lot of affection and respect.” Calderón disregarded the option of retaliating against legislators: “Then they will not approve your budget.” Similarly, Barletta said that “I believe that you consult with your own group, listen, absorb suggestions, and persuade. It’s not that you make a decision and everyone follows.” Cerezo emphasized that “the only way of producing long-term structural changes in a country is through reaching agreements.”

In contrast, some interviewees were more inclined to emphasize the need of exercising tough leadership, including the ability to retaliate against dissenters. “I would be a liar if I were to say that presidents do not retaliate...Human beings are like that. You step on my foot and I step on yours,” said Pacheco. Callejas said that “the president has to be very strong” and “has to have lots of power.” The Honduran justified not helping legislators to develop their projects as a way to “induce” them to follow presidential policies. The President of Costa Rica in 1986-1990 and 2006-2010, Óscar Arias, described himself as a strong leader and also endorsed the legitimacy of retaliating against rebel, pro-government legislators. He also exemplified his leadership with his decision-making style: “I used to say ‘I am asking for your vote for the free trade agreement (with the US). Believe me that it is good for Costa Rica. If it were bad, I would

not be asking for it.”” According to Abel Monge, President of Costa Rica between 1982 and 1986, Arias used to “chase” disloyal deputies with practices such as “taking them out of businesses” (in the case of politicians with entrepreneurial activities) and “vetoing them in government.”

It is uncontroversial to claim that individuals who reach the presidency run important risks. After all, they invest significant amounts of energy, money and prestige in campaigns in which they can end up with their hands empty. Once in power, presidents make highly relevant decisions, and the more consequences a decision entails, the more can be lost (i.e., more risks are taken). However, the interviews revealed the real magnitude of presidential risk taking: the office forces leaders to run important risks almost on a daily basis. Presidents did not have problems discussing situations in which they run high risks, even extreme in some cases. Callejas categorically described the demands of the office: “The presidency is always an administration by crisis.”

All the interviewees were asked about the most risky situations they faced as leaders. The answers were highly varied and expressed the different realities of the countries and times presidents governed. Some Central American leaders recounted that negotiating with the United States entailed high risks in periods when Washington had its security forces involved in the region. Callejas, for instance, remembered his effort to convince the US to pull out the American-funded Nicaraguan Contra guerrillas from Honduran territory. The Contras were more powerful than the Honduran army and without the American help Callejas would have faced an adverse scenario. “The United States could have refused to help us, which could have led to an internal conflict,” said Callejas. In a less threatening but still difficult situation, Pérez Balladares

struggled for some years until he convinced the United States to withdraw its troops from “securing” the Panama Canal.

The most risky decisions made by Chilean presidents revealed the delicate civic-military relations after the Pinochet regime (1973-1990): they were all related to human rights violations. While Eduardo Frei, President of Chile between 1994 and 2000, said that he run high risks incarcerating the former head of the secret police DINA, Manuel Contreras, for human rights violations. Lagos cited as one of his most risky decisions creating the Valech Report, a record of abuses committed during the Pinochet era.

However, most of the risky decisions made by the leaders interviewed tended to be more related to the political conjuncture in which they governed than to permanent historical problems. Examples include designing and implementing a fiscal reform (Saca), tax reform (Alemán) dealing with dock strikes (Pacheco), the kidnapping of a Supreme Court Justice (Calderón) or a Congress (Calderón Sol), dangerous protests (Bolaños) and several attempts on a leader’s life (Cerezo, Monge, Calderón Sol, Alemán).

Based on how they described their relation toward risk in office, presidents can be grouped in three broad categories. In one, former presidents said that they made efforts to minimize taking risks as much as possible. Other leaders openly recognized being high risk takers, some even with certain pride. Few interviewees described themselves as extreme risk takers.

Former presidents Frei and Cerezo said that they tried to minimize risks whenever it was possible. Cerezo said that given that he “had to run very strong risks to work for the democratic

openness of the country,” he worked hard to minimize the occurrence of crisis. Therefore, he said that he did not run more risks “than what was absolutely necessary.”²⁶

Interestingly, most of the interviewees described themselves as high risk takers. When asked where he would place himself in a scale where one is very risk averse and seven is very risk prone, M.A. Rodríguez said “five or six,” adding that a politician needs to be at least “four.” Arias also fell in this group: “You are not elected to please. I do not govern listening to the polls. That is risky, but I do not care.” Other presidents were more explicit. “I love risk, I do not know success without risk. You need to make a decision and surely some will result and others will not,” said Saca. Similarly, Pacheco said that “I already went through scary places. I am not afraid. I always face difficult situations,” reminding that he “did not have problems to fire ministers.”

Three of the interviewees described an almost reckless inclination toward risk. “I have the highest risk-propensity. The proof of that is that I worked on the foundation of the party in times of (internal) war,” said Armando Calderón Sol, President of El Salvador between 1994 and 1999. He recounted how he could have been easily killed while talking on stage during the years of Salvador’s internal conflict, and also described in detail an attempt on his life and numerous death threats. “I was always a risk-lover. I did not think about it, I was always very positive and thought I was going to get ahead.” The other extreme risk-taker leaders were even unable to end their terms. “I act according to my beliefs,” said Manuel Zelaya, President of Honduras between 2006 and 2009, when he was overthrown. “Risk has the effect of producing fear in people...I do not notice fears,” he said. Bucaram was also daring: “I do exactly what my conscience dictates, and in that sense I do not think about tomorrow...I am a man who, when believes in something,

²⁶ The leader from Guatemala remembered that he received four assaults against his life, before and during office. These assaults included shots in the streets that ended up with the life of several people, a bomb on a plane to kill him, and an attack with bazookas against his house.

does it. I completely assume the risks.” Bucaram stated that he knew he was going to be overthrown for not providing the military the funds they requested. “Let them go to hell. Overthrow me! Someone has to start” cutting funds to the military, he said.

When asked about the relevance of their political experience and socialization into politics to govern, former presidents overwhelmingly agreed that their background was crucial to understanding their performance. Some interviewees who were entrepreneurs or held high executive positions highlighted that their experience in the private sector also helped them to govern. The only relevant point in which there was a clear disagreement was whether a president gains proficiency with time in office.

Several leaders criticized presidents who are elected without much political experience. For instance, Calderón said that “you need to prepare for this life. You need to move up through the stairs, not the elevator. If you move up through the elevator, you might get lost. If you climb through the stairs, you will do so learning”.

M.A. Rodríguez remarked that politicians gain different types of experiences holding offices in the executive and in the legislature. “The experience in the executive or in municipalities teaches one the difficulties of running the government compared to running private companies. The experience in the legislature teaches to negotiate, the understanding with others and not seeing them as enemies but as people who have other point of view, and the need to seek support.” Along this argument, Frei said that being a Senator “was an important experience because it allowed me to understand the legislative management and (reach) agreements to get major projects and state policies done.” Pacheco held a more pessimistic view of his experience as legislator: “It made me resign all hope that Congress would help me because

I knew how it worked.” Despite his pessimism, as all the interviewees who sat in Congress, Pacheco recognized it as a relevant learning experience.

As M.A. Rodríguez, Pérez stated that working in the executive as minister was “fundamental” in helping him to govern due to the “big differences” with the private administration: “Bureaucrats can only do the things that the law allows them, (while) the normal Panamanian executive does the things that the law does not prohibit... You have to accommodate to the bureaucrats and their fear of change.”

Presidents who worked as entrepreneurs or in high executive positions -such as Saca, Frei, and Pérez Balladares- remarked that their working experience in the private sector helped them to develop skills that then they used to manage the presidency. “I think the fact that I worked 20 years as an engineer in the private sector helped me a lot to modernize the state. It allowed me to understand what teamwork is, planning, preventing, to anticipate events and delegate in big works,” said Frei.

Several interviewees remarked that their socialization into politics (i.e., how they became engaged in politics) also contributed to their performance in office. While only a select minority of individuals is exposed to politics from a very young age, several interviewees were socialized before adulthood into politics because they belong to political families. Such was the case, for example, of Micheletti, Barletta, Calderón, Cerezo, Bucaram, Calderón Sol, and Frei. The last two, in fact, were sons of presidents.

“When I was four years old I carried cans of paint and painted the last name of my father and my uncles on the walls,” reminded Bucaram, proud of belonging to a prominent political family. Frei recognized that the omnipresence of his father, president in 1964-1970, was key for his engagement in politics. “I was three years old when my father was minister, seven when I

accompanied him in his first legislative campaign, fourteen in his first presidential adventure. I lived in the home of a great president, a great statesman, a great intellectual and that was a school for me, that you do not get anywhere else,” he said.

M.A. Rodríguez’s grandmother introduced him to politics when he was a child, making him decide to be president at the age of 12. Rodríguez said he organized his entire life to become head of government: he studied law and economics to have the knowledge of a statesman, and worked as an entrepreneur to gain the economic independence needed to fund his political ambitions. Calderón, who as Frei is the son of a president, also engaged in politics before adulthood: “I affiliated to the party (Social Christian Unity Party) when I was 15 and started making a career.” Arias, exaggerating his early involvement in politics said in his campaign that he wanted to be president “since I was in the womb of my mom.”

A point in which former presidents disagreed was in whether they improved their management of the presidency with each additional year in office. While some interviewees considered that they gained practical knowledge as time went by, others said that they knew before reaching the presidency what they wanted to do, what they could do, and how to do it.

Callejas, Pacheco, Calderón Sol, and Frei stated that they felt more confident in their position as time went by. “You learn from the mistakes that you made, and assess your previous decisions,” said Callejas. “You improve the management of topics and the knowledge of the country and the people,” claimed Frei. “You modulate your character and you learn. You grow even intellectually because you have to study, do research,” said Calderón Sol.

On the other side, leaders such as Pérez Balladares and Arias stated that their knowledge of managing the office did not improve with time. “There was no learning experience,” said

Arias. “I am a person of clear convictions. I have intellectual clarity. I know what I want and what is convenient for Costa Rica,” he added.

Asking presidents about their decision making processes revealed interesting facts. First, most of the interviewees emphatically agreed that making important decisions was part of their daily routine. Second, head of states frequently make important decisions for which they do not have all the information they would like to have. Third, presidents do not follow identical strategies to make a decision.

Most leaders emphasized that not making a decision could lead to highly undesired outcomes. Some former heads of state also explained that they knew they were going to be held responsible for all of their government’s outcomes, even if they were not directly responsible of many issues. Cerezo claimed that “one of the fundamental problems of many Latin American governments is that presidents do not decide, or do it late or unclearly. This leads to overwhelming pressures.” Lagos stated that being prudent when deciding is wise, but that presidents need to make decisions even when they have little information. “If I have to make the decision within 24 hours because the world may fall, I may try to ask for some advice. But if it is not possible, well, hell, presidents exist to make decisions all day. You try to get as much information as you can, of course, but sometimes the cost that you pay for not making a decision is enormous.”

Precisely, while the act of deciding is a pressing need for presidents, many interviewees said that heads of state often have to make decisions with limited information available. M.A. Rodríguez was categorical about it: “Every day I had to make decisions with an information deficit.” Pérez Balladares said that although “more time allows you to get better information... There comes a point where the time has passed and you have to make the decision

with the information you have.” Only Zelaya said he did not make decisions if he could not rely on the information he had. However, Zelaya’s statement should be taken with a grain of salt given that, as Callejas said, “When there is not much information available, usually the president is the most informed.”

To minimize the possibility of making wrong decisions, all interviewees recognized that they routinely relied upon advisors who could provide them further information and alternative points of view based on their expertise. “Nobody can govern a country alone....You need people to orient you,” said Roberto Micheletti, interim President of Honduras between 2009 and 2010. On the same vein, Arnoldo Alemán, President of Nicaragua between 1997 and 2002, claimed: “Only dictators think that they are omnipotent and omnipresent. All democratic governments rely on a net of social, economic and interdisciplinary advisors.”

Despite the universal presidential trend of relying on advisors to make decisions, presidents differed on how much importance they grant to alternative points of view, how much information they used to gather before making a decision, and how important were their own beliefs as a base to make decisions. In broad terms, the interviewees could be classified in two groups. In one group, presidents said that they strongly tried to study alternative points of view and that they relied heavily on their group of advisors. On the second, smaller group, presidents said that they did not search for much counseling support because they did not doubt much what they wanted to do.

In the first group, for example, is Frei: “I gave all my trust to ministers, regional governments, intendants, and relied heavily on an internal audit group that worked permanently at the level of the presidency.” Similarly, Calderón said that “I always listened to many people. One of the things that you learn is not to rush your decisions, to meditate them. Patience, patience. I

permanently relied on advisors.” Saca said that he “consulted advisors even when I was almost sure about the decision I was going to make”.

A minority of the presidents interviewed fell in the second category. Calderón Sol, for instance, had a negative view of the presidents who rely too much on advisors: “The tragedy of the presidencies in Latin America has been the new emerging political class that, relying on political scientists and polling firms, is all the time centered on the results of surveys and focus groups. Some presidents have stopped governing for their vision, for their people, and do it for the survey.” Arias stressed that he “never stopped making decisions and I did not care if they were popular or not. I signed a free trade agreement with China and never asked Costa Ricans if they agreed. I did not rely much on advisors because before winning the elections I knew what I wanted to do.” Somewhat less categorically, Bucaram stated that despite having economic and juridical advisors “I basically made decisions based on my political beliefs.” Monge stated that “I had a political instinct and sometimes my advisors were not taking into account some factors that I was considering.”

Asking presidents about their decision-making style gave many clues about an important question: how presidents deal with the context in which they govern. As described earlier, the second group of questions in the interviews conducted inquired of the leaders about how they deal with the institutional, economic, political and social constraints that they face.

3.2.2 The Context

The interviewees cited a number of different actors with whom they had to deal with to govern, such as the general public, the press, interest groups, international actors (mainly the American government) and the military. Some of the constraints that presidents face to their office were

region and country-specific. For example, several Central American presidents interviewed mentioned the United States as a central constraint to their performance. Specifically, Zelaya, Micheletti, Cerezo, Pacheco and Callejas complained about the US involvement in their countries.

All former Costa Rican presidents interviewed complained about the legal framework and the proliferation of state agencies that oversee the government that strongly limit their ability to legislate and implement public policies. “The president is tied hand and foot by an incredible legal maze for decision making compared to the Costa Rica of 30 years ago,” complained Pacheco. “Here we create laws and laws and laws to control. And then a bureau to control the government, and another bureau that controls the bureau that controls the government”, he added.

Also revealing was that the security forces were mentioned as a relevant constraint by those leaders who led a transition government or ruled during an authoritarian context. Parts of the Guatemalan military attempted two coups against Cerezo, the first democratically elected president of Guatemala after the military regime of Óscar Mejía. Similarly, the first democratically elected Chilean president after the Pinochet regime, Patricio Aylwin, governed during two military exercises whose goal was to show strength against a corruption investigation on the assets of one of the sons of the dictator.

Naturally, the military were a stronger constraint for presidents who governed in authoritarian contexts. Barletta was forced to resign the presidency of Panama because he wanted to investigate the crime of a journalist in which the military might have been involved. Similarly, Francisco Rodríguez, President of Panama in 1989, said that the US invaded Panama in 1989 when he was about to quit because the military did not want to follow his decision to call for

general elections. Both Barletta and Rodríguez are generally considered puppets of strongman General Manuel Noriega.

While the American government, the legal framework and the military worked as constraints to the president's office obeying to the political realities of certain countries, other constraints were more universal. The interviewees complained about interest groups, the press, and, especially, Congress.

Zelaya criticized the influence of interest groups in Honduras: "I felt that where I touched interests, there were reactions." Similarly, Cerezo stated that "there are the facto groups who have enough power to control the president, such as economic groups." Pacheco said that in Costa Rica there are many interest groups such as professional alliances, entrepreneurs, and unions that "make themselves feel, as they can, everywhere." Efraín Ríos Montt, dictator of Guatemala between 1982 and 1983, even said that Guatemalan politics are dominated by eight families. He said that these families have so much influence, that they are a parallel governing structure.

The press was one of the most mentioned forces that constrain presidential behavior. Pérez Balladares said that he felt that the newspaper "La Prensa" had an animosity against him "and everything what my party represents." Saca, himself a journalist, stated that he did not receive "truce from the media because I was a colleague of them." M.A. Rodríguez protested that the Costa Rican press has an "informal control" of the government, while Pacheco said that when he governed he was "grabbed from the hair with the right-wing press."

Congress was also one of the most mentioned sources of presidential constraints. The leaders interviewed mentioned the importance of counting with a majority in Congress or to make all the necessary efforts to build one. Former presidents ratified some of the problems that

have been identified by researchers: that minority leaders have little influence over parties and face executive-legislative deadlock, which impedes them from advancing many of their campaign promises or preferred public policies (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Negretto 2006).

The interviewees who enjoyed a majority in Congress tended to praise their relation with the legislature. Calderón, for instance, said that he “had an extraordinary relation with Congress,” which allowed him “to approve everything I needed.” On the other end, Pacheco, who only counted on the support of six legislators during his term, complained that his range of action was very constrained: “If an ox leans, the other cannot pull the cart.” Lagos also said that having a minority in the Senate “greatly complicated my situation because one is elected with a program and has a mandate to run it, and in this case it was not possible.” Calderón Sol said that being a minority president forced him to make significant efforts to build a legislative consensus: “You have to talk, be much more flexible...I talked to all party bosses, invited them for breakfast or coffee.” Alemán said that “what I suffered the most when I was president was to constantly be in breakfasts, lunches and dinners negotiating with legislators” because he did not enjoy a majority in Congress.

The interviewees also corroborated the literature that has shown that most leaders of the region organize their cabinets on the basis of party coalitions to avoid being a minority president (Amorim Neto 2006; Martínez-Gallardo 2010). “If you give a ministry (to a party), you get 10 deputies,” summarized Bucaram.

The interviews revealed that practices such as exchanging cabinet positions for legislative support heavily rely on the negotiating ability of presidents. Several leaders said that the executive-legislative relations are strongly conditioned on how they design a strategy to cope with Congress. Barletta said that to build a legislative majority the “personality” of the president

is very important. He said that he made remarkable efforts “to persuade the opposition” to collaborate with him telling them that “strategically we agreed in wanting democracy, having the military in their barracks, and making economic reforms.” Barletta suggested that presidents who exhibited good negotiating skills and even empathy with legislators could be more successful in gaining –and keeping– congressional support. Other presidents expressed similar sentiments. For instance, Pérez said that, to keep a majority in Congress, he held numerous meetings and conversations with legislators. Aylwin, who did not enjoy a majority in the Senate, said that he managed to get several reforms approved as a result of “intense negotiations” that were “fruitful” allowing him to gain “the good will or the mental clarity of some right-wing (opposition) characters.” Similarly, some scholars have proposed that Lagos was able to achieve significant changes due to his ability to negotiate with the opposition (e.g., Siavelis and Sehnbruch 2014).

3.2.3 The Constitution

The third group of questions asked heads of government about the importance of the constitution for them, if the charter was enforced in their countries, and the types of presidential powers that were most useful to them. The leaders also discussed their potential motivations to change the constitution, revealing that most of them had a complex and close relation to the document. Some of the interviewees tried to change the charter to consolidate their power, some of them recognized thinking about it, and still a third group recognized that they would have changed other aspects of the constitution. Only a small minority of interviewees said they felt the constitution did not need any changes. The interviews clearly revealed that presidents have a highly dynamic relation with the charter, and that they consider constitutions as tangible documents that can be transformed without major tribulations.

All the interviewees recognized that the constitution was highly important to them. “It is fundamental. It is the framework within which the president can perform its powers and prerogatives. It allows him (the president) to act in some areas and not in others. Consequently, it is the basic element of the president’s performance,” said Lagos. The Chilean former president mentioned a point that was reiterative among the interviewees: the constraints that constitutions establish to their actions. Some presidents even described the charter as “the” main constraint to their office. “The democratic power is a limited power. Limited by the constitution, limited by law, limited by the opposition parties in a pluralistic system, limited by the media. And it has to be (like that). And possibly the main constraint is to exercise the mandate respecting the constitution and laws of the republic,” said Arias. Cerezo expressed in a similar way: “Sometimes the constitution becomes a limitation for the president, but that is the democratic system. For instance, I had a very active international policy, but at that time the constitution forced me to get permission from Congress to travel. It was an important limitation because in the early years I traveled a lot.”

Some presidents remarked the need of advisors to understand the direct and indirect rules and implications contained in the charter. Callejas said that, although he knew the constitution well, to have a better understanding of it he relied on lawyers: “The lawyers have to go conditioning the decisions of the Executive, or (analyze) those of Congress to analyze the position of the executive.” In a similar manner, Pacheco (2011) said that “the constitution defines our range of action one hundred percent...Given that I am not well versed in law, I had excellent advisors, who always advised me very well and always with the utmost respect for the law and, of course, for the constitution.”

All interviewees –except Bucaram– agreed that the constitution in their countries was at least generally enforced. Bucaram argued –correctly– that the charter was not respected when he was removed from office after Congress declared him mentally unfit. He also cited the numerous unfinished presidential terms of his successors in office as a proof of the little respect to constitutional procedures in his country: “I believe that no other country in the world has had 11 presidents in 10 years. Ecuador's Constitution is not respected.”

Other presidents described more grey areas. F. Rodríguez for instance, stated that the Panamanian constitution has been generally enforced since the democratization of the country in 1990, but added that such respect “has been crumbling”. He stated that “the control of public funds, and the rules for bidding, hiring, project execution, and supervision that should be done by the assembly and the Comptroller general have been lost to the executive.”

Probably the most coincidental position is that presidents consider the charter as a highly malleable document, subject to formal change or informal adaptation as a relatively ordinary procedure. The interviews revealed that presidents consider changing the constitution as part of a broader set of actions to which they can legitimately resort to implement policy changes. “If you know how to use the correct procedures, you can accomplish things. For example, I did land expropriations, even though the constitution puts many limits on this type of action. But if you know how to do them, it’s achievable. Do you understand me? It is a matter of skill,” said Cerezo.

Some interviewees revealed that they suspected the incumbent had intentions of reforming the constitution to consolidate their power. F. Rodríguez accused the then-incumbent Ricardo Martinelli of moving toward changing the charter to achieve reelection: “He has not sent a bill (to Congress yet), but he has his ways of doing things.” Barletta also expressed his

concerns of Martinelli: “There are lots of accusations that the current President is not observing the constitution in some things.” Martinelli ended his term in 2014 without making any public attempt of reforming the constitution, but the fact that two of his predecessors suspected him suggests that constitutional reforms that consolidate the power of the chief executive are in the range of relatively normal practices. In this manner, Barletta remarked on the permanent friction that takes place between what the charter says and how politicians try to accommodate it. He gave as an example the presidential nominations to the judicial system: “Presidents always try to influence the judiciary through appointments. There has never been enough independence among the three state powers.”

When presidents were read a list of presidential powers and asked which ones were their preferred ones, they leaned toward their legislative powers. Some politicians especially emphasized the importance of controlling the purse. “Among all the powers of the Executive in Panama, the fundamental one is the formulation of the national budget,” said Pérez Balladares. Lagos agreed: “The president’s economic prerogatives are very important. One uses them to the fullest, with complete consciousness.” M.A. Rodríguez stated that another precious prerogative is the exclusive initiative on certain legislation: “This helps you very much, because they (legislators) may not approve the bills, but at least you can force them to discuss them.”

Among non-legislative powers, some presidents explained their interest in extending their appointment prerogatives. For instance, Calderón Sol said that he “would have liked to have more presidential powers” to have a larger influence on the appointment of Supreme Court justices and the Attorney General. Callejas stated that the main constitutional reform that Honduras needed also was to change the appointment process of Supreme Court justices. “That is the most complex topic of the country,” he said.

An important discussion about the relation between chief executives and the constitution was about their motivations to change the charter to consolidate their power. Presidents who did not change the constitution were asked whether they would have liked to do it and, if so, which part of the document. The leaders who changed the constitution to consolidate their power were also asked why they did it, and if the reforms truly represented their preferences or they would have preferred to do something else.

The answers revealed interesting patterns. Very few presidents claimed that they would not have changed the constitution based on ethical grounds. For instance, Saca said that he “received calls from many followers who wanted me to lead a constitutional reform so I could be reelected. But I always left it clear that nobody can stay in power after his term.”

Interestingly, along with references to ethical principles, most interviewees provided less politically correct answers. Some presidents who said that they did not seriously think about changing the constitution justified their position on the context in which they governed. Barletta said he did not want to change the charter because it was satisfactorily changed two years before: “My administration was not the time to change the constitution.” Cerezo recalled that during his term “we needed to recover the trust of the people in the rule of law, in the democratic system. Had I begun the process to reform the constitution to reelect me or for anything else, then those goals would not have been achieved.” Nonetheless, Cerezo said that he was in favor of reforming the charter, including the provision that disallowed the president to be reelected. Similarly, Monge said that despite his opinion that the constitution deserved a “total reform,” he preferred not to change it because he was not sure that the correct people would lead the reforms.

Some presidents that did not reform the constitution said that they would have changed it in more promising circumstances. The changes that these leaders described were not necessarily

to consolidate the power of the head of state, but they indicate how frequently chief executives think the charter should be transformed. Aylwin, for example, recognized that he “would have liked” to replace the 1980 constitution. “But I had no ability to replace it. An essential virtue in a politician, especially when assuming functions of government, is to be realistic and I think that we did not only what we needed, but also what we could. We did not have the strength to call for a new constitution,” he said, alluding to the complex transition from military rule that he led. Enrique Bolaños, President of Nicaragua between 2002 and 2007, wanted to change several aspects of the Nicaraguan constitution, including reducing the number of legislators and Supreme Court Justices. However, he failed to pass most of the reforms because he did not have enough support in Congress: “I never had the votes.” Similarly, Pacheco said that he “would have loved to change the constitution,” but that it was impossible for him to do it because he lacked support in the legislature. “I would have changed many things, including how Congress works...I did not try it because how can I change anything with the support of only six deputies.” Pacheco added that changing the constitution was the desire of several Costa Rican presidents in recent years.

Other former heads of state interviewed failed to reform the constitution as they pleased even though their attempts at reform were not specifically directed at consolidating their power. Frei said that he led “multiple attempts to reform the charter” during his term, but failed to gather enough congressional approval. “The reforms included a change to the binomial (electoral system), giving more importance to the regions, and a higher equilibria between the executive and the legislature,” he said. In contrast, his successor was able to lead a broad constitutional reform in 2005. Although Lagos described the reform as “significant,” he said he would have

changed several other things, such as the electoral system to elect Congress and the presidential term.²⁷

Four of the former presidents interviewed tried to change the charter to consolidate their power. Pérez Balladares, M.A. Rodríguez, Zelaya, and Arias tried to be allowed to be reelected. The only one who succeeded was Arias, but after trying for a long time and when he was not the head of government.

Perhaps the most revealing answers provided by these leaders were how they explained their attempts. Pérez, Rodríguez and Arias described the reforms they wanted to have approved as impersonal changes to the political system. Zelaya went further, denying any interest in trying to consolidate his power.

Arias' attempts were commented on by other Costa Rican former presidents. Arias, who had been president in 1986-90 and wanted to return to office, initially sought support for a constitutional reform during the presidency of M.A. Rodríguez (1998-2002).²⁸ A leading figure of the National Liberation Party, Arias wanted the support of M.A. Rodríguez and his party (the Social Christian Unity Party) to approve the reforms in Congress. According to Calderón, given that Arias was ultimately unable to gather enough congressional support, he tried to do the reform through a petition to the constitutional chamber of the Supreme Court. Calderón said that, since Arias lost in his first attempt in the court, he used his influence in Congress to appoint two magistrates in the constitutional chamber, which allowed him to achieve the constitutional reform. "Arias's influence on the court was very clear," Calderón said. Monge agreed with Calderón's account. In fact, he was the most vocal critic of Arias, accusing him of being

²⁷ While the reforms shortened the term from six to four years for subsequent leaders, Lagos preferred a term of four years with immediate reelection (starting on the following term, according to him).

²⁸ Given that Arias did not try to change the constitution during his term, he is not considered as one of the presidential attempts to change the constitution in the statistical analysis conducted on Chapter 6.

“obsessed for political and economic power” and of doing “a technical coup” because the constitution states that only the legislature can lead constitutional reforms. Pacheco smiled when he was asked about the role of Arias in the constitutional interpretation that allowed him to be reelected. After mentioning his close friendship with Arias, he said that “the Arias (brothers) are very influential people. Don Óscar is a very persuasive man. Devil, devil. When something gets in his mind, he chases.”

Arias denied the accusations. His explanation was much simpler: “The vast majority of Costa Ricans wanted me to be a candidate again. Most people in my party did not want to take the risk of putting someone (else as candidate) and lose the elections for a third time because that could end the party. Therefore, they knew that with me they would win, and presented several actions of unconstitutionality with different arguments. At the end, one (of the actions) was approved by five magistrates against two.” The constitutional amendment allowed Arias to become presidential candidate, winning the contest for the 2006-2010 term. Some months before his term ended, Arias promoted the idea of convoking a constitutional assembly to replace the charter. Given that Arias was accused of planning to consolidate his power and that the idea was unpopular, Arias stopped talking about the project.²⁹

M.A. Rodríguez also justified his proposal of constitutional reform on the political context –not on his personal ambition. M.A. Rodríguez said that he wanted to implement a reform to move his country in the direction of a semi-presidential system. His goal was to overcome “the very strong weakening of the party system” with “a system that allows working more efficiently with coalitions and with a cabinet with legislative support.” Among other things, the reforms included the presidential reelection. As Arias, Rodríguez also tried to measure his

²⁹ Arias is not coded as trying to change the constitution since he never made any serious attempt to change the charter.

strength in Congress before he formally sent the bill. “There was a possibility to do the reform. In the informal chats with Congress you would get the feeling of support. Otherwise, why present the proposal?...I also thought that there was enough public support,” he said. However, the bill was still under discussion when he left the government.

Like Rodríguez, Pérez Balladares thought that he had enough congressional and popular support to change the charter to be allowed to be reelected. The former president managed to get the bill approved in Congress, but 64% of the electorate rejected the reform in a referendum held in August of 1998. The reelection was central to the reform proposed by Pérez, so he could hardly present it as a simple component of a broader reform.³⁰ However, as the other interviewees, he described the reform in impersonal terms. When interviewed, Pérez Balladares not only claimed that he would change the rule to allow immediate reelection: he said that “deeper reforms” were needed, including how the chamber of Deputies is elected and the selection and term that Supreme Court justices serve.

Zelaya directly denied that he wanted to change the charter and that the constitution is contradictory because it says that “sovereignty belongs to the people” but also that it cannot be changed. Zelaya’s inaccurate claims, as will be analyzed in detail in Chapter 7, were harshly criticized by the other two former Honduran presidents, Micheletti and Callejas.

³⁰ The other two reforms were about granting more economic independence to the electoral tribunal, and the abolition of the right of political parties to revoke legislators.

3.3 A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ATTEMPTS

The interviews revealed many insights about the relation between the presidents' individual differences and their performance in office, the constraints that affect the leaders and their relation with the constitution. The interviews showed that presidents overwhelmingly believe that their individual differences –unique life experience and personal attributes– are relevant to understand their performance. The interviewees also exposed the intimate relation between presidents and the charter, and that most of the leaders at least thought about trying to change it.

Interestingly, when asked why they did (or did not) try to change the constitution, most of the time the interviewees alluded to the political context to justify their behavior. Presidents who did not try to change the charter tended to say that they did not have enough political strength or it was not the “right moment” to do it. Similarly, the leaders who recognized trying to reform the constitution to consolidate their power provided an “impersonal” justification for their attempts.

Professional politicians have reasons to justify their behavior on the grounds of what the country needs: they would not survive as politicians if they describe their actions from a merely self-centered approach. A skeptical interpretation of the presidential explanations of the attempts suggests a different story: former heads of government were hesitant to admit that the main reason for trying (or not) to change the charter was to boost their careers by clinging to power.

In this study I propose that the main explanatory causes of the presidential attempts to consolidate their power are rooted in their psychological traits. In fact, the interviews reinforced what a historical examination of the attempts to change the constitution –conducted through case studies in Chapter 7– suggests: that only certain types of leaders try to change the constitution.

The central question is: which leaders? I propose that presidents who are more risk-takers and assertive are more likely to try to change the constitution to consolidate their power. Each of these traits deserves a separate discussion.

Risk taking is an important form of human behavior that in contemporary psychology has been the subject of numerous investigations and policy debates (Byrnes 2013; Slovic, Lichtenstein, and Fischhoff 1988). Scholars have argued that risk taking should be studied because of its relevance to the adaptiveness of human behavior (Byrnes 2013), the rationality of human thought (Baron 1994), and the importance of genes versus the environment in determining the phenotypic expression of traits (Wilson and Daly 1985; Zuckerman 1991). The literature that studies risk taking can be divided in three general approaches (Lopes 1987). In the first, theories explain differences between people who take risks and those who avoid them (e.g., Zuckerman 1991). In the second, works explain differences between situations that promote risk taking and those that encourage risk aversion (e.g., Kahneman and Tversky 1979). In the third, studies integrate the other two categories to explain why only certain people take risks in certain situations (e.g., Byrnes 2013; Irwin and Millstein 1991; Wigfield and Eccles 1992).³¹

Researchers tend to differ in the ultimate function for risk taking. However, most agree that goals and values condition the kinds of outcomes that are pursued by an individual and the kinds of options that are considered (Byrnes 2013; Lopes 1987). A goal directed option is considered as an example of risk taking when a behavior can lead to both desirable and undesirable outcomes (Furby and Beyth-Marom 1992). In fact, the standard definition of risk taking entails a decision that can lead to negative consequences, which includes a wide range of behaviors.

³¹ According to prospect theory, for example, people is more risk averse when they perceive themselves to be in the domain of gain, and risk seeking in the domain of loss (Kahneman and Tversky 1979).

I claim that the presidents' individual level of risk propensity influences their decision to attempt constitutional changes to improve their career prospects. While presidents who did not try to change the constitution despite their desires justified their inaction on the circumstances they faced, such explanation is not fully compelling. Presidents who did try to change the constitution did it many times facing adverse circumstances –so adverse, that heads of state such as Zelaya and Serrano ended up defenestrated. Undoubtedly, all presidents who tried to change the constitution run important risks. This is true even when leaders faced promising circumstances. Presidents cannot fully anticipate the consequences of the attempts to change the constitution because there are many things at stake that they do not control, such as the interests of other state powers and the reaction of the political class, voters and the press.

Presidents who tried to change the constitution did so because consolidating their power could give them an incredible advantage to advance their goals. While all presidents leave a mark on their countries, a self-serving constitutional reform may make a difference between being a footnote in the country's history –exercising as the most powerful politician for some years– and leaving a transcendental legacy to subsequent generations.

In sum, different levels of individual risk propensity shall explain why some presidents have attempted constitutional changes in risky circumstances, while others have not attempted to do so even when it seems that they had to face little risks to advance them.

The hypothesis that presidents who are more assertive are more likely to try to change the constitution is based both on the history of presidential attempts and the information revealed during the interviews. I propose “assertiveness” because, as I show in chapter 4, it is a concept measured through a scale that captures the main characteristics that presidents who attempt to consolidate their power seem to have. Therefore, I consider that, more important than the

concept itself, it is what it measures. Such approach avoids centering the discussion on the definition of the concept of assertiveness, a source of disagreement even among experts.

The traits that presidents who try to change the constitution have refer to politicians who are willing to make a significant effort to consolidate their power and trust in their ability to achieve their goals. Such politicians should be leaders who are highly motivated to succeed, are particularly good in leading others, and should feel comfortable controlling things.

The interviews revealed the importance of these characteristics. Two of the leaders interviewed who tried to adapt the charter to their preferences, M.A. Rodríguez (2011) and Arias (2011), recognized that they were motivated to reach the presidency well before becoming adults.

On the same line, when asked about the importance of being “strong leaders,” the interviewees provided mainly two types of answers. While some former presidents highlighted the importance of being careful in not affecting the relations with Congress –like Saca, Calderón, Barletta and Cerezo–, others –such as Callejas, Pacheco and Arias– were more willing to exercise a tougher leadership. Such leadership included using the resources and prerogatives of the presidency to discipline legislative behavior with practices such as retaliating dissenters in Congress. Such controlling attitudes should be both a motivation and an ability of presidents who want to consolidate their power. Inevitably, presidents who put in action a plan to reform the constitution need to have the skills of persuading whoever needs to be persuaded to succeed in implementing their projects of reform.

Finally, there is an emotional component that should motivate presidents to consolidate their power: certain pleasure in concentrating the decision-making in their hands. Such traits appeared in some interviewees. Remember, for instance, the words of Arias, asking Costa Ricans

to *believe* that he knew that a Free Trade Agreement with the US was better for the country, and proudly reminding that he “never asked Costa Ricans” their opinion for signing the FTA with China. Such disposition can be contrasted with Saca’s claim that he “consulted advisors even when I was almost sure about the decision I was going to make.”

Chapter 4 presents how assertiveness is measured in this study. I use a scale taken from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006), built based on the measure of dominance by the California Personality Inventory (CPI).³²

Among other things, the CPI dominance scale was created “to assess prosocial interpersonal dominance, strength of will, and perseverance in pursuit of goals” (Gough & Bradley, 2005, p.6). Accordingly, individuals who score low on this trait tend to be passive and nonassertive, while those who score high are self-assured, able to influence others, and tend to become leaders. In fact, the main objective of the scale is to measure variables related with the ability to exercise leadership. Accordingly, research has shown that the scale is predictive of high performance in managerial and executive positions (e.g., Viswesvaran, Chockalingam, and Ones 2000). I make no claims about the relation between assertiveness and overall presidential performance. However, being highly motivated for success, the ability of persuading and leading others, and having a strong inclination to control situations should be strongly associated to presidents who follow the necessary steps to consolidate their power.

³² Naturally, both measures are highly correlated (.76 and even .92 when corrected for attenuation due to unreliability). A correlation table of the scales is available at <http://ipip.ori.org/newCPITable.htm>.

3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has proposed that presidents who are more risk prone and assertive are more likely to try to change the constitution to increase their powers or relax their term limits. To reach such proposition, I followed two steps. First, I showed that presidents of the Western Hemisphere have been very active in trying to change the constitution to consolidate their power. Such pattern of presidential behavior has been frequent across time, countries, regimes and political contexts, but preceding research has failed to notice the prominent role of leaders in the constitutional changes. Second, in an effort to understand presidential behavior, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 former Latin American presidents. Such exercise opened a window to understand how presidents assess the relevance of their individual differences to govern, how the context in which they rule constraint them and their intimate relation with the constitution.

The historical review of presidential behavior and the interviews conducted supported an explanation of the presidential attempts rooted on the psychological traits of the heads of government, as proposed in 3.3. While a review of the historical cases suggests that presidents run important risks when they try to reform the charter to consolidate their power, the interviews showed that heads of state take risks on a continuous basis and that presidents have a dissimilar relation toward risk. Some interviewees described themselves as being much more risk takers than others. The presidents' varying relation toward risk strongly challenges the broadly held assumption in quantitative presidential studies that the uniqueness of the leaders is irrelevant to understand their behavior.

Similarly, a historical review suggests that leaders who attempt to change the constitution to consolidate their power fit into the profile of a politician with an intensive drive for success,

an inclination to control things, and an ability to lead others. As discussed, one scale from IPIP has grouped such characteristics under the concept of *assertiveness*. The interviews were very useful in revealing that presidents have varying degrees in their drive for power, concentrating decisions in their hands, and also in the paths that they follow to lead and persuade others. Such differences, I proposed, should help us understand why some presidents try to reform the constitution to consolidate their power and others do not.

The theoretical proposition of this study has the potential of making relevant contributions to the literature. First, it should advance the frontier of studies on the presidency by revealing how the uniqueness of heads of government shape their behavior and explain relevant political outcomes. Second, it provides a deeper understanding of institutional change. Current explanations of this foundational question in the social sciences remain incomplete because they have neglected the role of powerful individuals. Third, this work contributes to building bridges between different literatures. It connects the institutional research in political science and the literature in psychology that examines personality traits, and it also helps to integrate quantitative and qualitative studies on the presidency. As shown in Chapter 2, the scholars who in the late seventies started to promote a shift toward a quantitative study of the presidency thought that, to succeed in the endeavor, they needed to disregard presidents as units of analysis –a common practice in qualitative studies. This study is a step forward in reconciling such artificial division between qualitative and quantitative students of the presidency, showing that presidents can be considered as units on analysis in quantitative research.

From a normative democratic approach, this study proposes to make a significant progress in the relation between represented and representatives. While companies usually know how certain individual differences of their employees can be associated to their performance,

voters do not count with analogous information. I contend that voters and parties should be informed about how the personality traits and background of political candidates can be related to their performance once in office. Such an exponential increase in the information available about the politicians should lead voters and parties to make a better selection of officeholders. Presently, voters usually have very superficial information about the candidates they may vote for. This study helps to cover this democratic deficit.

This study also resonates theoretically with earlier comparative works that underscore that attitudes toward democracy (Dahl 1971: 124–88; Levine 1973; Lijphart 1977; Linz 1978), leadership (Linz 1978; Stepan 1978) and the strategic behavior of political leaders (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991) are critical factors in understanding political stability.

The next chapter discusses the different methodologies that have been used to measure personalities at a distance. After assessing the pros and cons of the alternatives, I present the expert survey that I conducted among specialists in presidents to capture numerous individual differences of the heads of state, including their risk taking and assertiveness.

4.0 HOW TO STUDY THE PERSONALITY OF THE PRESIDENTS?

The vast majority of studies conducted in personality research uses undergraduate students as participants. However, on certain opportunities psychologists have studied the individual differences of exceptional individuals, such as American presidents (e.g., Simonton 1988; Winter 1987), creators (e.g., Cassandro 1998), literary figures (e.g., Porter and Suedfeld 1981), and military leaders (Suedfeld et al. 1986). According to Song and Simonton (2007), the study of exceptional leaders serves two purposes in personality psychology. One is to demonstrate that the findings derived from traditional samples are generalizable to prominent individuals. Second, studying exceptional individuals can reveal the differences between ordinary people and those who are in the upper tail of the distribution in some specific human traits.

Most of the times, exceptional subjects are unwilling or unable to participate in studies of psychological inquiry. While historical figures have passed away, contemporary prominent individuals are unlikely to expose their traits to researchers. To overcome these difficulties, psychologists have created different methods to study them at a distance.

This chapter discusses the different methodologies that have been used to measure personalities at a distance and present the expert survey that I conducted among expert in presidents. In the following section I introduce the methods that psychologists have used to measure personality traits of exceptional individuals. In a third section I discuss why I chose to conduct an expert survey to measure the individual differences of presidents of the Western

Hemisphere. In a fourth segment I describe the use of this instrument in political science. The chapter ends with a description of the survey that I conducted, including its design and the experts that participated in the study.

4.1 DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Personality psychologists have used qualitative and quantitative methods to study subjects at a distance. Qualitative researchers have conducted work under the frame of “psychobiography,” which is a subset of “psychohistory.” In psychohistory, researchers use the theories and concepts of psychotherapy to analyze historical data. The goal is to understand the emotional base of social and political events of groups and countries. Therefore, it can be used to study from protests to revolutions and wars.³³

While psychohistory concentrates on historical events, psychobiography studies the life of historically conspicuous individuals. Psychobiographers tend to focus on specific events on the life of their subjects of study to have a deeper understanding of the motives behind some of the subjects’ actions and decisions. Psychoanalysis is also dominant in this domain of qualitative studies, being the first (and most famous) psychobiography a study of Leonardo Da Vinci conducted by Sigmund Freud (1910). However, most of the most popular subjects of these studies have been politicians, from Adolf Hitler (Waite 1977) to Saddam Hussein (Post 2005).

Psychobiographies are useful in a number of ways. First, they provide a deeper understanding of exceptional individuals emphasizing aspects that other researchers have

³³ A prominent researcher is Lloyd deMause, founder of The Institute for Psychohistory (www.psychohistory.com), who has studied from “The history of childhood” (1974) to “The Emotional Life on Nations” (2002).

overlooked, such as the leaders childhood or familiar relationships. As Flett (2007) claims, psychobiographies also emphasize the importance of the situations the individuals live, provides a mean to test alternative theoretical frameworks and identifies areas for further empirical testing.

Notwithstanding, psychobiographies have some relevant limitations. The most notorious one is that they are essentially subjective analyses, and therefore are affected by the authors' biases and limitations. Flett (2007) states that authors of psychobiographies may tend to attribute too much causality to the individuals, seek for evidence in support of their beliefs, and be subject of the biases of their own culture and gender. He adds that researchers may tend to focus on only one period of a person's life (especially childhood), only on few events, or even over-pathologize (i.e., center too much on negative traits). Arguably, biographers tend to write about individuals that they admire or deplore, which affects the lens that they use to assess their subjects. The admiration that Freud had of Da Vinci tends to be considered one of the main sources of bias in the book of the famous Austrian psychologist.

In sum, the main problem with psychohistory and psychobiography is that they are highly subjective (Elms, 1994). While a psychobiography can be a product of high intellectual quality and make a significant contribution to understand an individual through well-built descriptions and reasoned interpretations, it does not attain a minimum standard of falsifiability.

To overcome the biases of qualitative studies, personality researchers have used three types of quantitative approaches: content analysis, historiometry, and expert surveys (Song and Simonton 2007). These studies have in common the use of statistical techniques to test arguments in an attempt to remove the subjectivity of qualitative interpretations. Quantitative at-a-distance methodology encompasses a diverse array of techniques that can be subjected to the

same analytical tools used in more traditional personality research, such as factor analysis (e.g., Simonton 1986), cluster analysis (e.g., Simonton 1988), multiple regression analysis (e.g., Cassandro 1998), and structural equation models (e.g., Nicholson et al. 2005).

Content analysis is the analysis of different types of texts (e.g., writing, images, and recordings) related to psychological constructs. Among other things, researchers have studied speeches (Winter and Carlson 1988), letters (Suedfeld, Corteen, and McCormick 1986), diaries and writing assignments (Pennebaker and King 1999). For instance, Winter and Carlson (1988) did a content analysis of Richard Nixon's 1969 first inaugural address to measure psychological concepts related to the presidents' motivations. These traits are achievement motives (concern for excellence and unique accomplishment), affiliation-intimacy motives (a concern for close relations with others), and power motives (a concern for impact and prestige). They found that Nixon's motivation was high in achievement and affiliation-intimacy, and only average in power. Their results were validated through the analysis of the course of Nixon's everyday behavior, based on the memoirs of six assistants of the American president.

Historiometry consists of the testing of psychological hypotheses of individuals using quantitative methods on historical data. Galton (1869) popularized historiometric studies with his famous book "Hereditary Genius," considered the first social scientific attempt to study geniuses and greatness. There have also been studies centered on American presidents. Simonton (1986) collected biographical information for all the American presidents, removed the identity of the leaders, and asked independent raters to evaluate the heads of state using the Gough Adjective Check List. Conducting a factor analysis, the author created a personality profile for each leader based on 14 traits, which then was subjected to hierarchical cluster analysis to group presidents

according to their personalities. This allowed, among other things, to assess whether presidents who were in the same category exhibited similar leadership styles.

The last group of quantitative studies use expert surveys. This procedure allows to gather information and data from qualified individuals to measure psychological constructs. Expert judgments overcome the biased interpretations of any single biographer by evaluating presidents' traits through the specialized knowledge of multiple raters.

Expert surveys are used in different areas, from health issues to investment decisions to military conflict. According to Meyer and Booker (1991), researchers gather expert judgment to (1) provide estimates on new, rare, complex, or poorly understood phenomena; (2) forecast future events; (3) interpret or integrate existing data; (4) learn the processes through which experts solve problems or groups make decisions, and (5) capture the present knowledge of a field and what is worth learning in that field.

Expert surveys are the most popular technique among those who attempt to assess American presidents. The first prominent study of American presidents was conducted by historian Arthur Schlesinger in 1948, when he sent surveys to 55 experts to rank American presidents according to their greatness. Since then, several experts have followed him. Even his son repeated the survey using 32 experts on presidents (Schlesinger Jr. 1997). Murray and Blessing (1983) had 846 experts evaluate presidential greatness, while Maranell (1970) had 571 American historians assessing presidents on idealism, flexibility, activeness, strength, prestige, and accomplishment. Ridings and McIver (1997) polled 719 historians and political scientists to rank presidents according to their influence and importance in American history. More recently, Rubenzer, Faschingbauer and Ones (2000) and Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004) conducted the most comprehensive research of presidential personality.

Rubenzer and Faschingbauer (2004) asked experts to evaluate American presidents on the Big-Five personality traits, building on Costa and McCrae's (1992) NEO Personality Inventory. The authors received responses from 117 out of an initial list of 1,200 experts, who filled out a questionnaire containing 620 individual items for a specific head of state. The authors used these scores to predict presidential greatness, based on the measures of Murray and Blessing (1983).

Besides scholarly publications, the media has also used expert surveys to analyze American presidents. Recent releases includes the C-SPAN Survey of Presidential Leadership (2000), the Federalist Society-Wall Street Journal Survey on Presidents (Taranto and Leo 2004), and the Zogby International Presidential Greatness Poll (2002).

In this study I conduct an expert survey to measure the personalities of presidents at a distance because this measurement procedure has advantages compared to content analysis and historiometric studies. The next section discusses the pros and cons of conducting the survey.

4.2 WHY AN EXPERT SURVEY?

There are at least five reasons for choosing an expert survey instead of conducting a content analysis or a historiometric study to measure the individual differences of the presidents in the sample. First, expert surveys are likely to produce more valid measurements than the alternatives.³⁴ Expert surveys can attain a higher degree of accuracy in measuring personality traits, given that they are based on the evaluation of multiple qualified raters. The biases that

³⁴ Validity is the most important measurement feature, because the result of any test is only valid if concepts are properly measured.

each rater may introduce to the scores should cancel out as more experts participate. Moreover, the knowledge of experts should yield much more information than techniques that rely on a limited sample of texts or records. This allows raters to avoid making judgments on selective or partial information.

In contrast, the use of content analysis can become problematic. First, the documents under analysis may not be authentic. Moreover, important problems can emerge even if there are no authenticity problems and researchers can access the original letters, speeches, and other texts of presidents. For instance, presidents do not necessarily write their speeches. Therefore, speeches may represent the traits of a ghost writer. Personal letters may also be unrepresentative of the authors' traits, because they can be insincere in their writing (e.g., the text might reflect what the author thinks the recipient wants to read). Finally, the content available to be analyzed can be unrepresentative of the true traits of an author, because records tend to be produced in atypical circumstances. For instance, the oral reports that presidents give to Congress are not representative of how leaders usually express themselves.

Historiometric studies may lead to a more accurate measurement than content analyses. If the analysis is based on reputed biographies, for example, there should be little concern with insincere texts, and who is the author of the texts becomes less relevant. However, as with the analysis of material written by presidents, the selection of the texts may be unrepresentative of the true personality of a leader.

Second, it is more feasible to attain higher levels of reliability with an expert survey. Measuring personality traits based on texts leads to results that are a function of the material that is analyzed. If the documents under analysis –whether they are speeches, letters, interviews, pictures or biographies– are replaced by equivalent material, the results might change if the

materials analyzed are unrepresentative of the personality of the subjects under analysis. To reduce reliability problems, researchers can add more materials (e.g., more letters, records, biographies, etc.). However, this is problematic because there is a lot of variance in the quality and quantity of texts available for the presidents in the sample. Although experts can introduce biases based on their own individual differences (e.g., ideology, age, personal feeling toward the president), this bias tends to decline as the number of experts increases because the biases introduced by each additional expert cancel out the biases of the other participants.

Third, expert surveys allow to measure individual differences of more presidents. Content analysis and historiometric studies require the systematic analysis of available texts. Unfortunately, for many of the 315 presidents in the sample, the available material is minuscule. Even finding reputed biographies can be problematic for nearly a third of the sample. The extensive search of biographical information of presidents conducted for this study revealed that there are many biographies about prominent leaders, but there is little information available for many heads of state. The number of presidents that can be assessed by experts such as academics, biographers and journalists allows us to cover many more leaders than what examining published material would allow. This occurs because many individuals who have a detailed knowledge of the heads of state have not published biographies about them.

Fourth, expert surveys include the most extensive and updated information. Written or recorded material does not allow researchers to include information after their publication and inevitably register a limited amount of data. This is a particularly relevant problem when assessing presidents who are still alive (i.e., slightly less than half of the sample), about whom there is much more limited biographical information available compared to the material available for dead leaders. In contrast, expert judgments may be updated until the date in which raters

participate, and their answers to the survey should be a compendium of knowledge difficult to match by any written or recorded material. For instance, the judgment of an average expert about a president is based on all the material that the expert has gathered about a leader, including sources such as books, media outlets, opinions and even personal contact with the leaders (some frequent in the survey that I conduct). It is highly difficult to match all the information that experts have processed with available texts. As the next section shows, the advantages that expert surveys offer explain their increasing use in political science research.

4.3 EXPERT SURVEYS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Different organizations have used expert surveys to measure cross-national characteristics of democratic governance that are hard to capture through other means, such as levels of corruption, rule of law, quality of bureaucracy and media freedom. For instance, Transparency International has used expert opinions to conduct the Corruption Perception Index annually since 1995 (Lambsdorff 1999). An ambitious effort based on expert judgments started in 2010 is the Varieties of Democracy Project (2014), whose goal is to produce new indicators of democracy for all countries since 1900. More recently, The Electoral Integrity Project conducted an expert survey that covered 73 elections held in 2012 and 2013 in 66 countries to measure when elections meet international standards and principles (Norris 2014).

The topic for which expert surveys have been used the most is measuring political party policy positions and ideology, especially in Europe (Ray 1999; Benoit and Laver 2006; Huber and Inglehart 1995; König 2005; Steenbergen and Marks 2007). Different works have tested the results of these researches. For instance, Hooghe et al. (2010) examined in detail the 2002 and 2006 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), which measured national party positioning on

European integration, ideology, and several European Union (EU) and non-EU policies. The authors cross-validated the CHES results with data from the Comparative Manifesto Project, the 2003 Benoit-Laver expert survey and the 2002 Rohrschneider-Whitefield survey. The analysis demonstrated that the CHES data are a valid and reliable source of information on party positioning on European integration and ideological positioning. In a similar exercise, Steenbergen and Marks (2007) analyzed the validity of their own expert survey on national party positions toward European integration. They showed that their experts exhibited remarkable consistency in their responses, and that their placements of political parties converge with other measures.

Other studies have used expert surveys to study foreign policy decision-making and to measure the power of political leaders. Schafer and Crichlow (2002) asked 21 experts to assess 31 cases of foreign policy decision-making that had consequences mainly to the national interests of the United States and on the level of international conflict between 1975 and 1993. O' Malley (2007) gathered the judgment of experts to measure the power of 139 prime ministers in twenty-two parliamentary democracies over 22 years. His goal was to capture the leverage of the leaders over the policy output and their capacity to have their preferred policies enacted.

Most of the works cited that have used expert surveys are highly cited and have been published in leading peer-review journals. Each of the authors have relied on expert surveys to measure concepts that are key to their theories, discarding alternative measurement procedures. The survey presented in the following section will contribute to develop this corpus of research.

4.4 THE SURVEY ON PRESIDENTS

The main purpose of the survey developed for this study is to test the theory presented on Chapter 3. To design the survey, I thoroughly reviewed previous expert surveys and the literature that has measured personality traits and other individual differences at a distance.

The survey is composed of three main types of questions. In one group, the raters filled out psychometric tests that capture (1) two measures of risk propensity for presidents before and after they took office, (2) assertiveness, (3) dominance, and (4) a five-factor personality test.

In a second group, raters assessed background variables of the leaders. These items, inspired by the interviews with former heads of state presented in the previous chapter, asked about the presidents' (1) socialization into politics; (2) economic origin; (3) relation with the previous government; (4) religiosity (or lack thereof) before and during their terms; (5) religious group while in office (if applicable), (6) relation to religious fundamentalism; (7) political, economic and social ideology; and (8) decision-making style.

A third battery of items asked questions designed to take into account the potential raters' biases when filling out the survey. The intention was to capture if certain characteristics of the raters could systematically affect their assessments. Experts reported on their (a) gender; (b) age; (c) nationality; (d) city of residence; (e) educational attainment; (f) profession; (g) main activity; (h) sympathy (antipathy) toward the president; (i) approval (disapproval) of the leader's performance; (j) number of times that they met the head of state; (k) if the contact was professional, friendly, or familiar; and (l) their political, social and economic ideology.

The psychological questions address the hypotheses that presidents who are risk-prone (H1) and have an assertive personality (H2) are more likely to attempt constitutional changes. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the survey measures risk-taking based on the Risk Taking Index

(RTI) from Nicholson et al. (2005). This scale captures a general propensity toward risk asking about the individuals' relation to risk in six domains (recreational, health, career, financial, safety, and social risks), shown in table 4.1.³⁵ The scale asked raters to differentiate between the chief executive's behavior before reaching office and during their term. This distinction is necessary because heads of state have incentives to moderate or hide their risk propensity once they are in office (e.g., they stop smoking in public, driving fast, etc.). Further, conditions for risk-taking in office are influenced by unobserved factors that transcend the president's personality.

Table 4.1: Risk Propensity

10. We are interested in the president's attitude towards risk. Do any of the following descriptions apply to the president before his term in office and during his term in office?		
	Before term Yes/ No	During term Yes/No
Recreational risks (e.g. rock-climbing, scuba diving)		
Health risks (e.g. smoking, poor diet, high alcohol consumption)		
Career risks (e.g. quitting a job without another to go to)		
Financial risks (e.g. gambling, risky investments)		
Safety risks (e.g. fast driving, city cycling without a helmet)		
Social risks (e.g. publicly challenging a rule or decision)		
SOURCE: Risk Taking Index, Nicholson et al. (2005).		

Building on the scale of Nicholson et al. (2005), each answer for the six dimensions of risk propensity is given a 0 for “no” and 1 for “yes”. Having scores that represent the average assessment of the raters is conventional in expert surveys (Steenbergen and Marks, 2007). Therefore, the score of each dimension is the average score received by raters, and the score of risk taking for each president is the average score for the six dimensions.³⁶ This means that a leader scored with 0 means that all raters agree that the chief of state did not engage in any

³⁵ Three minor modifications of the RTI were introduced in the survey. First, the original scale uses a five-point scale that goes from “never” to “very often”. This five-point scale was simplified to a “yes” or “no” question to avoid assuming that raters have such a detailed knowledge of the risk propensity of presidents. Second, while the RTI asks about the present and past behavior of individuals, I asked “before term” and “during term.” Finally, the original statement that captured social risks was followed with the examples “standing for election, publicly challenging a rule or decision”. I erased the first phrase given that most leaders in the sample stood for elections.

³⁶ When a rater did not fill out the risk dimension of a president, the score of the dimension was based on the score received by the other raters.

dimension of risk behavior. A score of 1 means the opposite, a leader that was risk-prone in recreational, health, career, financial, safety, and social activities.

Raters also answered the following question, developed to check the robustness of the RTI scale: “In general, how would you describe the president’s attitude toward risk?” Raters chose between “very risk-taker” and “very risk-averse” in a five-point scale. As with the RTI scale, the score for each chief executive is based on the average score that raters assigned them.

To capture the assertiveness of the leaders, I employ a scale taken from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006).³⁷ This scale, shown in table 4.2, was selected because, as argued in Chapter 3, it captures the profile of a chief of state that is likely to make a big effort to consolidate his or her power. Through eleven statements (the last four capture assertiveness describing the opposite of this trait), the scale captures the characteristics of individuals that are highly motivated to succeed, that know how to convince and lead others, that feel comfortable taking control of things and do it promptly.

Table 4.2: Assertiveness

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following characteristics as they apply or not to the president:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) Expressed himself easily					
2) Tried to lead others					
3) Automatically took charge					
4) Knew how to convince others					
5) Was the first to act					
6) Took control of things					
7) Waited for others to lead the way					
8) Let others make the decisions					
9) Was not highly motivated to succeed					
10) Couldn’t come up with new ideas					

SOURCE: International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006).

³⁷ The IPIP scales are the source of nearly 500 academic publications (repository accessible at <http://ipip.ori.org/newPublications.htm>).

The score of assertiveness is based on the average of the answers given to the ten statements. For statements 1-6, the answers receive a score of 1 for “strongly disagree” and 5 for “strongly agree”. For questions 7-10, the scores are reversed (1 for “strongly agree” and 5 for “strongly disagree”). As with the scale that captures risk-taking, the final score for each president represents the average score given to them by the raters.³⁸

Risk taking and assertiveness are traits that the literature has associated to the five-factor model of personality, widely known as the Big-Five (Judge et al. 1999; Goldberg 1990). The Big-Five have proved to be robust and generalizable across virtually all cultures (McCrae and Costa 1997; Pulver et al. 1995; Salgado 1997) and remain stable over time (Costa and McCrae 1992a 1988). Therefore, the survey measures the Big-Five as a robustness check that each of the five components are associated with risk taking and assertiveness as mainstream literature has found. To measure personality traits, experts responded the 44-item Big-Five Inventory (BFI), created by Benet-Martínez and John (1998), presented on table 4.3.

³⁸ When there are no answers for more than two questions in the scale, the score of a president is considered invalid. However, when one or two answers were left blank, the total score represents the average of the questions answered.

Table 4.3: Big-Five Inventory

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to the president. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) Was talkative					
2) Tended to find fault with others					
3) Did a thorough job					
4) Was depressed, blue					
5) Was original, came up with new ideas					
6) Was reserved					
7) Was helpful and unselfish with others					
8) Could be somewhat careless					
9) Was relaxed, handled stress well					
10) Was curious about many different things					
11) Was full of energy					
12) Started quarrels with others					
13) Was a reliable worker					
14) Could be tense					
15) Was ingenious, a deep thinker					
16) Generated a lot of enthusiasm					
17) Had a forgiving nature					
18) Tended to be disorganized					
19) Worried a lot					
20) Had an active imagination					
21) Tended to be quiet					
22) Was generally trusting					
23) Tended to be lazy					
24) Was emotionally stable, not easily upset					
25) Was inventive					
26) Had an assertive personality					
27) Could be cold and aloof					
28) Persevered until the task was finished					
29) Could be moody					
30) Valued artistic, aesthetic experiences					
31) Was sometimes shy, inhibited					
32) Was considerate and kind to almost everyone					
33) Did things efficiently					
34) Remained calm in tense situations					
35) Preferred work that is routine					
36) Was outgoing, sociable					
37) Was sometimes rude to others					
38) Made plans and follows through with them					
39) Got nervous easily					
40) Liked to reflect, play with ideas					
41) Had few artistic interests					
42) Liked to cooperate with others					
43) Was easily distracted					
44) Was sophisticated in art, music, or literature					

SOURCE: Benet-Martínez and John (1998).

The expert survey also captures dominance, given that this trait shares some similarities with assertiveness. Dominance is also taken from the International Personality Item Pool and is presented on table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Dominance

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following characteristics as they apply or not to the president:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1) Tried to surpass others' accomplishments					
2) Tried to outdo others					
3) Was quick to correct others					
4) Imposed his will on others					
5) Demanded explanations from others					
6) Wanted to control the conversation					
7) Was not afraid of providing criticism					
8) Challenged others' points of view					
9) Laid down the law to others					
10) Put people under pressure					
11) Hated to seem pushy					

SOURCE: International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006).

4.4.1 The Search and Selection of Experts

To identify experts I led a research team that followed five strategies.³⁹ First, we searched in the database Worldcat the keyword *presidentes* (“presidents” in Spanish and Portuguese) and reviewed the 6,541 book titles to identify biographers that could fill out the survey. This review led to the identification of 495 authors. A new search in Worldcat using the names of each head of government allowed us to identify 7,661 books and 973 additional biographers.⁴⁰ In total, 1,184 book authors qualified to become raters were identified.⁴¹

³⁹ The team was composed by me and the research assistants María José Ojeda, Bárbara Veliz and Elsa Acuña.

⁴⁰ In this new search, the research team reviewed the first 30 book titles identified for each president (some presidents, especially from older periods, were associated to few or no book title). In cases in which many books were related to presidents, the search was expanded (up to 84 entries were reviewed).

⁴¹ Potential raters that published biographical books before 1960 were assumed to be dead or not in good conditions to fill out an electronic survey.

Second, we examined book titles for presidents in Google Scholar and Amazon. Third, we identified experts who participated in similar studies about American chief executives.⁴² Fourth, we wrote to 50 professional organizations of the Americas that group historians, political scientists, and journalists and asked them to provide names of potential raters. This search led to the identification of 484 additional scholars. Finally, I asked the participants of the survey to suggest other scholars who could participate. This allowed us to find 211 additional names. In total, 1,879 names of experts were identified. Of this number, slightly more than half had passed away or we could not find their contact information on the internet.

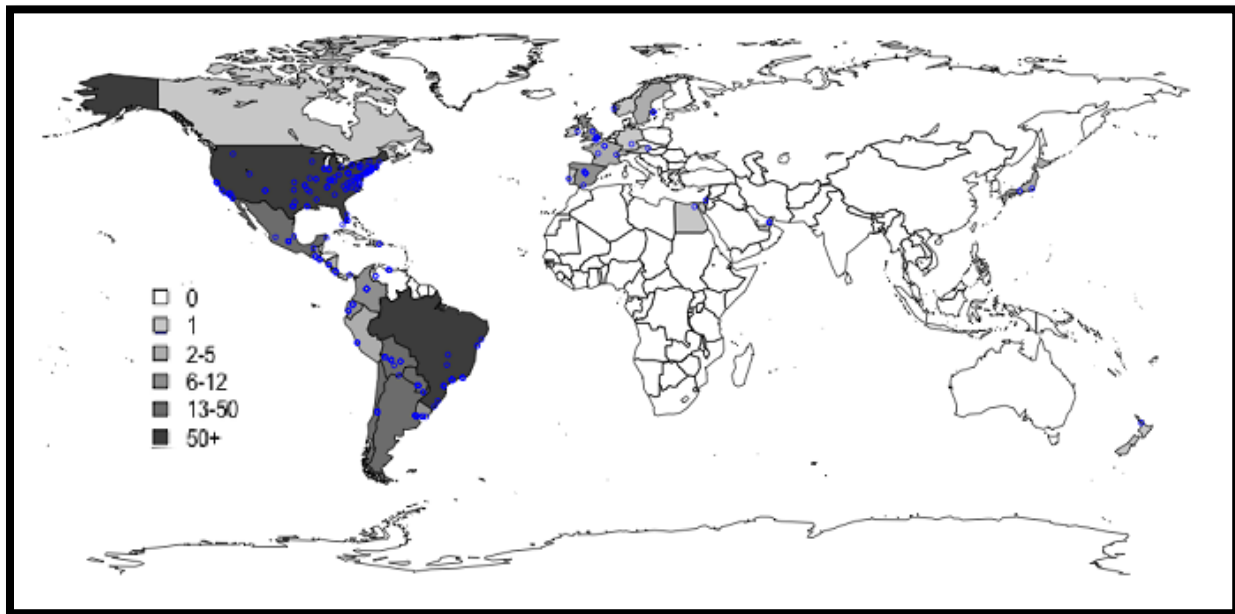
The survey was implemented using the software SurveyMonkey and takes nearly 15-20 minutes to be completed. The survey was delivered between August of 2012 and April of 2013 via email and in three languages to 911 experts (the complete list of experts is in Appendix F). All experts were contacted by email up to 4 times, and some of them received phone calls. In total, 361 experts filled out 531 surveys in which they assessed 165 leaders from 19 countries. Another 165 experts declined to participate (being the lack of time the main explanation) and 429 never replied.⁴³ Even counting as contacted raters who may have never received the message, the response rate was 40%. This number is high compared to most online surveys, especially considering that no material incentives were offered.⁴⁴ Figure 4.1 shows the geographical distribution of the experts, who belong to 29 nationalities and answered the survey

⁴² Names were taken from the C-SPAN Survey of Presidential Leadership and the books “Presidential Leadership: Rating the Best and the Worst in the White House” and “Personality, Character, & Leadership in the White House.”

⁴³ An indeterminate number of those who did not reply may have never received the message due to outdated contact information. Furthermore, nearly 60 potential raters were tried to be contacted through social networks (Facebook and Twitter) but these attempts were almost always unsuccessful.

⁴⁴ For instance, Hamilton (2003) revised a meta-data sample and found that the total average response rate among 199 online surveys conducted was only 13%. The study reviewed surveys distributed by SuperSurvey to clients across industry and local and federal government, mainly in Canada and the United States, involving a total of 523,790 email invitations.

from four continents.⁴⁵ The dots in the figure identify the location from where the survey was responded. Countries with more respondents are colored darker. About 60% of the surveys were answered in Spanish, 27% in English and 13% in Portuguese.⁴⁶



SOURCE: Author's elaboration based on the IP addresses of the survey experts.

Figure 4.1: Geographic Distribution of Survey Experts

The average age of the raters was 57, ranging from 26 to 91. Most of the experts were male (73%) and had a high educational attainment; 96% completed college degrees and 56% held a Ph.D. Respondents belonged to 29 professions, most of them being political scientists (27%), journalists (19%) and historians (18%).⁴⁷ The experts also listed 24 different activities as their main one, most of them related to research and writing.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Most raters were Americans (92), Argentineans (32), Chileans (30) and Brazilians (28).

⁴⁶ I wrote the English and Spanish versions, which were reviewed by the dissertation committee. Bruno Hoepers and Guilherme Coimbra translated the Portuguese version.

⁴⁷ Adding lawyers (7%), sociologists (6%), economists (4%) and “professors” (6%) (who may fall in one of the other categories as well) accounts for 87% of the professional backgrounds.

⁴⁸ The activities most repeated are “academia” (51%), “journalism” (17%), “research” (7%) and “writing”/“author”/“writer and researcher” (7%). Three answers were unclassifiable and 17 raters also described a second activity.

Several raters share a relevant characteristic that grants them special authority to rate the presidents. Among the 531 questionnaires filled out, 216 were completed by raters who met the heads of government at least once. In fact, 144 respondents met the president at least three times and 50 met the leaders more than 21 times. Their personal meetings with the chief executive were described as professional (47%), friendly (32%), for family reasons (2%) or a combination of these alternatives (19%). The first-hand knowledge of heads of state was certainly favored because among the raters were former ministers, ambassadors, legislators, and journalists who covered the activities of the presidents.

Table 4.5 describes the leaders assessed. The mean number of raters per head of state is three, a number that allows making reliable analyses for most of the 165 presidents assessed (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004).

Table 4.5: Presidents of the Americas Assessed

Country	Presidents, 1945-2012	Leaders rated*	Total evaluations**	Raters	Assessments per leader (mean)	Range of raters per president
Argentina	20	17	39	32	2.29	0-6
Bolivia	21	11	50	22	4.55	0-8
Brazil	17	17	76	36	4.53	0-11
Chile	12	11	57	42	5.18	0-9
Colombia	19	11	25	16	2.27	0-6
Costa Rica	15	14	24	7	1.71	0-3
Cuba	8	1	8	8	8	0-8
D. Republic	11	3	7	6	2.33	0-3
Ecuador	22	7	17	17	2.43	0-5
El Salvador	16	4	5	4	1.25	0-2
Guatemala	19	5	9	8	1.8	0-3
Honduras	17	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	12	12	29	26	2.42	0-4
Nicaragua	10	5	7	6	1.4	0-3
Panama	23	2	2	2	1	0-1
Paraguay	10	9	25	15	2.78	0-8
Peru	12	6	14	12	2.33	0-7
USA	13	13	89	60	6.85	1-13
Uruguay	24	8	13	11	1.63	0-3
Venezuela	14	9	35	31	3.89	0-14
Total	315	165	531	361	2.93	

SOURCE: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

* Only includes complete questionnaires answered.

** Includes evaluations with missing answers.

4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This Chapter discussed the different techniques that have been used to measure the individual differences of exceptional individuals at a distance. It argued that expert surveys present numerous advantages over other quantitative techniques, and showed that they are being increasingly used in political science research. Then it presented the expert survey conducted for this study, designed with the purpose of testing the theory developed in Chapter 3.

The following chapter begins evaluating the theory by presenting the *Presidential Database of the Americas*, a novel dataset of the 315 presidents who governed 19 Latin American countries and the United States between 1945 and 2012. This dataset contains the information collected on presidents that will be used to test the hypotheses.

5.0 THE QUEST TO CONSOLIDATE POWER: SAMPLE AND DATA

This chapter describes the sample and the data that is used in this study. Chapter 2 showed that constitutional change has been common in Latin America. On average, each country has replaced its charter 10 times. So far, conventional research proposes that the main causes of constitutional reforms are institutional variables. However, this approach neglects the role of presidents as chief-constitution makers and denies the fact that leaders of most of the Americas have tried to reform the charter to consolidate their power. In chapter 3 I advanced the theoretical proposition that the individual differences of the heads of state should be relevant to explain their behavior. Specifically, I hypothesized that presidents who are more risk-prone and assertive are more likely to change the constitution to benefit their careers. This chapter begins evaluating these hypotheses, by describing the data on chief executives that I have collected.

The sample of this study encompasses 165 presidents who have governed one of the 19 Latin American countries and the United States since 1945 for at least six months. The end of World War II represented the beginning of the most extensive democratic period in the region, with two “waves” of democratization; 1956-1962 and 1978-1992 (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005: 19).

Data about constitutional change, presidential powers, and presidential electoral rules was taken from existing databases and from national charters. As mentioned in Chapter 3, biographical data about chiefs of state was gathered from 68 books, online sources and material

gathered during field research.⁴⁹ Chapter 3 also described the semi-structured interviews that I conducted with 21 former presidents of the Western Hemisphere to have a deeper understanding of the relation between heads of state and the constitution and the importance of the leaders' individual differences to govern. Information about the presidents' personality traits and other individual characteristics not taken from the biographies comes from the online survey described in Chapter 4. The outcome of this data collection process led to the creation of the *Presidential Database of the Americas* (2013), the most complete and extensive biographical database about heads of state in the Western Hemisphere.⁵⁰

5.1 WHO CHANGES THE CONSTITUTION?

In Chapter 3 I outlined the criteria to identify the successful and unsuccessful presidential attempts to change the constitution. Building on such criteria, I use two dichotomous variables to capture when presidents want to increase their powers. One variable takes the value of one when heads of state attempt to increase their powers (and zero otherwise), while the other takes the value of one when the leaders try to relax their term limits (and zero otherwise). To distinguish the successful presidential attempts, which are a subset of the presidential attempts, I use other two dichotomous variables. One variable takes the value of one when the attempts to increase powers succeed (and zero otherwise), and the other takes the value of one when presidents manage to relax term limits (and zero otherwise).

⁴⁹ The online sources are mainly the biographies existing in www.wikipedia.org (in English and Spanish), www.cidob.org, and www.biografiasyvidas.com.

⁵⁰ The coding of the presidents' biographies is the collective product of a research team that includes the author and the research assistants María José Ojeda, Bárbara Veliz and Elsa Acuña.

Table 5.1 presents the descriptive statistics of the four dependent variables in this study. The table shows that heads of government attempted to increase their powers or relax their term limits in nearly 2% of the years.

Table 5.1: Presidential Attempts

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	N ^o *
Powers Attempt	1=president tries to reform presidential powers	0.020	0.140	0-1	1553
Powers Success	1= leader succeeds in changing her powers	0.017	0.128	0-1	1558
Term Attempt	1=president tries to adjust the presidential electoral rule	0.024	0.153	0-1	1536
Term Success	1= head of state changes term limits	0.018	0.133	0-1	1554

SOURCES: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013), Pérez-Liñán et al. (2015) and Negretto (2013).

Given that the dependent variables reflect the individual attempts to reform the constitution, and because my hypotheses refer to individual predictors, in the next Chapter I estimate discrete-time duration models. Using this technique, once a president attempts to adjust the charter, the leader is censored and drops from the sample. The logic is that presidents are unlikely to attempt a reform a second time in their term, especially if they are successful or are overthrown due to their attempt.⁵¹ In any case, even if presidents attempt to reform the charter a second time, the effect of their personality traits is exposed once the first attempt takes place.

5.2 THE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Chapter 4 presented the expert survey that was conducted for this study. Table 5.2 summarizes the psychological traits of the presidents, as measured in the survey. The table shows that the sample has a wide variation in terms of the psychological traits. Interestingly, asking about the presidents' risk propensity before reaching the presidency and during their terms proved to be

⁵¹ This decision leads to a loss of nearly 13% in the number of observations in the dependent variable.

worthwhile. As the table shows, in the two measures of risk propensity the average head of state was more risk-prone before taking office, supporting the expectation that leaders tend to consciously moderate their behavior once in office.

Table 5.2: Psychological traits of Presidents

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mode (# of times)	Range	Observations
Hypothesis 1: Risk Taking					
Risk Before Term	0.286	0.236	0 (26)	0-1	138
Risk During Term	0.237	0.224	0 (29)	0-1	140
Alt. Risk Before	3.216	0.832	3 (39)	1-5	155
Alt. Risk During	3.124	0.845	3 (32)	1-5	151
Hypothesis 2: Assertiveness					
Assertiveness	3.597	0.618	4, 3.6 (8)	1-5	151

SOURCE: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

NOTE: Each observation corresponds to the score obtained by each chief of state evaluated.

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution based on the RTI index. Noticeably, the distribution is more skewed to the left (less risk-prone) when presidents are in office. While 26 politicians avoided engaging in risky activities before reaching office, the number increased to 29 once in office. On the other extreme, Cuban President Fidel Castro (0.93) and the Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello (1) were the most risk-prone heads of government before reaching office, while the most risk-prone leaders once in office were Collor de Mello, the Mexican José López Portillo and the Salvadoran Salvador Castañeda (all of them with values of 1).

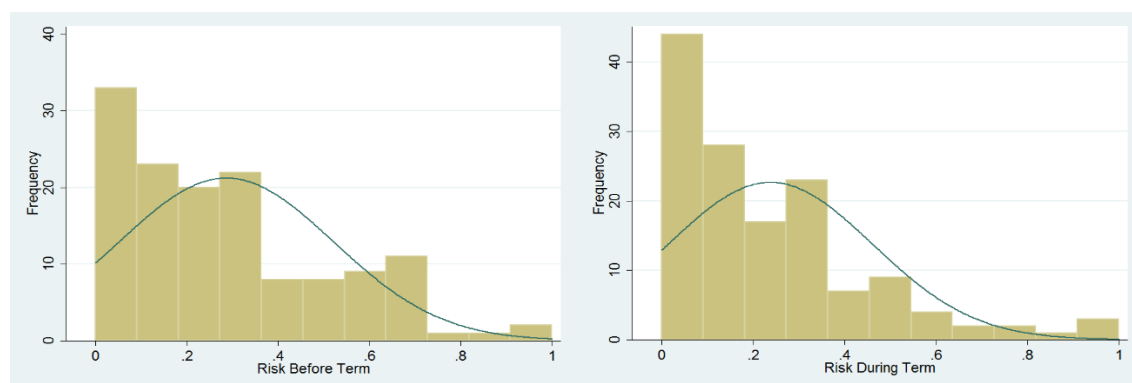


Figure 5.1: Risk Propensity, Before and During Term

Figure 5.2 shows that presidents tend to be assertive, which explains why the distribution is skewed to the right. At the lowest end are leaders Edelmiro Farrell (Argentina, 1.3) and Andrés Pastrana (Colombia, 2.1). Fidel Castro (4.7) and Uruguayan chiefs of state Eduardo Haedo and Benito Nardone (4.8) have the highest scores.

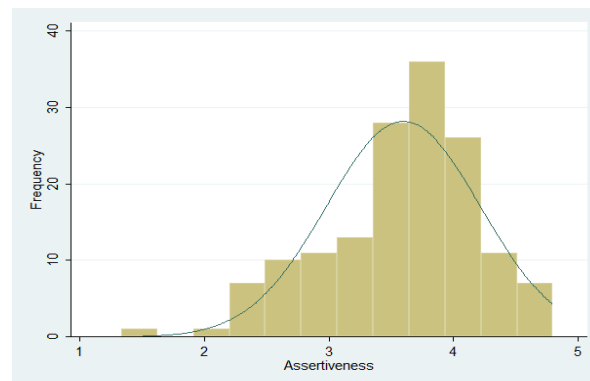


Figure 5.2: Assertiveness among Presidents

Some of the comments made by the experts help to understand the scores assigned to each head of state. For instance, one expert described Pastrana as a “lax person, without character, much given to good public relations, cocktails, foreign travels, trips at public expense, incapable of leading processes and devoid of ideas to govern a country. His ministers acted every man for himself.” A rater described another unassertive president, Farrell, as a “mediocre but ‘correct’ general within the canons of the Army.” This same rater considered that Farrell failed to express himself clearly, was unable to lead or even convince others, and often avoided taking control of things. Farrell’s political career seems to fit this description. Farrell reached the Argentine presidency in 1944 being appointed by the previous dictator, General Ramírez. Nearly a year after being in power, Farrell was forced to call to elections given the popularity of his vice-president, Juan Domingo Perón, who overshadowed him.

The description of these unassertive leaders contrasts with the description of Fidel Castro. “In general, Fidel has a strong personality and dominates any situation in which he finds himself.

This was true even in his childhood when he challenged teachers and ran away from school if disciplined”, said one rater. “Fidel has maintained during his leadership a very controlling and distrustful personality, with little listening of what others think. All the time he would say what had to be done and how to do it, and controlled the results of the tasks he guided with some despotic temper. This put his subordinates under much pressure and make them to hold great fears....He was always very prone to caustic, little constructive criticism, but not prone to self-criticism,” described a second expert.

As mentioned, each of the domains of the Big-Five personality traits has a different type of correlation with medium-level traits such as *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness*. Table 5.3 shows the correlation between the Big-Five and the two medium-level traits measured in the survey to check if they relate to each other as most of the literature finds. In line with the literature, *Risk Propensity* is positively associated to *Extraversion* and negatively associated to *Conscientiousness* (Nicholson et al., 2005; McGhee et al., 2012). Also in line with the literature, *Assertiveness* is positively correlated to *Extraversion* (Costa & McCrae 1992; Saucier and Ostendorf 1999). The fact that *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness* are related to the Big-Five as previous studies find suggests that the measurement of the constructs is valid.

Table 5.3: Correlation between the Big-Five and Medium-Level Traits

	Risk	Assertiveness
Extraversion	0.42	0.65
Agreeableness	-0.16	-0.17
Conscientiousness	-0.30	0.23
Openness	0.17	0.59
Neuroticism	0.06	-0.13
Dominance		0.53

SOURCE: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

An observer may wonder how the scores and variation detected in the personality traits for chief executives compare to the “average population.” This is not completely possible, because there is no sample representative of “all human beings.” However, in table 5.4 I compare

the means from the sample of presidents with a dataset of 71,867 adult American internet users who filled out the BFI, and with the 317 internet users that were 56 years old, the average age of the head of government in the sample (Srivastava, Gosling, and Potter, 2003). In almost all cases, the means of the leaders compared with the two other groups is different at the .01 level of statistical significance in the five domains.⁵²

Table 5.4: Big-Five Personality Traits Compared

	Presidents		Internet Users		Subsample of Internet Users (56 years old)	
	Mean	95% CI (min, max)	Mean	95% CI (min, max)	Mean	95% CI (min, max)
Extraversion	3.40	3.29, 3.51	3.18	3.18, 3.19	3.26	3.17, 3.35
Agreeableness	3.11	3.02, 3.20	3.66	3.65, 3.66	3.93	3.86, 4.00
Conscientiousness	3.46	3.37, 3.55	3.55	3.55, 3.56	3.88	3.80, 3.96
Neuroticism	2.81	2.73, 2.90	3.04	3.03, 3.05	2.96	2.87, 3.05
Openness	3.22	3.12, 3.32	3.98	3.98, 3.99	3.86	3.78, 3.94

SOURCES: Presidential Database of the Americas and Musson, Sandal and Helmreich (2004).

NOTE: CI refers to Confidence Interval.

The most interesting fact revealed by table 5.4 is that the means of the three groups are not too far from each other. This suggests that, despite being exceptional individuals, heads of government as a group do not particularly excel in one of the Big-Five. Presidents are not like astronauts, who when they score in the 50th percentile of conscientiousness relative to their colleagues they are near to the 93rd percentile relative to college undergrads (Musson, Sandal, and Helmreich 2004).

⁵² The exceptions are when chief executives are compared in extraversion and neuroticism with the subgroup of internet users (means different at the 90%) and conscientiousness with all internet users (means different at the 95%).

5.3 ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Presidential attempts to change the constitution could be rooted in other individual differences. Politicians that reached the presidency with little involvement in politics and formal political experience could be more likely to try to reform the charter.

Leaders who reach the presidency with little socialization into politics do not enjoy large informal political networks, are unfamiliar to political negotiating and to the day-to-day informal practices related to democratic governance. Further, they do not have experience working in a democratic culture that entails compromising and incremental changes, and may lack the political skills needed to successfully relate to other politicians. These type of heads of state should be more tempted to skip the democratic practices and to adjust the constitution to their preferences to overcome their political limitations.

Politicians who assume the presidency without previously holding formal political positions are likely to have a superficial understanding of how the state works. They know little about governmental procedures, paces, and practices. They have not dealt with electoral and policy defeats, something that is crucial to develop a commitment to democratic practices.

Previous studies have shown that outsider presidents, who often had a limited socialization into politics and political experience, increase the level of executive-legislative conflict (Carreras 2012). Interestingly, four presidents of the last two decades classified by Carreras as outsiders tried to consolidate their power via a constitutional adjustment. That is the case of Peruvian Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), Ecuadorean Rafael Correa (2006-), Paraguayan Fernando Lugo (2008-2012), and Venezuelan Hugo Chávez (1998-2013).

Given the potential importance of the leaders' socialization into politics and political experience, I control for both variables. *Political Socialization* is taken from the expert survey

and captures how the heads of government became engaged in politics. This is a five-point scale that takes the value of one when politicians became chief of state almost or fully by chance; two when leaders did not have a previous career in politics when the presidential campaign started; three when heads of state started their political activity late in their life or had an intermittent political path, but had some involvement in politics before arriving to office; four when the chiefs of state engaged in politics since they were young adults due to their interests and activities, and five when the heads of state grew up in a political environment and became permanently involved in politics before adulthood. Interestingly, 67% of the 165 heads of government evaluated entered politics as a young adult.

Political Experience measures the presidents' formal political positions held before reaching office. It takes the value of zero if the leader did not hold any position before reaching office; one if the leader held a position at the regional level (e.g.; major or councilor) or was president of a political party; two if the politician had a relatively low position in the executive; three if he or she was legislator, or minister or vice minister; four if was legislator and had a minor position in government; and five if the head of government was legislator and minister or vice-minister, or a former president. Most of the chief executives led significant positions before reaching office; 260 (74%) were at least legislators or ministers/vice-ministers. However, as many as 59 leaders (17%) did not hold any political position before reaching office.

A second group of variables takes into account institutional considerations. Chapter 3 discussed how the literature has traditionally focused on institutional and other contextual variables to explain constitutional change. Studies of institutional change propose that institutions constrain the behavior of political actors. Therefore, institutional factors should be behind institutional reforms. In Chapter 3 I argued that this approach has underestimated the

individual differences of decision makers as one of the major forces driving institutional transformation. However, I do not claim that institutions are irrelevant. Undeniably, institutions create incentives and long-term legacies. Therefore, I control for conventional explanations of modifications to the charter and even expand the list of variables that has been used in studies that explore constitutional endurance.

Presidents' motivation to increase their powers or extend their term limits may change according to their current level of powers and the length of their terms (Negretto, 2013). Powerful presidents may have fewer incentives to increase their powers than weaker presidents. Alternatively, powerful presidents may face fewer constraints than weaker leaders to expand their powers. Similarly, presidents who can be reelected may have fewer motivations to alter reelection rules than presidents who cannot run for reelection. On the other hand, they may have more time to plan a further extension of their term.

Table 5.5 shows that presidents in the sample have generally enjoyed considerable room to increase their powers or relax their term limits (e.g., in only 10% of the years in the sample presidential reelection was unrestricted). To differentiate powerful from non-powerful presidents, I created two dummy variables; *Strong Legislative Powers* and *Strong Non-Legislative Powers*. Both variables take the value of 1 when the powers of the president are one standard deviation above the mean and 0 otherwise. To simplify the argument about term extension, I use the variable *Immediate Reelection*. This variable collapses the five types of presidential electoral rule in two categories; those that allow for immediate reelection (coded as 1) and those that do not (coded as 0).

Table 5.5: Alternative Explanations of Constitutional Change

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	N ^o *
Other Individual Differences					
Political Socialization	Reached the presidency 1= almost or fully by chance; 2= without a career in politics before the campaign started; 3= after a short or intermittent political career; 4= after engaging in politics since being a young adult; 5= after growing up in a political environment and becoming involved in politics before adulthood.	3.615	1.104	1-5	164
Political Experience	President was 0= politically unexperienced; 1= politician at subnational level (e.g., major); 2= officer in govt.; 3= legislator or minister/vice-minister; 4= legislator and officer in govt.; 5= legislator and ex minister/vice-minister, or president	3.031	1.776	0-5	353
Institutional Variables					
Leg. Powers	1= lowest; 100= maximum. 14-items index of policymaking powers	44.677	23.063	1-100	1692
Non-leg. Powers	1= lowest; 100=maximum. Index of 18 items of presidential powers in non-policymaking issues	27.293	23.625	1-100	1604
Presidential reelection	0=not allowed; 1=after two terms out; 2=after one term; 3=limited to one term; 4= for 1 term followed for 1 term out; 5=unrestricted	1.917	1.437	0-5	1778
Strong Leg. Powers	1=presidential powers are one std. dev. above the mean, 0 otherwise	0.216	0.412	0-1	1778
Strong Non-Leg. Powers	1= presidential powers are one std. dev. above the mean, 0 otherwise	0.097	0.297	0-1	1778
Immediate Reelection	1= immediate reelection is allowed, 0 otherwise	0.236	0.425	0-1	1778
Amendment	Congressional quorum needed to amend the charter. 0=none; 1= absolute majority; 2= absolute majority plus something else; 3= 3/5; 4= 2/3; 5= 2/3 or 2/3 of other elected body plus something else	3.193	1.875	0-5	1778
Congress	1= there is a Congress, 0 otherwise.	0.892	0.311	0-1	1778
Presidents' Party	1= controls Lower Chamber, 0 otherwise.	0.382	0.486	0-1	1778
Judicial Review	1= court reviews constitutionality of laws, 0 otherwise	0.743	0.437	0-1	1690
Contextual Variables					
Time in Office	It takes the value of the number of years the president was in office	3.134	4.104	0-35	1778
Expected Years Left	Captures the expected number of calendar years left to the president's departure from office	2.473	1.735	0-12	1778
Dictatorship	1= Dictatorship, 0 otherwise	0.393	0.489	0-1	1778
GDP per Capita	GDP per capita measured in thousands of 2000 US\$	3.504	5.041	0.44-38.7	1756

SOURCES: The variables *Leg. Powers* and *Non-leg. Powers* are taken from Negretto (2013); the variables *Presidential Reelection*, *Congress* and *Presidents' Party* are an extension of Pérez-Liñán et al. (2014, 2015); *Judicial Review* is updated from Elkins, Ginsburg and Melton (2009, 2010); *Dictatorship* is taken from Polity IV (2014); *GDP per Capita* is taken from the World Bank (2014), and all the other variables come from the Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

Arguably, the main challenge that democratic presidents face in their attempt to reform the constitution is to comply with the rules to amend it. The higher the constitutional rigidity, the bigger the challenge. Coding this variable is not straightforward. To be amended, almost all charters require a congressional quorum, but a large subgroup also adds different requirements. In one group of charters (Argentina since 1853, El Salvador until 1982, and Paraguay since 1967), Congress needs to call for the election of a constituent assembly, which receives a mandate to reform the charter. In some federal countries (United States, Mexico, and Venezuela until 1999), the charter demands that state legislatures or other state bodies ratify the amendments approved in Congress. Other constitutions require that a national referendum ratifies the agreement reached in the legislature (Uruguay, Venezuela since 1999, and Cuba). Another group of charters demands that different elected legislatures need to approve the amendments (e.g., Panama, Honduras, and Guatemala). Finally, some charters state that some articles cannot be changed, or they can, but only through a constituent assembly (Honduras and Guatemala until 1985).

A small group of authors have attempted to code constitutional rigidity (Lutz 1994; Lijphart 1999; Anckar and Karvonen 2002; Lorenz 2005). I code this variable inspired in the most prominent study (Lijphart 1999), taking into consideration the congressional quorum and other special requirements needed to change the constitution.⁵³ This variable is coded such that it goes from 0 when there is no need of congressional support (or there is no acting Congress) to 5, when the president needs to have the support of 2/3 of Congress and “something else”.

The president is also likely to face fewer institutional constraints if there is no legislature or if there is one, but the president’s party controls it. The dichotomous variable *Congress*

⁵³ Lijphart considered four categories of constitutional rigidity: simple majority, more than simple majority but less than two thirds; two thirds, and more than two thirds. My variable adds the zero category, uses absolute majorities instead of simple majorities, and includes cases in which the quorum needed is three fifths.

captures if there is an acting legislature (89% of the observations) and the dichotomous variable *President's Party* measures if the president has more than half of the seats in the Lower Chamber (38% in the sample). Besides needing congressional support, presidents may face challenges from the judicial power. Elkins, Ginsburg and Melton (2010) propose that the practice of judicial review can contribute to extend the lifespan of the charter allowing it to adapt it to political pressures. On average, the charters in the sample lasted 32.44 years, and three fourths of the time there was a court capable of reviewing the constitutionality of laws. The variable *Judicial Review* takes the value of 1 when any court can review the constitutionality of laws (73% of the observations) and 0 otherwise.

A third group of control variables captures the expectation that the motivation of heads of state to adjust the charter is based on the context in which they govern. I include two variables that measure the leaders' ability to make changes according to their times. Presidents who have little time left in office may inhibit themselves from trying to reform the constitution, given the long bargaining process that changes to the charter usually entail. Therefore, *Expected Years Left* captures how much time the chiefs of state expect to be in office according to their constitutional term.⁵⁴ On average, presidents on the sample had 2.47 years remaining to attempt to adapt the charter. A second variable, *Time in Office* captures for how long the head of state has been in office. Usually presidents face more difficulties to adjust the charter at the very beginning or at the very end of their terms. The average time in office for the leaders in the sample is 3.1 years.⁵⁵

Constitutional reforms and regime change have historically been closely related (Elkins, Ginsburg and Melton, 2010). The presidents' capacity to modify the charter may vary depending

⁵⁴ In most cases, this variable was not problematic to code for dictators given that they usually "legalize" their term after seizing power, such that they govern with an identifiable end. For the years in which this variable could not be updated, I imputed the average time (1,017 days or 2.8 years) that presidents in this situation have governed.

⁵⁵ *Expected Years Left* and *Time in Office* are not highly correlated (-0.23), despite they may seem similar variables. The reason is that when a president is reelected the countdown in *Expected Years Left* restarts.

on who they are accountable to. In democracies and semi-democracies, heads of state are held accountable by Congress and the broader electorate. In authoritarian regimes, leaders are responsive to a reduced elite. Furthermore, regime changes lead to a new institutional structure of politics and constitutions usually legitimize and shape the new institutional setting. In fact, Negretto (2009) shows that almost half of the charters created after 1978 in Latin America came to light simultaneously with regime changes. In the sample, democracies ruled 40% of the years, dictatorships 39%, and semi-democracies 21%. *Dictatorship* is a dichotomous variable that captures if the regime is authoritarian, and is taken from Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013).

A fourth contextual variable is *GDP per Capita* (taken from World Bank 2014). Economic factors have been related to political instability and institutional modifications. Economic development (captured through GDP per capita) has traditionally been associated with regime stability (Przeworski 2000). Elkins, Ginsburg and Melton (2010) propose that the same relationship should be expected with constitutional endurance.

5.4 PERSONALITY, INSTITUTIONS, AND CONTEXT REVISITED

To check for the robustness of the results I will conduct different analyses using alternative specifications. The purpose is to check the strength of the theory advanced and that there are no other factors that explain the presidential attempts to change the constitution. The robustness checks are based on variables that capture other personality traits of the leaders, institutional factors and contextual aspects. These variables are shown in table 5.6.

An alternative approach to the argument that the presidents' individual differences explain their attempts to change the charter is to root their behavior on their basic personality

traits. As aforementioned, the five factors of personality traits were captured through the expert survey and are based on the 44-item Big-Five Inventory (BFI, Benet-Martínez and John 1998).

Table 5.6: Robustness Checks

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	N°*
1. Personality Traits					
Extraversion	Big-Five Inventory scale based on 8 items	3.403	0.676	1-5	150
Agreeableness	Big-Five Inventory scale based on 9 items	3.110	0.576	1-5	148
Conscientiousness	Big-Five Inventory scale based on 9 items	3.459	0.564	1-5	148
Neuroticism	Big-Five Inventory scale based on 8 items	2.807	0.524	1-5	147
Openness	Big-Five Inventory scale based on 10 items	3.218	0.618	1-5	150
Dominance	IPIP scale based on 11 items	3.469	0.561	1-5	151
2. Institutions					
Constitutional Features					
Scope	Percentage of selected issues covered in the charter	0.561	0.087	0-100	1690
Inclusiveness	Inclusiveness of the constitution-making process and constitutional provisions (additive index)	3.520	1.568	0-6	1219
Detail	Words per issue covered in the text	0.132	0.063	0.04-0.37	1690
Age	Age of text	32.437	47.396	0-225	1778
Characteristics of Congress					
ENPH	Effective number of parties in the House	2.904	1.596	0-9.45	1410
Parliamentary Power Index	De jure measure of Elkins et al. Parliamentary Power Index	0.365	0.094	0.1-0.6	1690
3. Context					
Economic trends and structure					
GDP Growth	Measured as a proportion.	0.017	0.043	-0.29-0.32	1773
Inflation	Price changes (natural logarithm)	0.201	0.465	-0.54-4.78	1688
Spatiotemporal considerations					
Diffusion	Number of presidential attempts to change the constitution in the Americas in the last three years.	1.72	1.33	0-5	1778
Cold War	1= years since 1990, 0 otherwise	0.311	0.463	0-1	1778
Third Wave	1= years since 1978, 0 otherwise			0-1	1778
Civil Wars	1= internal conflict; 0= no conflict	0.113	0.317	0-1	1689
Central America	1= Central American country; 0= otherwise	0.439	0.496	0-1	1778
South America	1= South American country; 0= otherwise	0.509	0.5	0-1	1778

SOURCES: the personality traits and the spatiotemporal variables are taken from the Presidential Database of the Americas (2013). The constitutional features and the Parliamentary Power Index are taken from Elkins, Ginsburg and Melton (2009, 2010). The economic trends and structure variables are an extension of Pérez-Liñán and Mainwaring (2013). ENPH is taken from Pérez-Liñán et al. (2014).

* Each personality traits observation corresponds to one head of government.

I also include *Dominance* as an alternative explanation for *Assertiveness*, given that both traits are related. As described, *Assertiveness* captures the profile of presidents determined to consolidate their power. Assertive individuals have a strong drive to succeed, are persuasive, know how to lead and convince others, tend to feel comfortable taking control of things and do it quickly. Dominant individuals also like to be on the controlling side in their relation with others,

but pursue nothing more and do it aggressively. *Dominance* is captured through the expert survey, and is taken from the IPIP scales (Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006).

Table 5.6 showed that in the central model I control for the most important institutional variables that can shape the presidents' decision to reform the charter. These variables are the presidents' current level of powers and length of their terms, two variables that capture constitutional rigidity, whether there is an acting legislature and whether the party of the president counts with the majority of the votes.

As a robustness check, I also explore with more detail some characteristics of the constitution and the legislature. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Elkins et al. (2009) find that the *Inclusiveness* of the constitution-making process, the *Scope* of constitutional coverage and the level of *Detail* of constitutional provisions are empirically associated with the lifespan of charters. Additionally, the authors find that the constitution's *Age* is related to its own endurance (older charters last more).

Given that often the president needs the congressional approval to reform the charter, I include two variables related to the structure of the legislature. The constitutional changes can be considered as an outcome conditioned by the distribution of power between the executive and Congress. The *Parliamentary Power Index* is a de jure measure of how powerful the legislature is in a given country in a given year (Elkins et al. 2009). A Congress that has more parties should increase the costs of passing legislation. Therefore, the variable *ENPH* captures the effective number of parties. This variable is taken from Pérez-Liñán et al. (2014).

Economic variables have also been linked to constitutional endurance. Elkins et al. (2009) propose that economic hardships should have destabilizing effects on the constitution. On the opposite situation, periods of economic bonanza may provide heads of state with a window

of opportunity to consolidate their power. I control for economic considerations using *GDP per capita growth* and *Inflation* using the data from Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013). On average, the countries in the sample have experienced modest economic growth (1.7% in the sample) and suffered high inflation rates (20%).

A final group of variables control for the possibility that the presidential attempts may be associated to spatiotemporal factors. First, presidents may try to change the charter if they observe other leaders of the region making such an attempt. Elkins et al. (2009) find that constitutions are more likely to be replaced when neighboring countries substitute theirs. The variable *Diffusion* takes the number of presidential attempts to reform the charter in the Americas in the last three years. The dichotomous variables *Cold War* and *Third Wave* control for the possibility that the attempts may be driven by the changes experienced in the countries of the sample after the cold war and the third wave of democratization experienced in the Americas (Hagopian and Mainwaring, 2005). Finally, the dichotomous variables *Central America* and *South America* control for the likelihood that regional factors may be related to the reforms.

5.5 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES: ENDOGENEITY AND SELECTION BIAS

The sample could be marred with endogeneity problems due to the fact that the experts that participated in the survey could assess the traits of the heads of government based on whether they attempted to reform the constitution or not. If such is the case, then the results of the variable *Assertiveness* should be explained by the values of the dependent variables. In Chapter 6 I conduct a statistical analysis that takes into account the possibility of an endogenous relationship between *Assertiveness* and the presidential attempts using instrumental variables.

A major challenge is to find appropriate instruments that are strongly related to the potential endogenous variable but uncorrelated to the disturbances in each model. Weak instruments –variables weakly correlated with *Assertiveness*– may lead to inconsistent estimates depending on the percentage of the variance they are able to explain and on the sample size (Murray 2006).

I use as instrumental variables three individual differences of presidents that the literature has associated to *Assertiveness*: age, educational attainment and whether the leader was imprisoned or not. The variables *Age* and *Education* are based on studies that suggest that individuals tend to be more assertive as they become older (e.g., Kimble et al., 1984) and more educated (Onyeizugbo, 2003). *Imprisoned* accounts for the fact that people that have been incarcerated tend to have higher levels of assertiveness (Heimberg and Harrison, 1980).

Table 5.7 shows that most of the chief executives completed college education and their age varies between 34 and 90. Before reaching office, 52 of the 315 leaders passed through jail. The table also shows the correlation between the instrumental variables and the presidential attempts to increase their powers and their terms. Noticeably, the instruments are uncorrelated with both dependent variables. The highest correlation (-.06) is between presidential attempts to increase their powers and the age of the president.

Table 5.7: Presidents' Characteristics

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	N°*	Powers attempts	Term attempts
Age	Number of years a president has.	56.228	9.655	34-90	1778	-0.06	-0.04
Imprisoned	1=in prison before presidency; 0= otherwise.	0.166	0.372	0-1	314	0.05	0.01
Education	1=incomplete high school (HS); 2= HS; 3= incomplete college; 4= college; 5= Master; 6= Ph.D. or two degrees	4.343	0.999	1-6	312	0.00	0.03

Sources: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

* Age considers all president-years in the sample. In the other variables, heads of state are the units.

The sample of leaders could be affected by a selection bias because 150 of the 315 chiefs of state who governed the Americas between 1945 and 2012 were not assessed. There might be factors that explain why some heads of government were evaluated and others were not. These factors might be related to how presidents were assessed and also to the presidential attempts to reform the constitution. Given that we only have observations on the independent variables when a rater evaluated a head of state, there may be sample selection bias. This bias potentially violates the Gauss-Markov assumption of zero correlation between the independent variables and the error term, causing biased and inconsistent estimators (Kennedy 2003, 282). Given the structure of the data under analysis and its potentially large selection problem (150 chief executives not evaluated), I follow the Heckman (1976) two-stage estimation procedure to account for the censored selection effect.

In the first stage of the Heckman procedure is estimated the expected value of the error (called the inverse Mills ratio, IMR) due to the selection effect. Therefore, in the first stage I will run a probit regression model where the dependent variable *Rated* is a dummy that takes the value of 1 when a president was evaluated by an expert and 0 otherwise. Once the IMR is estimated, it is rerun as an extra explanatory variable in the second stage.

The independent variables for the first-stage model capture factors that should be associated to the likelihood that a head of government will be assessed. Arguably, a president is more likely to be evaluated if the pool of potential raters is larger. I expect that the pool of potential raters is likely to vary according to the economic and geographical size of a country, according to how much time a leader is in office and the number of times the name of a president is mentioned in Google Scholar.

Countries that are bigger and have a larger economy tend to call more international

attention (including the consideration of more foreign scholars interested in political leaders). Overall, presidents of countries with these characteristics should enjoy a larger pool of potential biographers. Since heads of state who govern for a longer period are able to leave a more enduring legacy, I also expect that leaders who have governed for more time will call the attention of more experts. Finally, the number of citations that a president receives in Google Scholar is an indicator of how much scholarly attention he or she has already called.⁵⁶ Table 5.8 presents the descriptive statistics of these variables.

Table 5.8: Variables related to Presidential Assessments

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	N°
Country Size	The size of the country in millions of square kilometers	15.47	27.3	0.21-98	1778
GDP	Gross Domestic Product in hundreds of billions of 1990 international dollars	29.8	111.6	0.07-1047	1778
Time in Office	Years that a president was in office	6.41	6.1	0.49-35	1778
Google Mentions	Number of academic mentions (in 10,000)	0.378	1.97	0-25	1778

Sources: *Country Size* is taken from the CIA World Factbook (2013); *GDP* from the Maddison Project (2013) updated with data from World Bank (2014); *Time in Office* from the Presidential Database of the Americas (2013) and *Google Mentions* from <http://scholar.google.com/> (retrieved on March 25, 2014).

⁵⁶ The number of citations that show up in Google Scholar are directly related to how a name is searched. I seek the names of the presidents using at least three identifiers (e.g., the name and two last names) and chose the combination that presented the largest number of citations. In some cases I used acronyms instead of full names, based on how a chief executive has been publicly known (e.g., “George W. Bush” is far more frequent than “George Walker Bush”).

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe the data that is used to test the theory of constitutional change introduced in Chapter 3. This chapter presented the most complete existing database on presidents of the Western Hemisphere that have governed since 1945. Given that this study integrates the research agenda of political science and psychology in novel ways, a large set of variables is included to test for alternative explanations of constitutional reforms.

The descriptive data shows that even including presidents that are unlikely to attempt major institutional reforms (e.g., interim presidents or leaders that lasted less than a year), at least 12% of the chief executives in the sample tried to adapt the most important political document of a country to consolidate their power. Most of the presidential attempts succeeded.

Presidents from almost all countries and historical periods tried to increase their powers or extend their terms. This suggests that, although context conditions presidential behavior, something else should drive the presidential attempts. This study argues that the presidents' individual differences drive such attempts.

Most presidents are highly-educated males that lead democratic governments. As a group, the most powerful politicians of the Americas do not excel in the five dimensions of personality and are not particularly risk-prone, although they tend to score high in assertiveness.

The central question, "Which kind of presidents attempt to change the charter and who succeeds?" remains to be answered. In the next chapter I conduct a series of discrete-time duration analyses that document the impact of individual differences on the presidential attempts to modify the constitution between 1945 and 2012. I also conduct a series of robustness checks to make sure that the results hold using different samples and model specifications.

6.0 THE INTIMATE RELATION WITH CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

This chapter tests the theory that presidents who are more risk prone and assertive are more likely to attempt constitutional changes to increase their powers or relax their term limits. Given that the dependent variables used reflect the individual attempts to change the charter, and because my main hypotheses refer to individual predictors, to test the hypotheses I estimate discrete-time duration models in which the unit of analysis is president-year. I conduct a longitudinal analysis to take into account how presidents time their attempts and to include several control variables that change over time. I test the theory based mainly on the *Presidential Database of the Americas* (2013) created for this study.

The estimations conducted show that *Assertiveness* is the most consistent and one of the most powerful predictors of the presidential attempts to increase their powers or relax their term limits. This variable holds when potential selection bias and endogeneity concerns are taken into account, and under different samples and model specifications. The results also show that risk-prone presidents are more likely to try to change the charter to consolidate their power, but the findings are less clear. *Risk Propensity* does not resist the different robustness checks conducted.

Other individual differences prove to be related to the presidential attempts when using certain subsamples. *Political Socialization* and *Political Experience* become statistically significant in the samples that excluded the United States and puppet and interim heads of

government. These results reinforce the proposition that the uniqueness of presidents is central to understand their behavior.

Some institutional and contextual variables are also related to the presidential attempts, although they have a weaker relation to the dependent variables than the individual differences tested. The most important institutional variables related to the presidential attempts are the leaders' present level of powers and length of their terms. Given that they face fewer constraints than other presidents, powerful leaders and those who can run for reelection are more likely to try to adjust the constitution to consolidate their power. Other variables related to the presidential attempts are how much time the heads of government have been in office, how much time they expect to hold office, and the regime type.

The findings shown in this chapter support the proposition that the uniqueness of the heads of government is the main cause that explain their attempts to change the constitution to consolidate their power. These results offer a whole new understanding of institutional change, contributing to overcome the current divide between qualitative and quantitative studies of the presidency and opening novel avenues of inquiry.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section I take into account the potential selection bias due to the fact that a substantive number of the heads of state who governed for at least six months between 1945 and 2012 were not assessed. In the second section I present four models that provide the first and central test of the theory. In these models I use as dependent variables the presidential attempts to (1) increase their powers and (2) relax their term limits, differentiating between successful and unsuccessful attempts.

A third section address the potential endogeneity problems that can emerge because the experts that participated in the survey could have evaluated the presidents based on whether they

attempted to change the charter or not. To account for endogeneity, I estimate an instrumental variable procedure, using as instruments three objective characteristics of presidents; their age, educational attainment, and whether they were imprisoned or not.

The fourth segment addresses alternative approaches to understand the presidential attempts. I conduct interactions to examine if the presidential attempts are conditioned by institutions, specifically the rules that establish the rigidity of the constitution.

I also analyze if the results are driven by the sample. I test the theory using different samples to address the potential criticism that the sample misleadingly conflates Latin American countries with the United States, democratic leaders with autocrats, and heads of state that fully enjoy the privileges of their office with puppet and interim presidents.

As a further check of the results, in the final section I re-estimate the models including several potential alternative explanations of the presidential attempts to change the charter. These alternative explanations include additional personality traits, constitutional features, characteristics of Congress, economic variables, and spatiotemporal factors.

6.1 ACCOUNTING FOR RATER SELECTION

As described in Chapter 5, to account for the potential sample selection bias because 150 of the 315 leaders were not assessed, I follow Heckman (1976) and conduct a two-stage estimation procedure. In the first stage I run a probit regression model in which I estimate the expected value of the error (called the inverse Mills ratio, *IMR*) due to the selection effect. This procedure provides an *IMR* that I include as an extra explanatory variable in the second stage (and central) model.

The dependent variable in the probit is *Rated*, a dummy that takes the value of 1 when a president was evaluated by an expert and 0 otherwise. The independent variables for the first-stage model capture factors associated to the likelihood that a president will be assessed. As introduced in Chapter 5, these variables are *Country Size*, *GDP*, *Time in office* and *Google Mentions*. I expect that the probability that a president will be rated increases when the president belongs to a country that is bigger, has a larger GDP, when the head of government has been more time in office and is more mentioned in Google Scholar.

Table 6.1 shows the results of the probit, including the model estimated with marginal effects and the proportional reduction on error.⁵⁷ The probit has a high degree of fit ($\text{prob} > \chi^2 = 0.000$), explains 71% of the cases correctly and reduces the prediction error from merely relying on the modal category by 29%. All the independent variables are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Once marginal effects are computed, we observe that the likelihood that a president will be rated increases in 0.4% when *Country Size* increases in one million of square kilometres, and the same percentage when the GDP increases in one hundred billion dollars or the president stays one more year in office, holding all other variables to their mean. The results also show that, holding all other variables to their mean, each 10,000 additional mentions that a head of state receives in Google Scholar increases in 8% the likelihood that he or she will be evaluated. Given that presidents have been mentioned up to 251,000 times, *Google Mentions* is the strongest predictor of the likelihood that a head of government will be assessed. The probit provides an

⁵⁷ The coefficients of the probit model are difficult to interpret because they measure the change in the dependent variable associated with a change in one of the explanatory variables. Marginal effects represent a more useful measure. They are computed via the partial first-derivative method where continuous variables are evaluated at their mean values and binary variables are evaluated from zero to one.

IMR that is included as an independent variable in the second-stage models to account for selection bias.⁵⁸

Table 6.1: Probability that a President will be Assessed

	(6.1.1) Probit <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.1.2) Marginal Effects <i>b/(se)</i>
Country Size (millions of km ²)	0.061*** (0.007)	0.004*** (0.001)
GDP (hundreds of US\$ billions)	0.063*** (0.012)	0.004*** (0.001)
Time in Office (years as president)	0.059*** (0.008)	0.004*** (0.001)
Google Mentions (in tens of thousands)	1.342*** (0.316)	0.083*** (0.030)
Log Likelihood	-922.17	
Prob > chi2	0.000	
Pseudo R2	0.233	
Observations	315	
Correctly classified	70.98	
PRE	28.83	

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

6.2 PERSONALITY AND PRESIDENTIAL ATTEMPTS

I use four models in the first test of the theory. The dependent variable in the first model takes the value of 1 in the year in which a president attempts to increase her powers and 0 otherwise. In the second model, the dependent variable is replaced by a dummy that captures only the successful attempts to increase the powers of the heads of state. The dependent variable in models three and four are dichotomous variables that capture when presidents try to relax their

⁵⁸ The dependent variables used in this study were regressed on the independent variables of this first model and they were not correlated. This suggests that the independent variables proposed to explain the dependent variable in one stage of the model do not capture the effect of the independent variables in the second stage of the models.

term limits. Model three captures the presidential attempts, while model four measures only the successes of the heads of government. Given that the four dependent variables are dichotomous, I estimate the models using probit.

The independent variables *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness* capture the two hypotheses. As presented in Chapter 5, *Risk Propensity* is based on the Risk Taking Index (RTI) from Nicholson et al. (2005). This scale captures the general propensity of presidents toward risk asking about their behavior in six domains (recreational, health, career, financial, safety, and social risks). Since presidents have incentives to hide their relation to risk during their tenure (e.g., avoid smoking in public), the experts that filled out the survey were asked to assess the behavior of presidents before they became heads of state. To capture *Assertiveness*, I use a scale taken from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006). The scale, discussed in Chapter 5, is used because it captures the characteristics of chiefs of state who are likely to try to consolidate their power. Through eleven statements, the scale captures individuals who are highly motivated to succeed, do things quickly, know how to convince and lead others, and feel comfortable taking control of things.

The control variables capture alternative explanations of the presidential attempts, including two individual differences of the heads of government, conventional institutional and contextual causes of constitutional change, and the inverse Mills ratio (*IMR*). First, I control for two individual differences of presidents that might be related to their attempts to change the charter. *Political Socialization* captures the presidents' involvement in politics, ranging from those who became president almost or fully by chance, and the leaders who were socialized in politics since they were growing up. *Political Experience* categorizes the political positions that the leaders held before reaching the presidency. This variable ranges from leaders who held no

political position before reaching the presidency, to those who were previously presidents, or had experience as legislators *and* ministers/vice-ministers.

Following Negretto (2013), the first institutional variables capture the status quo for the dependent variable. The reasoning is that presidents may be tempted to change the constitution according to how much powers they have, or how flexible their term limits are. Accordingly, in 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 *Strong Legislative Powers* and *Strong Non-Legislative Powers* trace the effect of existing presidential powers, while in 6.2.3 and 6.2.4 *Immediate Reelection* captures the effect of the presidential electoral rule.⁵⁹

The control variable *Amendment* captures the congressional quorum needed to amend the constitution. This variable goes from zero when there is no Congress or need of congressional support to five when the president needs more than 2/3 of Congress to reform the charter. *Congress* and *President's Party* are two dummies that capture the argument that the conditions that presidents have to change the constitution are contingent on whether there is an elected body with whom to bargain on the reforms and whether the party of the president controls the assembly (having more than half of the seats). *Judicial Review* is a dummy that takes the value of one when a court can review the constitutionality of laws. As argued in the previous chapter, the practice of constitutional review may inhibit the presidential attempts, but can also allow the heads of state to use the courts to legitimate their efforts to change the charter.

Besides institutional considerations, the broader context may play a role in the presidential attempts. Two variables capture the argument that presidents will time their attempts based on how much time they have been in office, and how much time they have until their term

⁵⁹ As discussed in Chapter 5, the presidential powers are collapsed into a dichotomous variable that differentiates between presidential powers that are one standard deviation above the mean (considered to be strong) and the other ones. *Immediate Reelection* takes the value of one when immediate reelection is allowed, and zero otherwise.

expire. *Time in Office* reflects the number of years that presidents have been in office, while *Expected Years Left* captures how much time the head of government expects to continue in power, given any term limits.⁶⁰ Other contextual variables are *Dictatorship* and *GDP per Capita*. The first variable is a dummy that measures whether the government is authoritarian or not, while the second captures an economic factor that other studies have found related to political instability and institutional changes. Table 6.2 presents the four models described and provides the first test of the theory.⁶¹

The first thing noticeable is that the results change when the dependent variables that capture the presidential attempts to change the charter (models 6.2.1 and 6.2.3) are replaced with the presidential successes (models 6.2.2 and 6.2.4).⁶² The effects for the main variables becomes stronger in models 6.2.2 and 6.2.4, suggesting that presidents behave strategically and attempt to reform the charter when the likelihood of success is higher. Something that does not change, however, is that the variables that are (or are not) statistically significant do not vary much when we compare models 6.2.1 to 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 to 6.2.4. This is likely to occur because most of the presidents who attempt to change the charter also succeed.

⁶⁰ These variables are not collinear. In fact, they have a negative correlation (-0.23). *Time in Office* progresses linearly (taking the value of the number of years that the head of government has been in office) while *Expected Years Left* does not, because the counting of years is adjusted due to changes to constitutional terms or reelections. For instance, in 2008 the American President Barack Obama could expect to be in office four more years, exactly the same expectation after winning reelection.

⁶¹ I include Time in Office squared and cubed as a convenient and reliable way to control for temporal dependence, following Carter and Signorino (2010).

⁶² The results do not substantively change when the models are re-estimated without the IMR.

Table 6.2: Presidential Attempts to Change the Constitution

	(6.2.1) Powers Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.2.2) Powers Success <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.2.3) Term Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.2.4) Term Success <i>b/(se)</i>
Risk Propensity	5.600** (2.807)	9.134* (5.359)	1.727* (1.331)	1.869* (1.122)
Assertiveness	2.581* (1.342)	6.216** (2.544)	1.494*** (0.699)	2.231*** (0.858)
Political Socialization	-0.985 (0.649)	-1.646 (1.026)	0.041 (0.311)	0.094 (0.279)
Political Experience	0.551 (0.337)	0.598 (0.458)	0.002 (0.163)	-0.013 (0.152)
Strong Leg. Powers	1.791* (0.915)	4.056** (1.663)		
Strong Non Leg. Powers	3.542** (1.350)	5.967** (2.381)		
Immediate Reelection			2.247*** (0.623)	2.020*** (0.649)
Amendment	-0.061 (0.364)	0.517 (0.543)	0.306 (0.204)	0.044 (0.154)
Congress	2.705 (2.809)	4.563 (5.046)	0.595 (1.197)	0.717 (1.086)
Presidents' Party	0.296 (1.020)	1.428 (1.601)	-0.911* (0.516)	-0.539 (0.433)
Judicial Review	1.158 (1.577)	2.175 (2.472)	2.252** (0.958)	1.279* (0.754)
Time in Office	1.744** (0.715)	3.501*** (1.330)	1.071** (0.459)	1.000** (0.407)
Time in Office²	-0.165 (0.135)	-0.494* (0.270)	-0.078 (0.091)	-0.117 (0.092)
Time in Office³	0.006 (0.008)	0.023 (0.017)	0.001 (0.006)	0.004 (0.006)
Expected Years Left	0.853** (0.338)	1.718*** (0.641)	0.507*** (0.185)	0.481*** (0.160)
Dictatorship	2.675* (1.427)	4.687** (1.916)	1.120 (0.689)	1.437** (0.651)
GDP per Capita	-0.007	0.052	-0.220	-0.130

	(0.126)	(0.135)	(0.151)	(0.119)
IMR	1.026	0.372	0.418	0.339
	(1.958)	(2.308)	(0.824)	(0.609)
N	730	733	730	731
Groups	135	135	135	135
Prob > chi2	0.059	0.280	0.299	0.248

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

As expected, *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness* are positively associated to the likelihood that presidents will try to increase their powers and relax their term limits. These results confirm the expectation that the personality traits are relevant to understand why presidents make an effort to reform the constitution to consolidate their power.

The institutional variables that trace the effect of the existing dependent variable –*Strong Legislative Powers*, *Strong Non-Legislative Powers*, and *Immediate Reelection*– are in all cases positively associated to the presidential attempts. In other words, presidents who enjoy strong powers and who are allowed to immediate re-election are more likely to try to expand their powers and relax even further their term limits. This result has two interesting implications. First, presidents can concentrate more power when they already have significant amounts. It seems that only extreme institutional powers (e.g., unrestricted reelection) constitute a limit. Second, the result is consistent with the theory proposed. A central assumption of this research is that, *ceteris paribus*, presidents *always* want more power. This assumption builds on the fact that most politicians who reach the presidency have had a long-standing career in which they permanently seek to increase their influence. Therefore, there is no reason to expect that the drive to accumulate power vanishes once politicians become president.⁶³ Arguably, presidents who are powerful or can govern two consecutive terms face less difficulties to consolidate their power via

⁶³ As discussed on Chapter 3, as all individual differences, the drive for power should also vary across individuals. But given that we know that all presidents have demonstrated to have a strong drive for power –all the individuals in the sample voluntarily reached the presidency–, and that we cannot access the heads of the presidents to understand their drive and quantify it, the assumption that presidents always want more power seems reasonable.

a constitutional change than presidents who have less powers or have a shorter time frame to reform the charter. The variable *Judicial Review* is positively associated to the (successful and unsuccessful) attempts of presidents to relax their term limits. This result invites to examine the influence that presidents have on the courts. Some leaders, such as Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and former Costa Rican President Óscar Arias, have been accused of exerting their influence in the judicial power to have courts approving an extension of their term limits.

Perhaps the most remarkable result of the institutional variables is that most of them fail to explain the attempts made by the heads of government to consolidate their power. Neither *Amendment* nor *Congress* are statistically significant in any of the models, while *Presidents' Party* is significant only in 6.2.3. The findings show that legislatures have had a negligible role in the presidential attempts: the congressional quorum needed to amend the charter, the existence of an acting Congress and whether a president has a majority in the assembly (except in 6.2.3) are unrelated to the attempts. As I discuss below, these results can be understood as a consequence of how most presidents make constitutional changes to consolidate their power: via replacements. Among the 48 attempts to change the constitution, 30 were done through a replacement. As discussed in Chapter 3, many of these replacements were done without following existing rules, given that charters rarely include rules to be replaced. Consequently, several presidents were able to bypass institutional limits such as the congressional quorum needed to amend the charter in their attempts to change the constitution.

Two contextual variables that are statistically significant in all of the models are *Time in Office* and *Expected Years Left*. These results suggest that presidents time their efforts to change the constitution strategically. The leaders are more likely to try to change the charter when they have a reasonable amount of time ahead in the office, but also as they acquire experience leading

the executive. These results may seem contradictory but they are not. For instance, Chávez managed to change the constitution in 2009, when he expected to be four more years in power and after seven years as President of Venezuela.

The variable *Dictatorship* is positively related to the presidential attempts and is statistically significant in 6.2.1, 6.2.2, and 6.2.4. This result shows that autocrats are more likely to try to consolidate their power trying to change the constitution, arguably because they face smaller challenges to their attempts. Dictators may also be more tempted to legalize the de facto authoritarian nature of their office.

I estimate predicted probabilities to have a better understanding of the substantive impact of the explanatory variables on the likelihood that the president will try to change the constitution. Figures 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 show that *Risk Propensity* has a stronger effect when presidents attempt to increase their powers than when they try to relax their term limits.

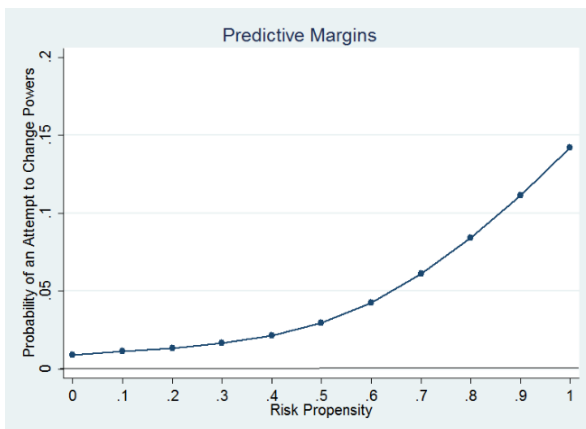


Figure 6.1.1: Risk and Powers

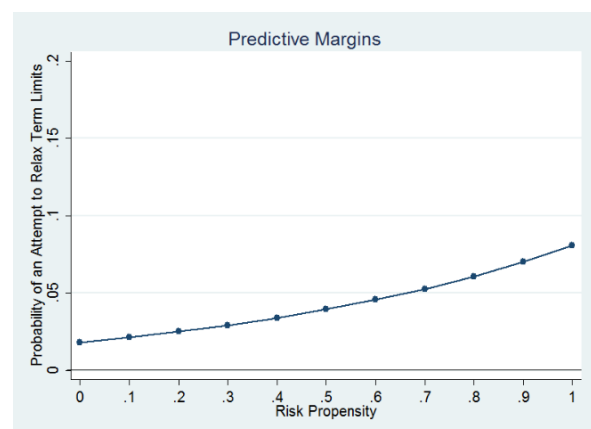


Figure 6.1.2: Risk and Term Limits

When presidents score very low in *Risk Propensity*, the predicted probability that they will try to increase their powers is only 0.9%, but it raises to 14% when the leaders are highly risk-prone. Similarly, when presidents score very low in *Risk Propensity*, the probability that

they will try to relax their term limits is just 1.8%. In contrast, the chances increases up to 8.1% when presidents are highly risk-prone. When presidents score above the median (0.5) in *Risk Propensity*, the probability that they will try to increase their powers increases significantly. In contrast, the relation between *Risk Propensity* and the attempts to relax term limits seems linear.

Figures 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 show that when presidents are highly unassertive, the chances that they will try to adapt the constitution to consolidate their power is almost zero. There is a chance of 0.09% that highly unassertive presidents will try to increase their powers and the probability that they will try to relax their term limits is just 0.05%. In contrast, the probability that highly assertive presidents will try to change their powers increases up to 6.8%, and to 10.3% in the attempts to relax term limits. Interestingly, the probability of observing a president attempting to change the constitution to increase powers (figure 6.2.1) or relax the term limits (figure 6.2.2) dramatically increases when his or her level of assertiveness surpasses 3.3. While the presidents of the sample tend to be assertive, it seems that only once they have this trait over a certain level (3.3) they actively try to change the charter.

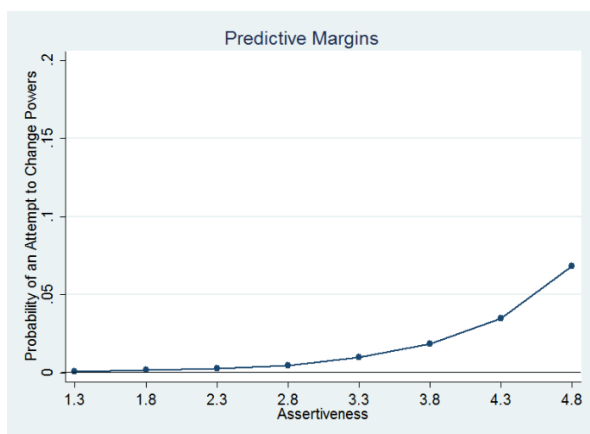


Figure 6.2.1: Assertiveness and Powers

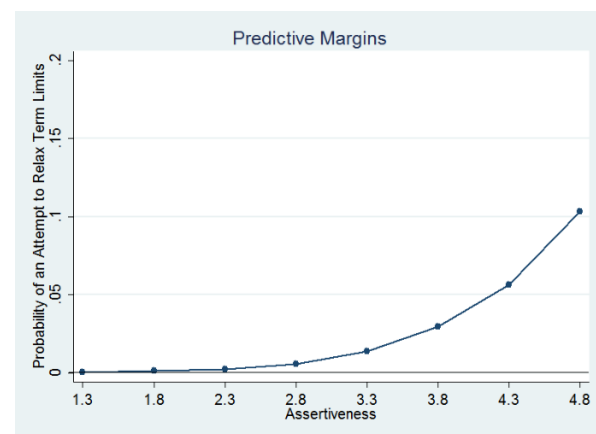


Figure 6.2.2: Assertiveness and Term Limits

Taken together, the results support the notion that *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness* are highly relevant factors that explain the presidential attempts to consolidate their power. The results remark the importance of the personality traits in explaining the behavior of leaders.

Table 6.3 reports the predicted probabilities for the extreme values of the control variables that were statistically associated to the presidential attempts on table 6.2. Holding all variables to their means, the likelihood that the president will try to increase powers or relax his or her term limits is almost zero: only 0.001%.

Table 6.3 Substantive Impact of the Control Variables

Value on the Independent and Control Variables	Powers Attempts	Relax Term Attempts
All variables at their mean	0.001%	0.001%
Strong Leg. Powers = 0	0.7%	
Strong Leg. Powers = 1	2.2%	
Strong Non-Leg. Powers = 0	0.3%	
Strong Non-Leg. Powers = 1	5.4%	
Immediate Reelection = 0		0.7%
Immediate Reelection = 1		11.6%
Presidents' Party = 0		4.5%
Presidents' Party = 1		2%
Judicial Review = 0		0.8%
Judicial Review = 1		6.7%
Time in Office = 1	0.1%	0.9%
Time in Office = 4	4.1%	18.0%
Expected Years Left = 1	0.5%	1.5%
Expected Years Left = 4	3.2%	15.0%
Dictatorship = 0	0.5%	
Dictatorship = 1	4.4%	

NOTE: The table presents the predicted probabilities for each variable holding all the other variables to their mean.

As noticed in table 6.2, the likelihood that a president will try to change the charter also varies according to institutional variables. Among the institutional variables that trace the effect of the existing dependent variable, their effect on the presidential attempts is not as strong as the personality traits tested. The only exception occurs when presidents enjoy *Immediate Reelection*. In such cases, the probability that the heads of state will try to relax their term limits is 11.6%.

Another institution that has a strong effect on the dependent variable is *Judicial Review*. When there is a court capable of reviewing the constitutionality of laws, the probability that presidents will try to relax their term limits increase from 0.8% to 6.7%.

The results for *Time in Office* and *Expected Years Left* suggest that presidents time their efforts to change the constitution strategically. When the heads of government have been only one year in office, the chances that they will attempt a constitutional reform is less than 1%. Similarly, when presidents expect to be only one more year in office, the chances that they will try to reform the charter is equal or less than 1.5%.

In contrast, the probability that presidents who have been four years in office will try to increase their powers is 4.1%, while the chances that they will try to relax their term limits is 18%. In the same vein, the probability significantly increases when presidents expect to be four more years in power. In such cases, the chances are 3.2% that the leaders will try to increase their powers and 15% that they will to relax their term limits.

These results suggest that presidents time their attempts strategically: when they have some experience in office and significant time left to make the reforms. Such circumstances are typical of presidents who lead reforms relatively early in their second or third term, such as the reforms of Fujimori in 1996 and Chávez in 2009.

Regime type also changes the likelihood that a president will try to change the constitution. Leaders of authoritarian regimes are 3.9% more likely to attempt to increase their powers than heads of state from democracies and semi-democracies.

In the following sections I test the robustness of the results addressing different potential criticism to the theory. The central findings tend to hold taking into account potential endogeneity problems and using different samples and model specifications.

6.3 ENDOGENEITY CONCERNS

As mentioned in Chapter 5, there could be an endogeneity problem because the participants in the survey could have assessed the presidents' traits based on whether they attempted to change the constitution or not. If such reverse-coding happened, then reported levels of *Assertiveness* could be partially explained by the values of the dependent variables. The same bias does not apply to *Risk Propensity* because what presidents did during their government is unrelated to the score that they received for this variable. As explained in the previous chapter, to anticipate endogeneity problems in the survey I asked experts to evaluate the relation between presidents and risk *before* and *during* their presidency. Given that heads of state have incentives to hide their relation to risk while they are in office, I use as the true measure of risk the assessment of presidents' behavior *before* they reach the presidency.

To address potential endogeneity in the assertiveness measure, I estimate an instrumental variable procedure. I use as instruments three individual differences of the head of government that are unrelated to the experts' judgments and that the literature has positively associated to an assertive personality: age (Kimble et al., 1984), educational attainment (Onyeizugbo, 2003) and whether the individual was imprisoned or not (Heimberg and Harrison, 1980).

In table 6.4, models 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 replicate models 6.2.1 and 6.2.3, respectively, but accounting for endogeneity. The Wald test of exogeneity of the instrumental variables is statistically significant in 6.4.1 and 6.4.2, suggesting that the models provide sufficient information to reject the null that there is no endogeneity.⁶⁴ Once endogeneity is addressed, some changes in the models emerge.

⁶⁴ The Wald test of exogeneity tests whether the residuals from the first stage are correlated with those from the final model. When they are, it suggests that instrumenting for the endogenous variable was the correct choice.

Table 6.4: Presidential Attempts and Instrumental Variables

	(6.2.1) Powers Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.4.1) IV Powers Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.2.3) Term Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.4.2) IV Term Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>
Risk Propensity	5.600** (2.807)	-0.243 (0.464)	1.727* (1.331)	-0.397 (0.275)
Assertiveness	2.581* (1.342)	1.849*** (0.183)	1.494*** (0.699)	2.010*** (0.109)
Political Socialization	-0.985 (0.649)	-0.205** (0.080)	0.041 (0.311)	-0.158** (0.066)
Political Experience	0.551 (0.337)	0.026 (0.047)	0.002 (0.163)	-0.013 (0.036)
Strong Leg. Powers	1.791* (0.915)	0.126 (0.154)		
Strong Non Leg. Powers	3.542** (1.350)	0.358* (0.211)		
Immediate Reelection			2.247*** (0.623)	0.265 (0.215)
Amendment	-0.061 (0.364)	-0.048 (0.051)	0.306 (0.204)	0.005 (0.044)
Congress	2.705 (2.809)	0.437 (0.488)	0.595 (1.197)	0.142 (0.291)
Presidents' Party	0.296 (1.020)	-0.034 (0.152)	-0.911* (0.516)	-0.180 (0.146)
Judicial Review	1.158 (1.577)	0.242 (0.209)	2.252** (0.958)	0.518** (0.226)
Time in Office	1.744** (0.715)	0.372* (0.196)	1.071** (0.459)	0.347** (0.147)
Time in Office²	-0.165 (0.135)	-0.065* (0.039)	-0.078 (0.091)	-0.047 (0.029)
Time in Office³	0.006 (0.008)	0.003 (0.002)	0.001 (0.006)	0.002 (0.002)
Expected Years Left	0.853** (0.338)	0.169* (0.096)	0.507*** (0.185)	0.133** (0.058)
Dictatorship	2.675* (1.427)	0.424* (0.220)	1.120 (0.689)	0.261 (0.177)
GDP per Capita	-0.007 (0.126)	0.009 (0.017)	-0.220 (0.151)	-0.026 (0.029)
IMR	1.026 (1.958)	0.010 (0.247)	0.418 (0.824)	-0.169 (0.172)
<i>N</i>	730	730	730	730
<i>Groups</i>	135		135	
<i>Prob > chi2</i>	0.059	0.000	0.299	0.000
<i>Wald Test of Exogeneity</i>		0.020		0.000

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Compared to previous results, accounting for endogeneity through an instrumental variable procedure reveals some continuities and also some changes. The most important continuity is that *Assertiveness* is positively associated to the presidential attempts to increase their powers and relax their term limits. Other variables that remain associated to the dependent variables are *Non Legislative Powers* and *Dictatorship* in the attempts to increase powers, *Judicial Review* in the attempts to relax term limits, and *Time in Office* and *Expected Years Left* in all types of attempts.

The most relevant change observed in 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 is that *Risk Propensity* loses statistical significance as an explanatory factor of the attempts to increase powers and relax term limits. Another interesting finding is that, in both models that account for endogeneity, the control variable *Political Socialization* becomes statistically significant. Other variables that lose statistical significance are *Strong Legislative Powers* in 6.4.1 and *Immediate Reelection* in 6.4.2.

The differences between the results shown in table 6.2 and table 6.4 could be due to the common loss of efficiency characteristics of models that use instrumental variables. However, as a robustness check they cast some doubts on the strength of the relation between *Risk Propensity* and the presidential attempts.

6.4 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

6.4.1 Conditional Effects

The previous sections demonstrated that the personality traits *Assertiveness* and *Risk Propensity* are important in explaining the presidential attempts. In contrast, the lack of statistical

significance for several of the institutional factors considered suggests that they are incidental in explaining the presidential attempts. From an institutionalist approach, these results are surprising because they suggest that the institutional setting in which presidents work is not directly related to something so important as the presidential attempts to change the constitution. However, institutions may still matter, if there is evidence that the relation between institutional rules and the presidential attempts are conditional to the personality traits of the leaders. In this section I examine whether such conditional relation exists. If the answer to this question is “yes,” then it will mean that institutional rules and personality traits are not independently related to the presidential attempts. In other words, it will mean that the institutional setting in which presidents work constraint certain personal characteristics of the leaders. However, if the answer is “no,” then there will be no evidence that institutions matter for the presidential attempts.

Arguably the institution that most clearly should constraint presidential behavior is the congressional quorum needed to amend the charter (*Amendment*), because it lays out how difficult it will be for presidents to succeed in their attempts to change the constitution. In theory, presidents that only need to gather a relatively small amount of congressional support to change the charter should face lower constraints than leaders who need to gather high quorums.

I test the conditional effect of *Amendment* on the presidential attempts. Therefore, on table 6.5 I replicate the models interacting the personality traits variables and *Amendment*. The only interaction that remains statistically significant is that between *Risk Propensity* and *Amendment*. The results once the interactions are included are unsurprising, since in the previous models *Amendment* was never statistically significant. However, it is worth to explore the conditional effect of *Amendment* on the presidential attempts at different values of *Risk Propensity and Assertiveness*.

Table 6.5: Presidential Attempts and Interactions

	(6.2.1) Powers Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.5.1) (6.2.1) with interactions <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.2.3) Term Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.5.1) (6.2.3) with interactions <i>b/(se)</i>
Risk Propensity	5.600** (2.807)	-2.284 (2.148)	1.727* (1.331)	-4.108 (4.302)
Assertiveness	2.581* (1.342)	-0.022 (0.725)	1.494*** (0.699)	3.965* (2.232)
Risk*Amend.		1.079* (0.628)		1.583 (1.136)
Assertiveness*Amend.		0.228 (0.206)		-0.637 (0.490)
Political Socialization	-0.985 (0.649)	-0.295 (0.220)	0.041 (0.311)	-0.187 (0.342)
Political Experience	0.551 (0.337)	0.101 (0.124)	0.002 (0.163)	0.119 (0.188)
Strong Leg. Powers	1.791* (0.915)	0.350 (0.385)		
Strong Non Leg. Powers	3.542** (1.350)	0.495 (0.469)		
Immediate Reelection			2.247*** (0.623)	2.196*** (0.639)
Amendment	-0.061 (0.364)	-1.197 (0.793)	0.306 (0.204)	2.381 (1.816)
Congress	2.705 (2.809)	1.881 (1.195)	0.595 (1.197)	0.722 (1.183)
Presidents' Party	0.296 (1.020)	-0.031 (0.330)	-0.911* (0.516)	-0.866* (0.505)
Judicial Review	1.158 (1.577)	0.331 (0.501)	2.252** (0.958)	2.410** (1.047)
Time in Office	1.744** (0.715)	0.651* (0.356)	1.071** (0.459)	1.056** (0.464)
Time in Office²	-0.165 (0.135)	-0.091 (0.072)	-0.078 (0.091)	-0.076 (0.092)
Time in Office³	0.006 (0.008)	0.005 (0.004)	0.001 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)
Expected Years Left	0.853** (0.338)	0.370*** (0.142)	0.507*** (0.185)	0.501*** (0.187)
Dictatorship	2.675* (1.427)	0.600 (0.437)	1.120 (0.689)	0.958 (0.672)
GDP per Capita	-0.007 (0.126)	-0.024 (0.045)	-0.220 (0.151)	-0.221 (0.152)
IMR	1.026 (1.958)	0.320 (0.526)	0.418 (0.824)	0.300 (0.829)
<i>N</i>	730	730	730	730

Groups	135	135	135	135
<i>Prob > chi2</i>	0.059	0.851	0.428	0.515

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figures 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 show the marginal effect of *Amendment* on the presidential attempts at different values of *Risk Propensity* with *Assertiveness* fixed at its median value.⁶⁵ Interestingly, in all cases the impact of *Amendment* when the *Risk Propensity* of the leaders increase cannot be statistically differentiated from zero.

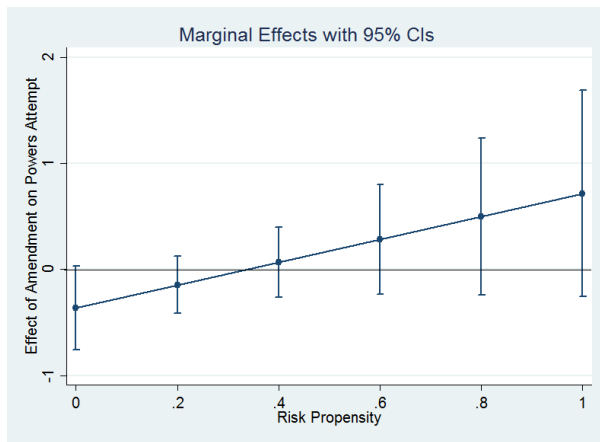


Figure 6.3.1: Marginal Effect on Powers

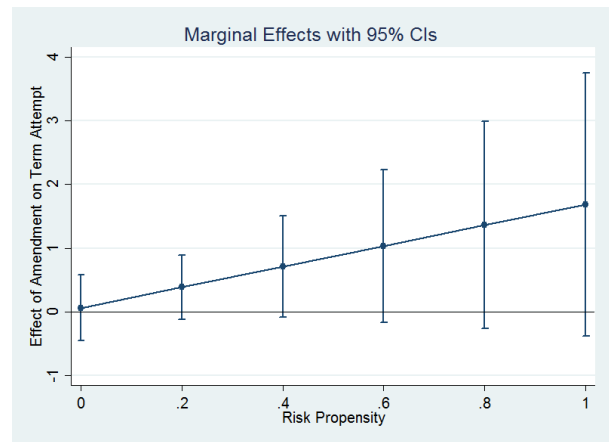


Figure 6.3.2: Marginal Effect on Term Limits

Figures 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 reveal the marginal effect of *Amendment* on the presidential attempts at different values of *Assertiveness* with *Risk Propensity* fixed at its median value. As in figures 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, the marginal effect of *Amendment* on the presidential attempts to consolidate their power is not conditional on the level of presidential assertiveness.

Taken together figures 6.3.1, 6.3.2, 6.4.1 and 6.4.2, it seems safe to consider that how rigid the constitution is does not constrain the relation between the *Risk Propensity* and the *Assertiveness* of the presidents and their attempts to change the constitution. Stated differently,

⁶⁵ I present the graph with *Assertiveness* fixed at its median value because when I tested the relation at different values of this trait the relation between *Amendment* and the presidential attempts did not experience any change.

the relation between the personalities and the presidential attempts is independent from the level of constitutional rigidity.

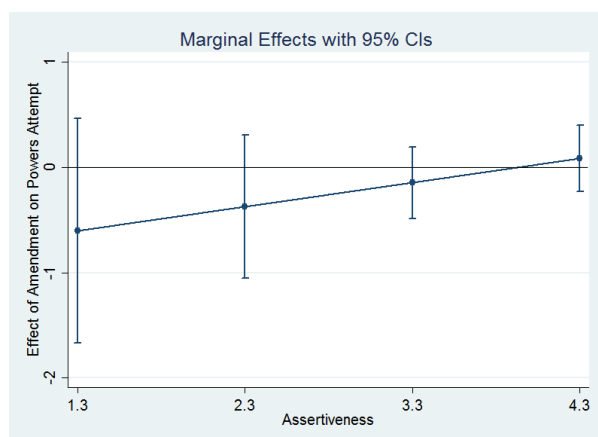


Figure 6.4.1: Marginal Effect on Powers

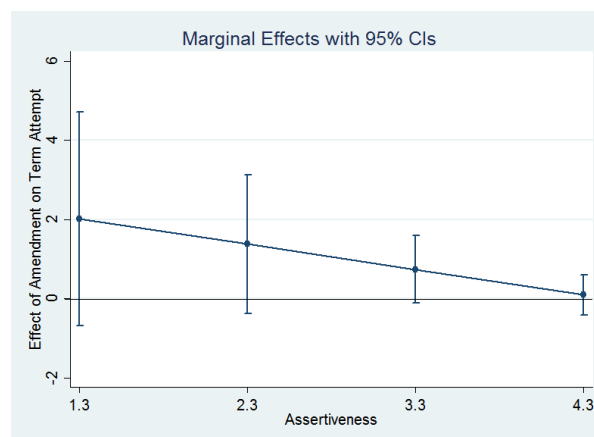


Figure 6.4.2: Marginal Effect on Term Limits

The absence of a conditional effect may be considered counterintuitive but it is not so surprising when the presidential attempts are closely examined. As shown in Table 3.1, most of the presidents in the sample chose to replace the constitution rather than to amend it, violating the rules that are supposed to constraint presidential behavior.

The results, in any case, should be interpreted with caution. The constitutional rigidity does not constrain the *Assertiveness* and *Risk Propensity* of presidents when they try to change the constitution, but such finding does not suggest that institutions do not constraint presidential behavior. Further examinations may reveal an interplay between the individuality of the heads of government and the institutional setting in which they perform.

6.4.2 Homogeneity Concerns

The sample used could be object of three main types of criticism. First, it could be argued that it artificially conflates mainly developing countries (Latin American countries) with a highly

developed nation (the United States). Therefore, the presidential attempts such as the ones examined in this study can be considered as unlikely to emerge in the superpower due to different factors, such as dissimilarities in civic culture, institutional development, and checks and balances.

A second potential criticism is that the sample conflates different regime types. Numerous studies have shown that political institutions work differently according to the regime type (for a prominent analysis, see Gandhi 2008). Among other things, only in electorally competitive regimes presidents face a strong opposition from Congress. Further, authoritarian leaders may have lower incentives to make legal changes to their powers and terms given that dictators have more leverage to violate constitutional constraints. In Chapter 3 I argued that while regime types undeniably differ in highly relevant ways, democratic and nondemocratic leaders face similar motivations to change the constitution. Throughout the recent Latin American history, authoritarian leaders have actively pursued changes to the charter because their power is constitutionally-based. In pursuing constitutional changes, autocrats have faced mass and elite oppositions that resemble the congressional obstacles faced by democratic leaders. Despite these caveats, I re-test the theory using as sample different regime types.

Finally, puppet and interim presidents may have little motivations to attempt to adapt the constitution to consolidate their power. Puppet presidents represent the preferences of a leader in the shadow, while interim leaders are completing the mandate of someone else and may lack enough support to attempt relevant institutional changes. The weakness of this criticism is that both interim and puppet presidents may still have motivations to adapt the charter to their preferences, and they may be able to succeed. I take the data for puppet and interim leaders from the database of Pérez-Liñán et al (2015). These type of leaders are not abundant in the sample;

only 0.2% of the observations belong to puppet presidents, and 4.2% to interim leaders. Nonetheless, I re-estimate the model leaving interim and puppet presidents out of the sample.

To address the three criticisms to the sample, in table 6.6 I re-estimate the central model of the presidential attempts to increase their powers excluding the United States (model 6.6.1), excluding dictatorships (6.6.2), and excluding puppets and interim leaders (6.6.4).

The table shows that all the independent and control variables remain statistically significant across all models. The consistency of the results across samples clears the doubts about the sample used. In fact, the effect of *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness* tend to become higher when the United States is taken out of the sample. In other words, the decision of including American presidents in the sample tends to decrease the strong relation that exists between the personality traits and the efforts made by presidents to change the constitution. Arguably this occurs because, despite American presidents have a similar distribution of *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness* compared to the rest of the sample (as shown in Appendix 5.D), since 1945 none of them have tried to change the charter given the extreme unlikelihood that they would succeed in such attempts.

A surprising result is that *Political Socialization* and *Political Experience* become statistically significant in the models that leave out the United States and puppet and interim heads of government. Both variables are interesting because they capture individual differences of presidents, and therefore reinforce the proposition that the uniqueness of presidents is central to understand their behavior. These surprising results suggest that the heads of government who were socialized in politics at a later stage on their lives and those who held more important political positions are more likely to try to increase their powers.

Table 6.6: Presidential Attempts to Increase their Powers, Different Samples

	(6.2.1) Central Model <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.6.1) Without USA <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.6.2) Without Dictators <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.6.3) Neither Interim nor Puppets <i>b/(se)</i>
Risk Propensity	5.600** (2.807)	9.745*** (3.672)	5.337* (2.973)	5.025* (2.705)
Assertiveness	2.581* (1.342)	4.789*** (1.646)	6.765*** (2.33)	2.668* (1.386)
Political Socialization	-0.985 (0.649)	-1.729** (0.669)	-1.225 (0.83)	-1.006* (0.569)
Political Experience	0.551 (0.337)	0.933** (0.444)	0.892 (0.698)	0.572* (0.305)
Strong Leg. Powers	1.791* (0.915)	2.310** (1.163)	3.789** (1.82)	1.673* (0.951)
Strong Non Leg. Powers	3.542** (1.350)	6.730*** (2.004)	7.167*** (2.571)	3.285** (1.414)
Amendment	-0.061 (0.364)	-0.588 (0.561)	-0.048 (0.514)	0.024 (0.378)
Congress	2.705 (2.809)	6.541 (6.442)		2.328 (2.417)
Presidents' Party	0.296 (1.020)	0.390 (1.314)	0.097 (1.64)	0.206 (0.971)
Judicial Review	1.158 (1.577)	0.672 (2.687)	1.280 (5.721)	1.484 (1.633)
Time in Office	1.744** (0.715)	3.132*** (1.159)	1.859*** (0.641)	1.510** (0.720)
Time in Office²	-0.165 (0.135)	-0.267 (0.196)	-0.327 (0.212)	-0.155 (0.132)
Time in Office³	0.006 (0.008)	0.010 (0.012)	0.017 (0.024)	0.006 (0.009)
Expected Years Left	0.853** (0.338)	1.514** (0.632)	0.903*** (0.231)	0.685** (0.330)
Dictatorship/ Democracy	2.675* (1.427)	6.902** (2.703)		2.830* (1.549)
GDP per Capita	-0.007 (0.126)	1.283*** (0.491)	-0.123 (0.101)	0.002 (0.165)
IMR	1.026 (1.958)	4.005 (2.514)	0.748 (2.211)	0.672 (1.744)
<i>N</i>	730	638	572	692
<i>Groups</i>	135	122	112	128
<i>Prob > chi2</i>	0.0011	0.011	0.048	0.441

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

These results seem contradictory, but in the following chapter I discuss why they are rather complementary. Based on the interviews conducted with former presidents, I propose that

leaders who have participated in politics for more time are more fearful of the challenges entailed in a constitutional reform. This is true except for the cases in which politicians have held more political positions. In those cases, I argue that experienced politicians are more confident in the likelihood that they will succeed in trying to increase their powers.

The results for *Political Socialization* go in line with the findings of Carreras (2012), who shows that outsider presidents (most of which had limited socialization into politics before being elected) increase the level of executive-legislative conflict. Carreras claims that outsiders tend to confront the legislature because they do not have enough support in Congress and lack the networks and understanding to build a larger and stable coalition in the assembly. In the last three decades, at least four outsider heads of state -Peruvian Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), Ecuadorean Rafael Correa (2006-), Paraguayan Fernando Lugo (2008-2012), and Venezuelan Hugo Chávez (1998-2013)- tried to consolidate their power replacing the constitution.

Table 6.7 replicates the models presented in table 6.6, but using as dependent variable the presidential attempts to relax their term limits. In this case, the most interesting change occurs when *Risk Propensity* loses statistical significance in the models that use alternative samples (6.7.1, 6.7.2, and 6.7.3). This suggests that this variable is sensitive to model specification, casting doubts on the robustness of its relation to the dependent variable.

As in table 6.2.3, *Assertiveness*, *Immediate Reelection*, *Judicial Review*, *Time in Office*, and *Expected Years Left* are statistically significant and positively associated to the presidential attempts in the three subsamples used on table 6.7. One difference with respect to the results shown on 6.6.1 and 6.6.3 is that *Political Socialization* and *Political Experience* do not become statistically significant.

Table 6.7: Presidential Attempts to Change their Terms, Different Samples

	(6.2.3) Term Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.7.1) Without USA <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.7.2) Without Dictators <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.7.3) Neither Interim nor Puppets <i>b/(se)</i>
Risk Propensity	1.727* (1.331)	1.769 (1.373)	4.809 (3.532)	1.582 (1.307)
Assertiveness	1.494*** (0.699)	1.508** (0.722)	3.063*** (0.395)	1.590** (0.735)
Political Socialization	0.041 (0.311)	0.024 (0.327)	0.129 (0.895)	-0.044 (0.347)
Political Experience	0.002 (0.163)	0.015 (0.171)	1.140 (1.21)	0.044 (0.169)
Immediate Reelection	2.247*** (0.623)	2.292*** (0.635)	2.646*** (0.816)	2.185*** (0.611)
Amendment	0.306 (0.204)	0.299 (0.211)	0.274 (0.319)	0.351 (0.215)
Congress	0.595 (1.197)	0.677 (1.252)		0.710 (1.25)
Presidents' Party	-0.911* (0.516)	-0.865 (0.532)	-1.331 (0.867)	-0.965* (0.513)
Judicial Review	2.252** (0.958)	2.136** (0.955)	3.549*** (0.828)	2.326** (0.969)
Time in Office	1.071** (0.459)	1.076** (0.469)	2.043*** (0.46)	1.047** (0.464)
Time in Office²	-0.078 (0.091)	-0.068 (0.094)	-0.054 (0.082)	-0.082 (0.092)
Time in Office³	0.001 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)	0.004 (0.011)	0.002 (0.006)
Expected Years Left	0.507*** (0.185)	0.539*** (0.198)	0.811*** (0.214)	0.469*** (0.181)
Dictatorship	1.120 (0.689)	1.143 (0.722)		1.247* (0.696)
GDP per Capita	-0.220 (0.151)	-0.149 (0.179)	-0.471 (0.452)	-0.233 (0.157)
IMR	0.418 (0.824)	0.526 (0.885)	0.463 (1.01)	0.167 (0.871)
<i>N</i>	730	638	572	692
<i>Groups</i>	135	122	112	128
<i>Prob > chi2</i>	0.299	0.313	0.015	0.2942

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

The overall picture that emerges from tables 6.6 and 6.7 is that the results do not vary much when different subsamples are used. When the theory is tested using subsamples,

Assertiveness proves to have a robust relation to the two types of presidential attempts to change the constitution examined in this study, while *Risk Propensity* loses statistical significance when the dependent variable are the attempts to relax term limits.

6.5 ALTERNATIVE SPECIFICATIONS

As an additional check for the robustness of the results, I re-estimate the models including several potential alternative explanations of the attempts to change the charter. These alternative accounts include more personality traits, institutional factors and contextual variables.

Among the new personality traits, I included the five factors of personality (*Extraversion*, *Agreeableness*, *Conscientiousness*, *Neuroticism*, and *Openness*) and *Dominance*. I test the relationship between the five factors and the presidential attempts to explore if the core psychological traits can provide a better explanation of presidential behavior than medium-level traits such as *Risk Propensity* and *Assertiveness*. *Dominance* is included because it shares some similarities to *Assertiveness*.⁶⁶ I also explore with further detail some characteristics of the charter and the legislature. I consider variables that Elkins et al. (2009) have related to constitutional endurance; *Scope* (percentage of selected issues covered in the charter), *Inclusiveness* (of the constitution-making process), *Detail* (Words per issue covered in the charter) and *Age* (of the charter). I take the data for these variables from these authors. I also test for the effective number of parties in the House (*ENPH*), taken from Pérez-Liñán et al. (2014), and the *Parliamentary Power Index*, taken from Elkins et al. (2009).

⁶⁶ The differences are discussed in Chapter 5, pages 136-137.

Finally, I test for two types of contextual variables. One group considers the economic factors *GDP Growth* and *Inflation*. The other set includes the spatiotemporal considerations *Diffusion* (number of presidential attempts to change the constitution in the Americas in the last three years), *Cold War* (years since 1990), *Third Wave* (years since 1978), *Civil Wars* (whether there is one for a given year), and the regional dummies *Central America* and *South America*. The results are presented on table 6.8.

Table 6.8: Presidential Attempts to Increase their Powers, Alternative Specifications

	(6.2.1) Powers Attempt	(6.8.1) Age	(6.8.2) Central America
	<i>b/(se)</i>	<i>b/(se)</i>	<i>b/(se)</i>
Risk Propensity	5.600** (2.807)	6.378** (3.160)	4.169* (2.511)
Assertiveness	2.581* (1.342)	3.756*** (1.398)	2.031* (1.090)
Political Socialization	-0.985 (0.649)	-0.928* (0.557)	-0.827 (0.537)
Political Experience	0.551 (0.337)	0.628* (0.345)	0.431 (0.298)
Strong Leg. Powers	1.791* (0.915)	1.811 (1.120)	1.829* (0.989)
Strong Non Leg. Powers	3.542** (1.350)	5.424*** (1.590)	3.619** (1.565)
Amendment	-0.061 (0.364)	-0.233 (0.462)	-0.167 (0.323)
Congress	2.705 (2.809)	3.288 (3.627)	2.745 (2.542)
Presidents' Party	0.296 (1.020)	0.518 (1.100)	-0.307 (0.855)
Judicial Review	1.158 (1.577)	-0.301 (1.999)	1.483 (1.466)
Time in Office	1.744** (0.715)	2.023** (0.844)	1.507** (0.681)
Time in Office²	-0.165 (0.135)	-0.186 (0.160)	-0.154 (0.127)
Time in Office³	0.006 (0.008)	0.007 (0.010)	0.006 (0.008)
Expected Years Left	0.853** (0.338)	0.876** (0.368)	0.727** (0.295)

Dictatorship	2.675* (1.427)	2.750* (1.468)	1.842 (1.256)
GDP per Capita	-0.007 (0.126)	0.350** (0.154)	0.035 (0.113)
IMR	1.026 (1.958)	-0.170 (1.906)	-0.811 (1.685)
		Age -0.065*** (0.022)	C. America 3.100* (1.775)
<i>N</i>	730	730	730
<i>Groups</i>	135	135	135
<i>Prob > chi2</i>	0.059	0.001	0.823

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Once included, most of the 21 new variables did not introduce significant changes in the models and very few achieved statistical significance. As shown in table 6.8, when the dependent variable is the presidential attempts to increase powers, only the *Age* of the charter and *Central America* become statistically significant. In line with Elkins et al., older constitutions are less likely to be reformed. The positive relation between *Central America* and the attempts of heads of government to increase their powers may respond to the little respect for the rule of law and high political instability that characterized that subregion, especially during the cold war.

Only four of the 21 new control variables were statistically (and positively) related to the presidential attempts to relax term limits. The positive relation of *Cold War* and *Third Wave* with the attempts suggest that, in the last decades, more and more heads of government have been willing to make an effort to stay more time in power. Current presidents Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua), Evo Morales (Bolivia), and Rafael Correa (Ecuador) are still governing exclusively because of their successful efforts to reform the charter.⁶⁷ Former presidents Álvaro Uribe (Colombia), Manuel Zelaya (Honduras), and Fernando Lugo (Paraguay) would probably still be in office had they been successful in their attempts to extend their terms further.

⁶⁷ While Morales and Correa led polemic constitutional replacements, Ortega managed to stay in office thanks to a highly questionable interpretation of the constitution made by the Supreme Court.

Related to the increase in the number of presidential attempts in the last decades, *Diffusion* shows that the heads of state are more likely to try to change the charter when other presidents have tried to extend their terms in the preceding years. This fact –heads of government finding inspiration in other leaders– can lead to a vicious cycle of increasing constitutional violations. Presidents who successfully struggle to stay in power beyond their constitutional limits may increasingly lead to an authoritarian regression in an era that paradoxically has represented the most enduring and fruitful democratic period in Latin America.

The result for constitutional *Scope* contradicts the findings of Elkins et al. (2009), who find that charters that tend to be specific in terms of issues covered last more. The authors claim that constitutional specificity facilitates constitutional enforcement by assisting agreement as to the contents and meaning of the charter. However, *Scope* works against constitutional endurance. Arguably, more specific charters are likely to have more clauses that constrain presidential behavior. This, in turn, increases the motivations of presidents to change the charter. Table 6.9 show that, as in table 6.8, the results do not vary much when alternative specifications are tested.

The biggest change in table 6.9 occurs in *Risk Propensity*, which loses statistical significance in three of the four alternative specifications, questioning the robustness of the relation between this personality trait and the dependent variable.

Table 6.9: Presidential Attempts to Change their Terms, Alternative Specifications

	(6.2.3) Term Attempt <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.9.1) Cold War <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.9.2) Third Wave <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.9.3) Diffusion <i>b/(se)</i>	(6.9.4) Scope <i>b/(se)</i>
Risk Propensity	1.727* (1.331)	2.653* (1.362)	1.759 1.326	1.613 1.259	5.496 (3.784)
Assertiveness	1.494*** (0.699)	1.633** (0.700)	1.644** (0.737)	1.534** (0.687)	5.024** (1.841)
Political Socialization	0.041 (0.311)	-0.058 (0.340)	0.037 (0.348)	0.095 (0.302)	-0.515 (0.941)
Political Experience	0.002 (0.163)	0.064 (0.168)	0.075 (0.182)	-0.005 (0.154)	0.194 (0.503)
Immediate Reelection	2.247*** (0.623)	1.832*** (0.582)	2.081*** (0.618)	2.359*** (0.639)	9.009*** (2.438)
Amendment	0.306 (0.204)	0.333 (0.217)	0.402* (0.241)	0.295 (0.201)	1.885** (0.818)
Congress	0.595 (1.197)	-0.170 (1.219)	0.424 (1.239)	0.506 (1.188)	0.153 (4.059)
Presidents' Party	-0.911* (0.516)	-0.361 (0.543)	-0.771 (0.516)	-0.827 (0.516)	-3.765 (2.167)
Judicial Review	2.252** (0.958)	2.042** (0.887)	2.117** (0.947)	2.129** (0.918)	8.563 (2.939)
Time in Office	1.071** (0.459)	1.046** (0.464)	1.017** (0.458)	1.306*** (0.496)	2.511 (1.492)
Time in Office²	-0.078 (0.091)	-0.084 (0.092)	-0.073 (0.092)	-0.142 (0.097)	-0.197 (0.302)
Time in Office³	0.001 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)	0.005 (0.006)	0.004 (0.018)
Expected Years Left	0.507*** (0.185)	0.500*** (0.181)	0.501*** (0.188)	0.529*** (0.182)	0.641 (0.634)
Dictatorship	1.120 (0.689)	2.423** (1.068)	2.029** (1.003)	1.321* (0.701)	8.092 (2.885)
GDP per Capita	-0.220 (0.151)	-0.236 (0.170)	-0.272 (0.182)	-0.233 (0.158)	-0.571 (0.454)
IMR	0.418 (0.824)	0.351 (0.813)	0.162 (0.859)	0.351 (0.798)	1.732 (2.778)
		Cold War	Third Wave	Diffusion	Scope
		2.434** (0.990)	1.615* (0.924)	0.349** (0.160)	32.073* (17.302)
N	730	730	730	730	711
Groups	135	135	135	135	134
Prob > chi2	0.299	0.000	0.408	0.324	0.019

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

The experience of re-estimating the models including several alternative explanations leads to three important insights. First, most of the 21 additional variables included as a robustness check of the theory were unrelated to the presidential attempts. The few variables that were statistically related to one dependent variable were unrelated to the other. This suggests that the theory includes the most relevant factors associated to the presidential attempts. A second insight is that testing more variables allows to have a more subtle understanding of the presidential attempts. The results for *Age* and *Central America* in table 6.8 and *Cold War*, *Third Wave*, *Diffusion* and *Scope* in table 6.9 highlight how different factors related to spatiotemporal considerations and constitutional features help us to have a deeper understanding of the presidential attempts to change the constitution. Finally, *Assertiveness* remains statistically significant across all new alternative specifications estimated.

6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter tested the hypotheses that presidents who are more risk prone and have a more assertive personality are more likely to attempt constitutional changes to increase their powers or relax their term limits. Accounting for potential selection bias and endogeneity, and using different samples and model specifications, discrete-time duration estimations showed that *Assertiveness* is the most consistent and one of the most powerful predictors of the attempts.

The results for *Risk Propensity* are less clear. While in most of the estimations conducted this variable tends to be related to the presidential attempts to increase their powers, its relation to the attempts to relax term limits does not resist the different robustness checks conducted. These results may occur because presidents face more risks when they try to increase their

powers than when they attempt to extend their term. Many times presidents try to extend their powers to overcome the inconveniences of being unpopular or facing strong political opposition, while they attempt term extensions in periods of high popularity or when they are able to gather wide support from the political elite.

Other individual differences were also related to the presidential attempts. *Political Socialization* and *Political Experience* became statistically significant in the samples that excluded the United States and puppet and interim heads of government. These results reinforce the proposition that the uniqueness of presidents is central to understand their behavior.

The factors that trace the effect of the existing dependent variable –*Strong Legislative Powers*, *Strong Non-Legislative Powers*, and *Immediate Reelection*– are the most relevant institutional variables consistently related to the presidential attempts. *Judicial Review* was also strongly positively related to the presidential attempts to relax their term limits. However, several institutional factors examined did not attain statistical significance. Surprisingly, the legislatures have had a negligible role in the presidential attempts: the congressional quorum needed to amend the charter (*Amendment*), the existence of an acting Congress and whether a President has a majority in the assembly were in almost all the models tested unrelated to the attempts.

Since most institutional factors were unrelated to the presidential attempts, I conducted interactions to explore if the relation between institutional rules and the attempts are conditional to the personality traits of the leaders. Revealingly, I found that the relation between the personalities and the attempts is independent from the level of constitutional rigidity. The absence of a conditional effect is not so surprising if we recall that most of the presidents did not follow the rules to amend the charters, and opted to replace them.

Some contextual variables were also associated to the presidential attempts. Given that they face less constraints in their behavior than non-authoritarian leaders, presidents are slightly more likely to attempt to change the constitution to increase their powers in dictatorships. The results for *Time in Office* and *Expected Years Left* suggest that presidents time their attempts to change the constitution strategically (i.e., when they expect to be more time in office, and as they have already acquired some experience leading the executive).

Finally, the practice of attempting to reform the constitution has become more commonplace since the third wave of democracy in the region. Just in the Twenty-First century, 13 heads of state have tried to consolidate their power via a constitutional change. To add complexity, presidents are more likely to try to adjust the charter if other leaders of the region have made constitutional reforms in the recent past. This increasingly widespread practice has destabilizing effects on regional democracies, something that I explore in detail on Chapter 8.

The statistical models presented in this chapter were essential to test the theory, but they do not reveal how the unique characteristics of the leaders operate in practice. To unearth the uniqueness of presidents in action, the next chapter examines how the assertiveness and risk taking of the heads of government expressed in the real world. I conduct four case studies. In two cases, presidents faced an unpromising scenario to change the constitution: Manuel Zelaya of Honduras and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela were not particularly popular and faced a minority in Congress. In the other two cases, the leaders faced an unpromising scenario: Luis Alberto Monge of Costa Rica and Ernesto Pérez Balladares were popular presidents who also enjoyed a majority in Congress. The chapter attempts to reveal how the personalities of these leaders help to explain why Zelaya, Chávez, and Pérez Balladares tried to consolidate their power through a constitutional change, while Monge did not.

7.0 PERSONALITY TRAITS IN ACTION

The statistical analyses conducted on Chapter 6 demonstrated that *Assertiveness* is the most consistent and one of the more powerful predictors of the presidential attempts to change the constitution. In most of the estimations conducted the *Risk Propensity* of the leaders was associated to their attempts to increase their constitutional powers, but not to their attempts to relax their term limits. The statistical models tested served the function of providing evidence of the causal relation between the personality traits of presidents and their attempts. The results demonstrated a highly relevant pattern of presidential behavior, but did not reveal how the personality traits of the leaders are unfolded in the real world. In this chapter I conduct an in-depth analysis of four presidencies to analytically describe how the assertiveness and risk propensity of the presidents explain their attempts (or lack thereof) to change the constitution.

I examine the behavior of four presidents who governed in two different states of the world: one in which the leaders faced an unpromising scenario to try to change the constitution, and one where the conditions to reform the charter were more favorable. The purpose of this exercise is to examine if the risk propensity and assertiveness of the presidents are relevant to explain the behavior of the leaders in different states of the world, or if they are conditional on the circumstances.

To select the case studies, it is important to define what can be considered as promising and unpromising scenarios to change the constitution. Naturally, most presidents face

circumstances in which there are forces that work in favor and against their potential attempt to change the constitution. Nonetheless, there are some key variables that could potentially minimize the difficulty of the challenge.

Although the statistical analysis showed that presidents who enjoy a majority in Congress are not more likely to try to change the constitution, it is worth to conduct a more in-depth exploration of how this variable could potentially condition presidential behavior. From an institutionalist perspective, presidents who enjoy a majority in Congress should be more likely to face an easier path to change the constitution. Most of the charters demand a minimum congressional threshold to support a modification of the presidents' term limits or powers. Moreover, Congress has the potential to influence mass public opinion and may have an informal control of courts, something particularly relevant in cases in which presidents need some sort of judicial approval to reform the constitution.

A second relevant variable is the difficulty to change the constitution. As discussed in section 5.3, there is a large variety in how rigid the constitutions in the sample are. I coded constitutional rigidity developing further Lijphart's scale (1999), taking into consideration the legislative quorum and other "special requirements" needed to change the charter (e.g., a referendum or the ratification by a certain number of state's legislatures).

A third variable that should also be considered as relevant to change the constitution is the popular support that presidents have. This variable was not included in the statistical analysis because reliable polls are scarce or inexistent in many Latin American countries, especially for preceding decades. Nonetheless, their level of public support should be something that presidents take into account when deciding to change the constitution. For instance, Presidents may believe

that their high popularity may help them to overturn their minority support in Congress and even bypass constitutional limits.

This chapter examines presidential behavior in promising and unpromising states of the world defined on the three variables mentioned (congressional support, constitutional rigidity, and popularity). Given that pure (un-)promising states of the world rarely exist, a president is considered to face a promising scenario when at least two of the variables mentioned facilitate their attempt to change the charter. This chapter argues that the presidents' level of assertiveness and risk propensity are crucial to explain if presidents try to change the constitution irrespective of whether a leader govern in a promising or unpromising state of the world.

I examine the cases of two heads of government who tried to change the constitution in unpromising scenarios and two leaders who dealt with promising states of the world. While most leaders who faced a minority in Congress and a rigid constitution did not try to change the constitution to consolidate their power, Presidents Manuel Zelaya of Honduras (2006-2009) and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela (1999-2013) did try. The difference with most of the leaders who did not try, I argue, is that Zelaya and Chávez had high levels of risk taking and assertiveness. When dealing with promising circumstances to change the constitution, most presidents did not try to change the constitution either. That is the case of Costa Rican President Monge (1982-1986), who did not try to change the constitution despite wanting to do so. In contrast, Panamanian President Pérez Balladares (1994-1999), who had a majority in Congress and was relatively popular, tried to change the constitution. The main difference between Monge and Pérez Balladares, I argue, is that the latter is a high risk taker and assertive person.

The description just made is relatively in line with the results of the expert survey conducted. In a scale that went from 0 (complete risk aversion) to 1 (complete risk propensity),

the average risk taking of the presidents rated was 0.29, being the standard deviation 0.12. In this scale, Chávez scored 0.60, Zelaya 0.42, Monge 0.31 and Pérez 0.25. In other words, within the sample of presidents, Chávez and Zelaya were in the group of risk takers (more than one standard deviation above the mean), while Monge and Pérez had a risk taking close to the average (with Monge slightly above and Pérez slightly below the mean). According to the theory, Chávez and Zelaya should have been more prone to try to change the constitution (as they eventually did), while Monge and Pérez should have not (something that applies only to Monge).

Something similar happens when we compare the behavior of these leaders and their assertiveness level, as measured in the expert survey. In a scale from one (no assertiveness) to five (complete assertiveness), the mean level of this trait for the presidents assessed was 3.6, being 0.6 the standard deviation. In this scale, Chávez scored 4.5, Pérez 4.3, Zelaya 3.7 and Monge 3.6. According to the theory, Chávez and Pérez should have been more inclined to try to reform the constitution, while Zelaya and Monge should have not, given that they had levels of assertiveness close to the average.

As can be noticed, the results of the survey help to understand the behavior of the four presidents mentioned. The survey scores always placed Monge with an average risk propensity and assertiveness, and he was the only of the four who did not try to change the constitution. In contrast, the other three presidents were placed in the group of presidents that were either at least one standard deviation above average risk propensity (Chávez and Zelaya) or assertiveness (Chávez and Pérez).

Interestingly, only a small minority of the 38 heads of government in the sample who tried to change the constitution operated under promising states of the world. Only in seven

attempts the leaders enjoyed a majority in Congress and needed less than three fifths of congressional support to reform the constitution. Considering congressional support and constitutional rigidity separately, presidents enjoyed a majority in Congress only in half of the attempts to change the constitution, while only in fifteen attempts the presidents governed with a constitution that could be amended with the support of less than three fifths of the legislature. To sum up, among the four presidencies described in this chapter, the more representatives of the presidents who tried to change the constitution are Zelaya and Chávez, and not Monge and Pérez.

7.1 MANUEL ZELAYA AND THE COUP

Honduras seemed to begin 2009 without a negative political forecast. The economy was stable and growing, there were no social protests, the political elite was not particularly polarized, the administration of President Manuel Zelaya was not affected by scandals and the head of government was relatively popular. In fact, these conditions remained until Zelaya was deposed by the military on June 28, when commandos entered the presidential residence, arrested Zelaya, and sent him on a flight to Costa Rica. The military were following an order of arrest issued by the Supreme Court (Llanos and Marsteintredet 2010). What happened between the turn of the year and June? The short answer is that Zelaya actively started to unfold a plan to hold to power through a constitutional change, deploying a process that antagonized his government with the political opposition, Congress, the Supreme Court, his own party, part of the media, and finally the military. Despite all the antagonism that his initiative generated, Zelaya never stopped.

Zelaya was born and raised in a wealthy family, engaged in the logging and timber businesses. He lived his adult life as both an entrepreneur and as a relevant politician of the center-right Liberal Party (LP). The LP is a traditional party that has governed Honduras in the last century mainly alternating power with the rightist National Party (NP). Zelaya entered the LP when he was 18 years old and became an active and successful politician, serving three terms as a deputy in the National Congress between 1985 and 1998, and then becoming minister of investment (1998–2002) in the government of Carlos Flores. Zelaya approached the apex of his career when he won the LP's nomination in the 2005 presidential primaries, receiving 52% of the votes. The LP candidate received 45.6% of the votes in the elections, barely defeating the NP candidate Porfirio Lobo, who received 42.2% of the votes. The LP did not gain a majority in Congress (it won 62 of the 128 deputies), although Zelaya's party was occasionally able to work a majority making alliances with small parties.

Since taking office, Zelaya had a very adverse scenario to try to change the constitution. He won with a slim advantage and did not enjoy majority support in Congress. Moreover, the Honduran constitution established at the time that the articles related to the presidential term could not be changed. Specifically, these petrous articles forbid presidential reelection (article 4), set the presidential term in four years (article 237), and forbid a former chief executive retaking office (article 239). In addition, different opinion polls show that Zelaya was not particularly popular. Shortly after the coup, a CID-Gallup poll revealed that 31 percent of Hondurans said they had a positive image of him and 32 percent a negative one (New York Times 2009).

Zelaya started to distance himself from part of the Liberal Party in 2007, when he started leaning toward the political left. For instance, he participated in the 28th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua and incorporated Honduras to *Petrocaribe*, an oil alliance of

several Caribbean states with Venezuela to purchase oil on conditions of preferential payment. Besides ostensibly showing his admiration of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, Zelaya joined in 2008 the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, a leftist international alliance formed in 2004 by Venezuela and Cuba. These actions started to cause conflict with his vicepresident, part of his party, and the business sector. Nonetheless, most political observers described Zelaya's turn to the left as a tactical temporal movement, mainly to gain financial benefits from ALBA members, especially Venezuela's subsidized oil (Taylor-Robinson, 2009).

A stronger division between Zelaya and a majority within the LP started in November 11 of 2008, when the president announced his plan to reform the constitution (Dangl, 2009). Zelaya's initial project was to send a bill to Congress to include a fourth ballot in the general elections of 2009. Such ballot would ask citizens if they approved the immediate convocation of a constituent assembly to replace the constitution. Zelaya's proposition was harshly resisted by the political opposition, prominent entrepreneurs, different LP leaders, and part of the media. They feared that Zelaya wanted to follow the political path of Chávez in 1999, when the Venezuelan President convoked a constituent assembly to replace the previous constitution with a charter that, among other things, increased his powers and allowed him to be reelected. These fears increased when Zelaya said in a military promotion ceremony that he wanted to serve another term (La Prensa 2009).

The suspicions against Zelaya were not arbitrary. First, they came from Zelaya's increasing proximity to the political left and Chávez. Former Honduran President Rafael Callejas (2011), for instance, said that Zelaya felt encouraged to remain in power due to the "(ideological) currents that come from the south. He was very close to the funding and thinking of Chávez. He liked (power) and wanted to stay more time." Second, as mentioned, Congress can reform all the

constitution except the articles related to the president's term. Roberto Micheletti, who became president when Zelaya was ousted, stated that "the intention of the government of Manuel Zelaya was to change the constitution only for two petrous articles. And the two articles that cannot be touched establish that the president cannot be reelected and that the term is for four years. Logically, the ambition of convoking a constituent assembly can only be for those two articles, because the rest of the constitution can be changed." Micheletti was slightly inaccurate because there are seven petrous articles in the constitution (4, 9, 237, 239, 240, 373, and 374). However, as he stated, these articles forbid reelection, limit the presidential term, and prohibit an ex head of government retaking office.

Micheletti added that when members of the LP realized that Zelaya was shifting toward the political left and there were strong suspicions that he was planning to hold to power, the party sent several emissaries to prevent him in his plans. However, these contacts were not fruitful.

Given that Zelaya realized that Congress would not back his proposition, he decided to directly consult citizens about his plan to include a fourth ballot in the general elections of November to convoke a constituent assembly. Zelaya seemed to believe that receiving a majority support in a referendum would give him a strong leverage over Congress (Llanos and Marsteintredet 2010). In March 24, Zelaya announced that the day before he issued a decree calling for a referendum that would take place in June. Nonetheless, Zelaya faced immediate opposition from the Public Ministry, an independent public organism that takes the lead in most public prosecutions, including corruption and organized crime. In parallel, a *Juzgado en lo Contencioso-Administrativo* (Administrative Law Court) suspended the decree, which was never published (i.e., never reached legal status). The opposition to Zelaya's plan was rooted on article 5 of the Constitution, which states that only Congress can call a referendum.

Although it seemed that Zelaya's plan reached a dead end, the head of government did not give up. He signed a new decree on May 26. The main difference with the previous decree was that the last said *encuesta nacional* (national poll) instead of *consulta popular* (referendum), a legal strategy aimed at placing the initiative within the framework of the 2006 Citizen Participation Law (Llanos and Marsteintredet 2010). Nonetheless, the judicial order that the Administrative Law Court issued on March also declared unconstitutional these kind of initiatives, and ordered the military to confiscate the "poll" materials.

At this point, even within the LP there was little support for Zelaya's plan. The Congress was so determined in impeding Zelaya's "poll," that four days before the poll was scheduled the legislature approved a law that declared that no referendum could be held 180 days before or after an election day. One day later, on June 25, Congress formally opened an investigation to analyze the presidents' behavior. By some accounts, the real goal was to oust the president (Salomon 2009).

The situation was going to get worse, with the military getting involved in the institutional crisis. The Chief of Staff, General Romeo Vásquez, rejected to provide logistic help to implement the poll because there was a judicial order forbidding it. A furious Zelaya decided to dismiss General Vásquez, something that triggered the resignations of the ministry of Defense, Edmundo Orellana, and the commanders in Chief of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. The Supreme Court immediately declared illegal the dismissal of Vásquez and ordered its restitution.

Zelaya was unwilling to back up. The same day he fired General Vásquez, he entered into an aerial base with a group of supporters to recover the poll material confiscated. Later in the day, Zelaya declared that he was not going to restitute General Vásquez. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. The Supreme Court issued an order to arrest Zelaya on June 26, accusing

him of “treason to the motherland,” “abuse of power” and nearly other 20 charges. The military deposed Zelaya and, bypassing the laws, put him on a flight to Costa Rica on June 28, the same day the poll was supposed to take place (Llanos and Marsteintredet 2010: 185). Later that day, an overwhelming majority of Congress voted Zelaya out of office and accused him of plotting to dissolve Congress. Neither the military had the constitutional authority to flee the president nor Congress to impeach the president. In total, 122 of the 128 legislators (including all members of the Liberal Party) voted to legitimize the coup and named the leader of Congress, Roberto Micheletti, as Zelaya’s successor. Micheletti would finish Zelaya’s term, and transfer the presidency to Porfirio Lobo, the winning candidate in the November 2009 elections.

Zelaya never recognized what he wanted to do with the constitution. When I interviewed him in 2011, Zelaya still denied that he wanted to change the charter: “I would not change absolutely anything of it. That is a faculty of the people.” When pressed further to express his opinion on how the constitution could be updated, Zelaya replied that “I do have an opinion but imagine I express it ... That has to be discussed in a National Constituent Assembly.” The former president added that “we only wanted to know if the people wanted us to put a fourth ballot in the general elections that asked in generic terms whether the people wanted to install a constituent assembly in the following government.” According to Zelaya, the coup against him was because he wanted to have the charter enforced by giving back the sovereign power to the people.

Micheletti said that Zelaya expected to succeed in his attempt of constitutional reform because “he had behaved very well with the Armed Forces, and began to surround himself with many people from the left, local and from abroad...Who were telling him that he could stay in power.” According to Micheletti, Zelaya was going to win the “poll” because “in the discoveries

that we made after the 28 (of June) we realized that the ballots that came from El Salvador and Venezuela were filled with votes for him.” Micheletti added his conviction that, after the poll, Zelaya was going to use mobs of supporters to close or take over Congress, the Supreme Court, the Public Ministry, and all state organisms that opposed his attempt to hold to power. “He wanted to copy the constitution recently done in Ecuador, were the President saw his power increased and was allowed to be reelected,” he added.⁶⁸

As discussed in Chapter 2, mainstream quantitative research in political science proposes that presidents are soulless rational actors. Nonetheless, a description of the constitutional crisis that ended up with Zelaya being ousted suggests that he had an unconventional behavior. Zelaya had a firm preference for changing the constitution to relax his term limits, but his attempt had few chances of succeeding since the beginning. Noticeably, the strong opposition of Congress and the judicial system to Zelaya’s attempt to convoke a constituent assembly left Zelaya with no institutional path to succeed.

Zelaya continued with his plan recurring to extraconstitutional means, but his behavior was reckless. Zelaya did not count with the main player that traditionally has been able to implement extraconstitutional reforms: the military. Zelaya, in fact, confronted the military. Worse still, he did not count with an overwhelming popular support that potentially would have allowed him to impose his reforms (Taylor-Robinson and Ura 2012).

I argue that the reason for Zelaya’s behavior is rooted in his risk propensity and assertiveness. The decisions that Zelaya made were evidently risky. Any experienced politician, as he is, knows that confronting simultaneously Congress, the judiciary and the military in an all-or-nothing bet can end up with the head of government being deposed. As mentioned in chapter

⁶⁸ Micheletti’s claims about Zelaya’s motivations have not been fully substantiated by independent sources.

3, when I asked Zelaya about his relation to risk he described himself as an extreme risk taker: “The risk has the effect of producing fear in the people...I do not notice fears,” he said. He added that “I act according to my beliefs,” irrespective of the risks he has to face. The description of the political process that led to the ousting of Zelaya seems to support his statements.

As important as Zelaya’s risk propensity was his assertive behavior as measured in this study. To briefly recall, this study used the definition of assertiveness as measured by the IPIP (Goldberg 1999; Goldberg et al. 2006), which captures the characteristics of subjects who are highly motivated to succeed, know how to convince and lead others, and feel comfortable taking control of things. Zelaya was so motivated to hold to power (succeed) that he never backed from his attempt despite all the difficulties. Zelaya also seemed comfortable in trying to lead a process of constitutional reform for which there was not much popular support, and arguably he believed he would be able to convince enough political actors to accept his initiative and succeed.

7.2 HUGO CHÁVEZ AGAINST THE “OLD REGIME”

Hugo Chávez has been one of the most known Latin American heads of government in the twentieth first century. Many books and rivers of ink have been devoted to describe Chávez’s “Bolivarian Revolution,” “Socialism of the 21st Century,” public clashes with world leaders and influence on other countries. Chávez would not have gained so much influence without fully replacing Venezuela’s constitution through a constituent assembly in 1999, soon after taking the presidential oath. Chávez was able to govern until he passed away and with little constraints because he replaced the 1961 charter.

Chávez entrance in politics is widely known but is key to understand his career. Born and raised in a working-class family, Chávez entered the Venezuelan Army in 1971, where due to his political concerns he founded in 1982 the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200 (MBR-200). The goal of the MBR-200 was to take power via a coup, something that the movement eventually tried in 1992. Chávez decided to try to take power once he was given the command of a parachute brigade of 600 troops in Maracay. The coup that Chávez launched with just five army units of support against President Carlos Andrés Pérez was a complete failure; only a small minority of the Army supported it. Consequently, Chávez surrendered the same day of the insurrection to the government. Despite the failed coup, Chávez attracted massive national attention and support. He would only spend two years in prison, and came out as a popular politician in 1994.

Once freed, Chávez gained increasing popularity and in 1997 founded the socialist party Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), which took him to the presidency in the 1998 elections. Chávez won the presidential contest with 56.2% of the votes, in an election with 63.45% of voter turnout (International Republican Institute 1999). Therefore, Chávez counted with a strong mandate to do reforms. During his presidential campaign, Chávez promised to “lay the foundations of a new republic” and to replace the constitution, which he said was no more than the “legal-political embodiment of puntofijismo,” the country’s traditional two-party patronage system (Latin America Weekly Report 1999). Chávez was strongly supported among the poor and the middle class that suffered economic hardships (Wilpert 2007:18–19). Part of this electoral base, especially the poor, accompanied Chávez until he died in office, in March 5, 2013.

Once president, Chávez immediately started a campaign to replace the constitution. In his oath, on February 2 of 1999, he said that “I swear before God and my people that upon this moribund constitution I will drive forth the necessary democratic transformations so that the new republic will have a Magna Carta befitting these new times” (Marcano and Tyszka 2007: 127).

Chávez had a strong popular mandate to convoke a constituent assembly, but he did not enjoy a majority in Congress in the 1998 elections and amending the constitution was not easy. Chávez’s MVR gained 35 seats in a Chamber of Deputies that had 207 members, and five seats in a Senate of 100 members. The main allied parties, such as the Movement for Socialism (MAS) and Fatherland for All (PPT), added the support of nine senators and 35 deputies to the new government. Chávez was not even close to build a majority in the legislature.

To amend the constitution it was required an absolute majority in Congress and the support of two thirds of the state’s assemblies. While reaching an absolute majority to amend the charter is a relatively low threshold among the countries in the sample, historically it has been difficult to any Venezuelan president to get the support of two thirds of the state’s legislatures.

In sum, Chávez did not have enough support among elected national and state legislators to change or replace the constitution. Chávez was willing to continue with his plans, and started a highly risky move: he convoked a referendum to ask citizens to decide whether they wanted to replace the constitution. The problem was that the president did not have the constitutional authority to convoke the referendum.

Surprisingly, in a controversial resolution, the Supreme Court did not consider unconstitutional the referendum. Such was probably the decisive moment that changed Chávez’s likelihood of success. The maximum judicial authority gave Chávez a green light that made a significant difference. The referendum was held on 25 April 1999. The opposition called for

abstention and the turnout was the lowest ever for national elections, but the proposal was approved by 88% of the votes. In July 25, elections were held to elect the members of the assembly. Although nearly 900 of the 1,171 candidates to the assembly opposed Chávez, his supporters won 95% of the seats (125 of 131), greatly helped by a new plurality electoral system.

Given that Chávez had the full support of the constituent assembly, in practice he controlled all the content of the new constitution and even had the power to transform any institution he wanted. For instance, on August 12 the constituent assembly members voted to give themselves the power to abolish government institutions and to dismiss officials who were perceived as being corrupt. With such powers self-granted, pro-government legislators fired almost sixty judges (Jones 2007: 245-246). Such measures were considered as plainly authoritarian by observers (Jones 2007: 241), but the process was already unfolding and nothing could prevent Chávez from controlling the main state institutions. That same month Chávez created a commission to replace the members of the Supreme Court. To prevent being fully replaced, the justices of the Supreme Court agreed on August 24 to dissolve the tribunal and allowed the assembly to appoint a new court. Such agreement allowed Chávez to effectively control the court, and, by extension, the judicial power (Nelson 2009). Something similar happened with Congress; on August 25 the assembly approved a “decree of legislative emergency” and five days later the legislative was declared “technically closed.” Now Chávez effectively controlled the three state powers through the constituent assembly.

The constituent assembly finally proposed a constitution that was voted in a referendum in December of 1999, with 72% of the voters endorsing the new charter. The new constitution extended the presidential term from five to six years and allowed the head of state to be reelected once (the previous constitution forbid it). The powers of the head of government were also

increased: the head of government was granted the power to legislate on citizen rights and on economic and financial matters (International Crisis Group 2007: 6). Article 236 also allowed the president to decide military promotions, appoint the vice-president, convoke referendums, and dissolve Congress (Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela 1999). In a measure that helped Chávez to increase his leverage over the future Congress, the new charter also turned the bicameral congress into a unicameral one.

Among other things, the new constitution required that new elections be held to legitimize the reforms. For the first time in Venezuela's history, there were concurrent elections to select the president, governors, national and state legislators, mayors and councilmen.

The real goal of these elections was to capitalize the enormous popular support that Chávez enjoyed to fill out with pro-government most of the elected positions. Such goal was clearly achieved. Chávez was re-elected with 59.76% of the vote, more than in the previous elections. More importantly, he gained a vast majority support in the National Assembly (his supporters won 101 out of 165 seats). The pro-government forces also succeeded in controlling a large number of governorships, municipalities, and state legislatures.

In only a year, Chávez passed from being a minority president that was going to govern for five years to a dream situation. After the 2000 election, Chávez enjoyed more presidential powers, a large majority in a strongly loyal legislature, the prospect of governing for 12 more years, a larger support of governors, mayors and councilmen, and the control of the judicial power. Chávez's control of the legislature was very clear when the assembly allowed him to pass 49 decrees on important economic and social issues (Marcano and Tyszka 2007). In sum, the

process that Chávez started to replace the 1961 constitution gave him an effective control of the three branches of power until his death.⁶⁹

While the process of constitutional replacement allowed Chávez to significantly increase his constitutional powers and to remain in office until he died, I argue that he was able to do such changes due to his personal risk propensity and assertiveness. As shown above, among the four leaders assessed in this chapter, the Venezuelan president was rated by experts as having the highest scores in risk propensity and assertiveness. Although I was unable to interview Chávez, a review of the comments made by the experts that participated in the survey are revealing.

Several experts remarked that Chávez had a typical life of a risk prone individual. “Chávez was paratrooper, a high-risk occupation. He led troops in a coup, another risk. He was a smoker and had a very poor diet. He took serious risks to dismiss the PDVSA directors in 2002. He challenged the political system to deliver the coup and then consistently challenged the state powers until they were under its control,” one expert said. “He organized a secret conspiracy in the military for 10 years -certainly a huge career risk,” other expert said.

The experts also made comments on some characteristics of Chávez related to his assertiveness. “Chávez was a born leader, even if you disagree with him, was very charismatic and bold,” one expert said. “He had a natural leader’s temperament,” said other. The risks that Chávez took to replace the constitution and his obsession to control as much as possible of the Venezuelan political process in his hands suggests that his personality traits were the main forces behind his attempts to replace (first) and amend (later) the constitution.

⁶⁹ In 2007, Chávez made a second attempt to reform the constitution. A constitutional commission set up by the government proposed some changes to the 1999 charter, such as shortening the working week and new regulations against discrimination. However, the main changes were devoted to increase the constitutional powers of the president, and to allow him to be reelected indefinitely (Cannon 2009). The proposition was submitted to a referendum in December of 2007. However, contrary to the previous thirteen electoral processes, Chávez lost and the proposal was rejected by 50.65% of the votes (Cannon 2009). Despite this setback, Chávez proposed to abolish the two-term limit from all public offices in a referendum held on February 15, 2009. The initiative succeeded with 55% of the voters supporting it.

7.3 LUIS MONGE, THE POPULAR PRESIDENT

The relation between former Costa Rican President Luis Alberto Monge (1982-1986) and the constitution is representative of most presidents included in the sample: he did not try to change the constitution to consolidate his power. However, the case of Monge is illustrative of how the personality traits of a leader can deter him from making changes despite facing a promising scenario to do so and despite wanting to replace the constitution.

Luis Monge had a humble origin. He was born in a farmer's family and as a child worked in tobacco fields. His curiosity made him enter politics at a very young age, becoming president of the workers confederation *Rerum Novarum* being just 19 years old. After supporting the political-guerilla movement of the National Liberation Army that took power after a short civil war, he became a deputy in the 1948 constituent assembly that drafted the 1949 Costa Rican constitution. Since then he had a prominent political career: in 1951 Monge was one of the founders of the social democrat National Liberation Party (NLP); in 1955-1956 he served as minister of the Presidency; he was deputy in 1958-1962; ambassador in Israel in 1963; secretary general of the NLP in 1967-1979, and deputy again in 1970-1974. After losing his first presidential candidacy in 1978, he became president in 1982 receiving 58.8% of the votes in the first round, defeating the five other candidates by far (the second most voted, Rafael Calderón Fournier, received 33.6%).

Monge took office in the middle of an economic crisis: while the prices of imported oil were skyrocketing, the prices of the main export products (e.g., banana, sugar, coffee and cacao) were falling. Unemployment was high and the annual inflation rate bordered 80%. The international arena was highly complex too. Costa Rica was surrounded with the civil wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador, which threatened to enter Costa Rican territory and become a target

of the interventionist policies of the Reagan administration. The main threat that Monge faced was the possibility that the Sandinista government in Nicaragua could invade or export its socialist revolution to Costa Rica, a country that does not have an army since 1949.

Monge was forced to make many relevant decisions in both the domestic and international arenas, and accounts of this historical period suggest that his administration succeeded in managing the challenges (e.g., Seligson and Muller 1990). The former farmer kept Costa Rica neutral in the Central American conflict and followed an economic plan that slowly took the country out of the crisis. Monge ended his presidency with a high level of popularity (Oconitrillo 2004).

Monge did not make all the reforms he would have liked to do in office. One of them was to replace the 1949 constitution. When interviewed, Monge said that he informally started proposing to replace the constitution in the government of his friend Daniel Oduber (1974-1978) “I told Daniel, look, I think we have to update it, but there are so many political factors that could derail a constituent assembly that we do not know what will come out.” He never changed such opinion. In 2011 he still supported a constitutional replacement, but he feared that it could be controlled by the “wrong” politicians.

To sum up, Monge was elected with a large majority with a mandate to make important decisions in a nation that suffered an economic crisis and an international adverse scenario. Monge enjoyed a majority in Congress, governed with a constitution that is not difficult to reform and that he preferred to replace altogether. Why he did not change the 1949 constitution?

Monge’s explanation of why he did not try to change the constitution suggests that he was relatively risk-intolerant: “I did not try to change the constitution for the fear that it could become a partisan-political thing and we could not select a group of capable people for the

constituent (assembly).” In other words, Monge did not want to face the risks of starting a deep process of reform in which he could not fully anticipate the consequences.

These type of risk-averse statements were present in other parts of the interview, such as when he described his lack of conflicts with other branches of the state. “Everything depends on how the president is...I never had any friction with the other (state) powers, because I thought that the principle of independence of powers was very important for democracy.”

Moreover, Monge’s own description of how he exercised his leadership with Congress suggests that he was not particularly assertive. “I had 33 deputies, and met with them to discuss the things that interested me, but I also met with the opposition. That was famous, the capacity of reaching decisions that were widely supported in the assembly. I did not want to vote important decisions relative to the economy only with the National liberation Party. I made decisions negotiating” with the opposition, he said. In other words, he was not even willing to mobilize his majority in Congress to impose his policies; he wanted a broader support to implement the agenda of his government. In sum, it seems that the reasons that explain why Monge did not try to change the constitution are rooted on his risk-aversion and on his unassertive personality.

7.4 ERNESTO PÉREZ, THE FAILED ATTEMPT

As Luis Monge, Panamanian President Ernesto Pérez dealt with a relatively promising state of the world to change the constitution to consolidate his power. However, in contrast to Monge, Pérez did try to change the constitution to allow for reelection. I argue that the main causes behind Pérez’s attempt are rooted in his personality.

Pérez entered politics from the banking system. He was Citibank's manager of corporate credits to Central America when he developed close ties with Panamanian dictator General Omar Torrijos. In 1976 Pérez accepted to become Torrijos' minister of Finance, position that he changed in 1981 to become minister of Planning and Economic Policy until 1982. Pérez was one of the founding members of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) in 1979, and became secretary general of the party in different periods. In 1991 he was named secretary general of PRD, position that he used to his advantage to become in 1994 the presidential candidate of the Pueblo Unido (United People) coalition, composed of the PRD, the Liberal Republican, and the Labor parties. Pérez won the 1994 race in the first round with a very slim support; only 33% of the votes. However, when interviewed Pérez defended the electoral mandate that he received: "You have to take into account that we were seven candidates."

Although Pérez was not elected with a strong popular mandate, he was able to govern with a workable majority in Congress because his coalition got 33 of the 73 seats in the Legislative Assembly and Pérez frequently was able to add the support of minor parties. Pérez was optimistic about his chances to change the constitution. To amend the charter, Pérez needed to follow two steps. First, get the support of an absolute majority in Congress, something that he could easily attain. Second, to have the bill ratified in a different elected legislature or through a popular referendum. Pérez was confident in his ability to have his reform approved by his fellow citizens.

The former president recognized that before attempting to reform the constitution he held numerous talks with Congress and political parties. He said that the project of constitutional reform "was probed in Congress, among the political parties of my alliance, and everyone thought it was an excellent idea." He justified the initiative arguing that "the goal of the project

was to achieve what slowly has been changing in Latin America and is natural in other countries and that is to allow one immediate (presidential) reelection.”

Pérez tried to persuade Panamanian citizens that he needed another term to complete the economic reforms that he started and the successful transfer of the Canal from the United States to Panama, in December 31 of 1999. “Public opinion surveys depicted a favorable scenario too,” he said. In fact, media outlets from that time showed that polls depicted an unclear scenario. Some of the polls revealed that between 55% and 60% of voters opposed allowing the president to run for a second term (The New York Times 1998). However, other polls suggested that the president would win by nearly 10% of the votes, while a third group showed a technical tie and nearly 20% of “undecided” voters (Hernández 1998).

In any case, Pérez said in the interview that he was confident that the referendum would favor him. In the end, 64% of the voters rejected to allow presidential reelection in the referendum held on August 30, 1998. “I think that the feeling back then, despite my government had a high level of approval, was that people does not want to run the risk of an immediate reelection,” said the former head of government.

To say that Pérez’s attempt to change the constitution to hold to power for an additional term is rooted in his personality is arguably less appealing than in the cases of Zelaya and Chávez. After all, the attempts made by Zelaya and Chávez took place in unpromising scenarios and both leaders showed a particularly risky and assertive behavior.

Nonetheless, as aforementioned, most of the presidents who govern with a political scenario similar to the one Pérez had –with a majority in Congress, relatively flexible procedures to amend the charter and a relatively promising public opinion– did not attempt to consolidate their power by changing the constitution. Moreover, Pérez’s attempt to reform the charter is an

excellent example of an assertive leader (something in line with the score he received in the expert survey), and he did run the risk of losing in the referendum, as it finally happened.

During the interview, Pérez directly addressed his risk propensity and indirectly his assertiveness. Pérez blatantly said that “I do not care about risks.” Asked to place himself in a scale from one to seven, where one is strong risk averse and seven is strong propensity, he placed himself in six. He said that he “assumed many risks in my life,” due to his experience as a politician and as an entrepreneur. “Man, of course there has to be a base of intelligence that allows you to assume that you are minimizing risks. But risks always exist,” he added.

Pérez’s statements about the leadership style that a president needs to have were also revealing. When asked if the president should be a “strong leader, able to demand obedience from the forces that support him in Congress,” Pérez said he believed that such characteristic is “fundamental” to govern. When asked whether he felt more confident leading the presidency as he spent more time in office, Pérez categorically said “no.” “I had no problems managing the presidency since the first day. I was minister for six years and although it was my first public job it was strong enough to know what I needed to do,” he said.

The former president also remarked his strategy to keep majority support in Congress: “At the beginning of my government I achieved a political alliance sufficiently strong and cohesive to advance a legislative agenda without problems.” Pérez added that he was able to keep the coalition together holding “lots of meetings and conversations. As a practice we had breakfasts with the assembly leadership every week, and at least once per month with all pro-government legislators.” Recall that assertiveness describes the behavior of individuals who are highly motivated to succeed, know how to lead others and feel comfortable taking control of

things. The answers provided by Pérez seem the typical descriptions of an assertive individual, as measured through the IPIP scale.

7.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter did a thorough review of the behavior of four heads of government who governed under two different states of the world: promising and unpromising scenarios to change the constitution. The cases of presidents Zelaya and Chávez showed that despite facing significant challenges to change the constitution, both of them tried to replace it. While Zelaya failed and was ousted from power, Chávez succeeded in replacing the constitution to consolidate his power and was able to stay in office until his death. I argued that the high level of assertiveness and risk propensity of both leaders explain their attempts to change the constitution in adverse circumstances. I also examined in detail the behavior of two presidents who faced relatively promising circumstances to adapt the constitution to their preferences, but only one tried. I argue that the high level of risk propensity and assertiveness of President Pérez explains why he tried to change the constitution to remain in power, while President Monge did not try despite he faced a promising scenario and wanted to replace the Costa Rican charter. The four cases show that to understand presidential behavior it is necessary to explore the psychological motivations of the leaders. Such psychological explanations should be included in theoretical models that describe presidents as rational actors. Such models will help to understand presidential behavior only after they incorporate the psychological characteristics of presidents.

The case studies conducted in this chapter demonstrated that the difficulties that presidents face to change the constitution rarely explain their attempts. The cases of Zelaya and

Chávez, who tried to change the constitution in adverse circumstances, are representative of the presidential attempts studied in the sample. As mentioned, most of the presidents who tried to consolidate their power through a constitutional change did it in unpromising scenarios: Presidents enjoyed a majority in Congress only in half of the attempts to change the constitution, while only in fifteen attempts the presidents faced a constitution that could be amended with the support of less than three fifths of Congress.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This dissertation has proposed to answer two basic yet fundamental questions for the understanding of the presidency: Does it matter who the president is? If so, how does it matter? Although the answer to these questions may be intuitive for many readers, students of the presidency fundamentally disagree on whether the identity of presidents is relevant to understand their behavior. Qualitative researchers have historically proposed that the identity of who seats in the presidency is crucial to understand many governmental decisions. However, for analytical purposes mainstream quantitative research assumes that presidents are merely rational actors whose unique characteristics are irrelevant to understand their behavior. In line with qualitative research, this dissertation has proposed that the individual differences of presidents are relevant to understand their behavior. However, this study has avoided most of the pitfalls that led to a shift to quantification in presidential studies in the late seventies, and has developed and tested a falsifiable theory of presidential behavior.

This study examined the importance of the individual differences of presidents focusing on a highly relevant but overlooked phenomena that has marked the modern democratic history of Latin America: the attempts made by presidents to consolidate their power through a constitutional change. Between 1945 and 2012, 38 presidents tried 48 times to increase their constitutional powers or relax their term limits, succeeding in 36 opportunities. Heads of government from all Latin American countries –except Mexico– have tried to change the

constitution to consolidate their position. These attempts have been scattered in the last seven decades, and have been crucial in allowing successful reformers to be part of the historically most prominent leaders of the Americas.

No previous work has tried to understand why certain presidents and not others try to consolidate their power via a constitutional change. This is surprising, especially because many of the presidential attempts have caused constitutional and regime crisis. Unsuccessful attempts have ended with leaders ousted from power, while successful reforms have allowed others to hold on to power for decades, many times at the expense of democratic institutions. Some attempts have produced so much political instability that they have contributed to turn consolidating democracies into semi-democracies.

This dissertation has argued that the causes behind the presidential attempts are rooted in the personality of presidents. As shown in section 3.1, numerous presidents had invested significant time and energy and have made noticeable efforts to change the charter to consolidate their power. Such pattern of presidential behavior has been frequent across time, countries, regimes, and institutional and political contexts, and the central role of presidents in the changes cannot be attributed to other actors.

Presidents have not attempted to change the constitution following an impersonal path –a path that every human being in their circumstances would have followed. Some presidents tried to change the constitution under unpromising circumstances, while most heads of government who faced promising circumstances did not try to change the charter. This suggests that assuming that presidents behave similarly when facing similar contexts does not help us to understand their attempts. As extensively discussed in section 2.3, psychology research offers a much more compelling argument: although all presidents should prefer to increase and extend

their period in office, only those who meet certain characteristics are willing to try it. Such proposition is in line with an extensive stream of research in differential psychology, which has shown that the individual differences of presidents are relevant to understand their behavior.

To understand the motivations of presidents who try to consolidate their power through a constitutional change, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 former Latin American presidents in seven countries. As shown in section 3.2, these interviews revealed many interesting patterns of presidential behavior, including the relation between presidents and the constitution and the importance of the leaders' individual differences to govern.

The theory proposed in this study built on the examination of the historical presidential attempts presented in section 3.1, the material revealed during the interviews, and the scholarly literature on personality research. I hypothesized that presidents who are more risk prone and assertive are more likely to try to change the constitution to increase their powers or relax their term limits.

To assess the empirical validity of the theory I created the *Presidential Database of the Americas*, whose main content was introduced in Chapter 5. The *Database* includes the 315 presidents who governed 19 Latin American countries and the United States between 1945 and 2012. This database integrates information from three sources. Data about presidents' personality traits comes from an online survey distributed to 911 experts from 26 nationalities. The experts answered standardized psychometric questionnaires and items designed to measure the most important unique characteristics of leaders. Second, researcher assistants coded 13 individual characteristics of presidents taken from biographical data. Finally, the study was enriched with the semi-structured interviews conducted with former Latin American presidents.

To test the theory I conducted numerous statistical analyses. In Chapter 6 I tested several discrete-time duration models in which the unit of analysis was president-year. This approach was convenient because the dependent variables used reflect the individual attempts to change the charter, and because my main hypotheses refer to individual predictors. I conducted a longitudinal analysis to take into account how presidents time their attempts and to include several control variables that change over time.

The estimations conducted showed that the level of *Assertiveness* of the presidents is the most consistent and one of the most powerful predictors of the presidential attempts to increase their powers or relax their term limits. This variable holds when potential selection bias and endogeneity concerns are taken into account, and under different samples and model specifications. The results also show that risk-prone presidents are more likely to try to change the charter to consolidate their power, but the findings are less clear. *Risk Propensity* does not resist the different robustness checks conducted. Other individual differences also proved to be related to the presidential attempts when using certain subsamples. *Political Socialization* and *Political Experience* became statistically significant in the samples that excluded the United States and puppet and interim heads of government.

Some institutional and contextual variables also proved to be related to the presidential attempts, although they had a weaker relation to the dependent variables than the individual differences tested. These variables are the leaders' present level of powers and length of their terms, how much time the heads of government have been in office, how much time they expect to hold office, and the regime type. Overall, the findings support the proposition that the uniqueness of the heads of government is a relevant predictor of their attempts to change the constitution to consolidate their power.

To observe the causal mechanisms in action, the statistical analysis was complemented by an in-depth examination of the behavior of four presidents in promising and unpromising scenarios. Chapter 7 examined the behavior of Manuel Zelaya (Honduras, 2006-2009) and Hugo Chávez (Venezuela, 1999-2013), who tried to change the constitution in adverse institutional scenarios. This chapter also examined the administrations of Luis Monge (Costa Rica, 1982-1986) and Ernesto Pérez (Panama, 1994-1999), both of whom faced promising circumstances to change the constitution, but only Pérez tried to hold to power for another term. This chapter described the administrations of these leaders to clarify how the personality of the leaders help to understand their relation with the constitution.

The results of this study challenge pre-existing views in the literature on presidential studies and on institutional change. It demonstrates that the dominant assumption in quantitative presidential studies –that the identity of the leaders is irrelevant to understand their behavior– is theoretically feeble and empirically wrong. This assumption is responsible of maintaining a partition wall between quantitative and qualitative researchers, artificially limiting the channels of communication between students of the presidency.

As discussed in 2.1.1, the quantitative shift in presidential studies started in the late seventies partially because scholars thought that it was necessary to stop considering presidents as units of analysis. This study, nonetheless, has demonstrated that the technology of evaluating presidents at a distance allows to use leaders as units of analysis and to conduct rigorous statistical analyses of presidential behavior across time and countries. In other words, the technology of evaluating presidents at a distance allows quantitative researchers to elaborate more complex arguments to understand the presidency, freeing them from the need to assume that the individual differences of presidents are of little relevance. This technology also allows

qualitative researchers to support their arguments not only doing a thorough description of historical events but also to test them through conventional statistical procedures.

The interdisciplinary approach of this research also leads to a deeper understanding of institutional change. Research on this topic has systematically overlooked the role of individuals as a cause of institutional transformations. Recent research suggests that many major institutional changes occur gradually, through small changes (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Such approach recognizes institutions as a permanent subject of struggle by groups of powerful actors that want to transform them. This dissertation goes one step forward by proposing that the motivations of individual actors can become a source of institutional change if such actors are sufficiently powerful. Given that institutions frame politics, understanding the role of powerful individuals in changing the rules is of utmost importance to political scientists.

Given that institutional change is a topic of interest across the social sciences, researchers from other disciplines can also explore how powerful actors contribute to produce institutional transformations. This dissertation has centered on presidents, but economists could explore the role of CEOs and managing directors in changing company rules, while anthropologists could explore how the uniqueness of human groups shape social norms.

This dissertation also contributes to the research in psychology that studies the individual differences of presidents. As discussed in section 2.3, psychologists have produced numerous works to identify the characteristics of American presidents that can be related to their leadership and performance. Psychologists have been obsessed in trying to find the profile of the individual best equipped to lead the country. Although understanding which characteristics of presidents lead them to be ranked as better performers is undoubtedly valuable, the understanding that political scientists have of the presidency should help to develop much more sophisticated

questions. This study is a step forward in developing a systematic and falsifiable analysis of the relation between the individual differences of presidents and their actions and decisions in office.

This study also has broader implications. As discussed in Chapter 1, increasing the information available to constituencies and organizations that select political leaders will increasingly resemble an extensive hiring practice in the corporate world. Companies use personality traits tests as a hiring strategy to select the best employees for the positions they offer, reduce turnover and enjoy better results on the long term. I propose that improving the information available of the potential fit between political candidates and the positions to which they are running can improve the harmony between representatives and represented. Such practice should minimize the problems of representation that arise when voters feel deceived by the politicians they selected.

As most studies, this dissertation has some limitations. On a theoretical ground, it builds on the assumption that presidents' desire to consolidate their power is a constant. This type of assumption is common in political science. As Bueno De Mesquita et al. claim (1999: 793): "We assume that political leaders in all systems are motivated by the same universal interest: the desire to remain in office." This is not an arbitrary assumption. A review of the personal trajectory of presidents reveals that most of them are politicians who reach office after many years –or decades– of systematically working to become the most powerful politician in the country. Some former presidents interviewed, such as M.A. Rodríguez and Arias, recognized that they decided well before adulthood that they wanted to be presidents, and organized their lives to reach such goal. Unless something extraordinary occurs, it would be odd to expect that, once in power, presidents are happy to step down from the presidency. However, despite how reasonable and widespread is the assumption that politicians want to hold office, it may not be

true for each and every case. Some presidents may truly believe that the rules with which they were elected should not be changed or may not even desire to continue in office, even if they face promising states of the world to remain in office. Unfortunately, researchers cannot have access to the minds of politicians, and even if they could, presidents may switch their opinions. Therefore, it seems that this limitation is unsolvable.

This study has more punctual limitations derived from the expert survey conducted. Given that the survey delivered to experts needed to be restricted in extension, it was not possible to conduct a more complete measurement of personality traits of the leaders. While this study proposed – and demonstrated– that assertiveness and (to a lesser extent) risk propensity are related to the presidential attempts to change the constitution, there may be other traits worth of being explored. For instance, there may be some individual differences rooted in the personalities of the leaders that may inhibit their motivations to change the constitution, working against the motivations due to the leaders' level of assertiveness and risk propensity. Another potential limitation of the study is that unfortunately I was unable to gather expert evaluations for 150 chief executives that governed the Western Hemisphere between 1945 and 2012. Although in section 6.1 I conducted a two-stage Heckman procedure to take into account the potential rater selection bias, a larger sample would help to increase the confidence in the results.

There are numerous ways in which future endeavors can expand the research agenda initiated by this study. I would like to mention two projects that I will develop. I plan to use the *Presidential Database of the Americas* (2013) to examine why some presidential candidates change their policy positions once they reach office and then throughout their terms. The handful of existing hypotheses claim that presidents react to economic factors, but they do not explain why some leaders do not switch their policy positions despite having strong incentives to do so,

and why some presidents switch their policy positions throughout the course of their terms. I propose that heads of state accommodate their policies according to the composition of Congress, and that those who are more risk-prone are more likely to change their policy positions once their party or coalition loses or regain majority in Congress. In a second project, I will examine how the behavior of presidents that have participated in guerrillas and illegal movements change over time. Preliminary evidence suggests that leaders with a radical past tend to be moderate presidents. Such is the case, for instance, of Brazilian Dilma Rousseff and Uruguayan José Mujica.

Future endeavors can show how other characteristics of the heads of government can help us understand their behavior and decision making in office. This topic is highly relevant to students of comparative politics interested in the presidency, elite behavior, and also on the quality of democracy. As discussed in Chapter 3, more powerful presidents can become a source of political instability because they have incentives to challenge or circumvent the other state powers, increasing the tensions in the political regime. The individual differences of leaders should be particularly relevant when they enjoy broad discretionary powers, such as politicians of developing countries with low levels of institutionalization.

Students of International Relations should also be interested in exploring the role of heads of government in events of international conflict and cooperation. The quantitative study of presidential behavior is a good starting point to understand how leaders can shape the foreign policy of their countries, complementing state-centric studies. For instance, accepting the proposition that leaders can become a source of institutional change allow us to examine the role of leaders in events of cooperation, such as the creation of intergovernmental organizations. One example can clarify this point. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA)

was created by Venezuela and Cuba in 2004 to promote the social, political, and economic integration of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Presently, it has 11 state members. It is uncontroversial to say that the central force behind the creation and expansion of ALBA was Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

APPENDIX A

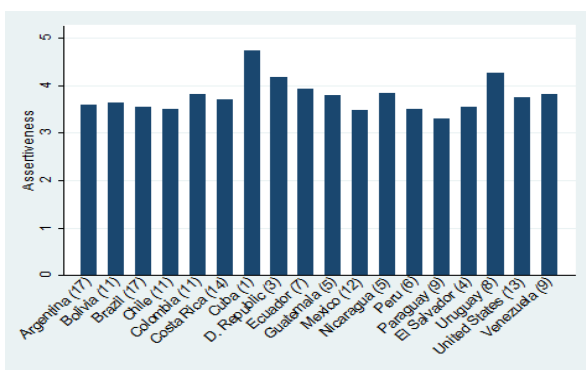
MEXICAN AND AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM?

Only Mexican and American presidents have not tried to change the charter to consolidate their power. What explains this exceptionalism? Three different explanations seem plausible. The simplest argument would be that the fact that the leaders have not tried a constitutional change in the 67 years examined does not mean that there will be no attempts in the future. After all, in five countries of the sample there has been only one presidential attempt, so it would be a matter of time to observe one attempt in either country. However, such argument does not provide new information.

A second possibility is that Mexican and American presidents have personality traits that are different to the rest of the nations in the sample. The heads of government from these two countries may tend to have a lower level of *Assertiveness* and *Risk Propensity*, compared to the presidents of the other countries.

Figures A.1 and A.2 explore this explanation. As can be noticed, on average Mexican and American presidents are neither particularly unassertive nor principally risk-averse. Only the scores for Cuba are an outlier. This occurs because Fidel Castro, one of the most risk-prone and assertive leaders in all of the sample, was the only Cuban head of state evaluated in the survey.

The figures show that, on average, presidents as a group tend to be assertive in all the countries of the sample. While there is more variation in the mean of Risk Propensity, American presidents tend to be among the leaders that score higher in this personality trait.



*In parenthesis the number of presidents evaluated.

Figure A.1: Assertiveness by Country

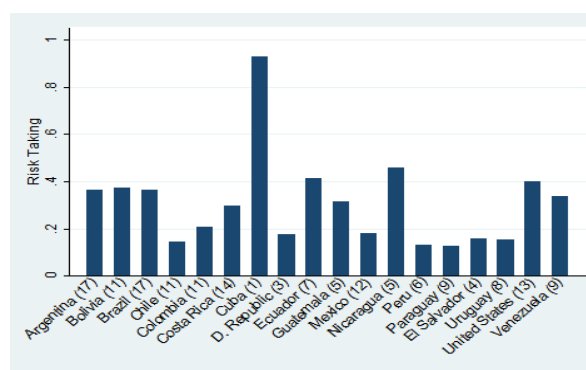


Figure A.2: Risk-Propensity by Country

The answer seems to lay more on the context in which Mexican and American presidents have governed. Both countries are in the select group of seven countries –along with Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Paraguay, and Argentina– in the sample in which constitutional changes are difficult because they require the support of two thirds of Congress or other elected body and “something else.” As discussed on Chapter 3, to confront constitutional rigidities some chief executives have chosen to violate or replace the charter. However, presidents are unlikely to succeed violating or replacing the charter in Mexico and the United States, given the high working levels of checks and balances in those countries.

Disregarded the extra-constitutional path, the legal alternative seems unsurmountable. American leaders need a super majority of two thirds of Congress and a ratification of three fourths of the states to reform the charter. No president elected since 1945 could have counted with so much support to consolidate his power.

Mexican presidents that want to amend the constitution also need a super majority in Congress and the approval of a majority of the states, a threshold difficult to surpass to any

Mexican leader. Moreover, Mexico offers a historical particularity that needs to be taken into account. The 1910 Mexican revolution started as an uprising against the reelection of President Porfirio Díaz. Once in power, revolutionaries prohibited presidential reelection in the 1917 charter. The culture against reelection has been so strong since then that, until nearly a decade ago, official documents usually ended up with the saying “sufragio efectivo, no reelección” (effective suffrage, no reelection). The Mexican revolutionary historic path explains why it is the only country in the Americas where reelection is forbidden to legislators, majors and presidents.

Despite no American nor Mexican president has tried to change the constitution, leaders from both countries have played in the border of legality to increase their powers. To face institutional limitations, American heads of state have exercised some practices that allow them to informally increase their legislative powers, such as executive prerogatives, implied powers and signing statements. The signing statements, for example, allow leaders to specify what parts of a law they will not enforce because they think they are unconstitutional. For some authors (e.g., Cooper 2005), these statements amount to a line-item veto, something not allowed by the charter.

In Mexico, during the long rule of the PRI party in power (1929-2000), chief executives enjoyed the so-called “meta-constitutional” powers. These were informal powers that gradually increased over time, granting leaders superlative powers. Moreover, PRI presidents enjoyed the *dedazo* (“finger tapping”), an informal institution that gave them the right to choose their successors. This practice allowed chiefs of state to extend their influence beyond their term.

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Table B.1 presents the questions asked to presidents during the interviews conducted with 21 former presidents. The questionnaire is a reference: the order of the questions asked may have changed according to the circumstances and some leaders were not asked all the questions due to time or other constraints. During the interviews, all the presidents were also asked about specific aspects of their political trajectories, and many shared additional details about their careers.

Table B.1: Questionnaire Applied to Presidents

Purpose	Question
Relation to the constitution	<p>-- How important is the constitution for the president?</p> <p>-- Is the constitution respected and enforced in your country?</p> <p>-- Why did you try to change the constitution? / Would you have liked to change the constitution? (If the answer is “yes”; had you have a complete control of the reforms, what would you have changed?)</p> <p>-- Would you have liked to change the constitution to increase the presidential powers or relax term limits?</p> <p>-- The constitution grants several legislative and non-legislative powers to the president. By legislative powers I refer to...By non-legislative powers, I refer to...In general, which of the powers that I mentioned are most important to govern? Which ones were the most and the least useful for you? Are these powers enforced or there are non-written, informal rules that allow accommodating these powers?</p>
Personal Individual Differences	<p>-- Would you mention any circumstances of your life that influenced your understanding of politics?</p> <p>-- In a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means very risk averse and 7 very risk prone, where would you place yourself? Would you have answered something different had I asked when you were in office?</p> <p>-- Do you remember a decision that you made as president that was particularly risky?/ Which was the most risky decision you made as president?</p> <p>-- On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means atheist and 7 extremely religious, where would you place yourself? Have you changed your religiosity since you were president?</p> <p>-- How would you describe your socioeconomic origin? (e.g., between very poor and very rich?)</p> <p>-- Suppose that you want to make a decision but you do not have all the background information you would like to have to make an informed decision. What would you do? Would you follow your instincts, ask for advice, or refrain from making a decision?</p> <p>-- On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is extreme left and 7 extreme right, where do you place yourself? Has your ideological position changed since you were president?</p>
Presidency and Individual Differences	<p>-- In a presidential system, how important are the presidents’ personality traits and background characteristics to govern?</p> <p>-- Which personal characteristics would you describe as positive and negative to govern?</p> <p>-- Do you think that the characteristics that you mention are specific to your country, or they should have a similar effect in other countries?</p> <p>-- Did your marital status influenced your performance as president? If so, how?</p> <p>-- Do you consider the age at which a president reaches the office as important to rule?</p> <p>-- Do you have entrepreneurial experience? If so, does this experience helped you to govern?</p> <p>-- Did your understanding of executive-legislative relations improved as you spend more time in power?</p> <p>-- How much your early/late socialization in politics influenced your career?</p> <p>-- Some analysts claim that lawyer presidents have an advantage when conducting relations with Congress, because they have a deeper understanding of how to negotiate and make the laws, and also about the implications of legal changes. Do you agree with this view? Why?</p>
Political Context	<p>-- Do you think that as president you could make a big difference for your country or did you felt bound by political, social or institutional limitations?</p> <p>-- Would you mention any circumstances of your life that influenced your understanding of politics?</p> <p>-- You arrived to the presidency winning in the first/second round with X% of votes. Also, your administration was politically continuist/rupturist with the preceding government. Do these factors conditioned the type of reforms that you could do? Which of these factors was more relevant, the electoral support that you received or your relation to the previous government?</p> <p>-- Did any social groups strongly supported you? How was your relation with the forces that supported you in Congress? Did you have problems with the Catholic Church, the press, the Army or NGOs?</p>

Source: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

APPENDIX C

THE PILOT SURVEY

To test the survey design and minimize the outbreak of unanticipated problems, a pilot study was conducted among undergraduate students of political science at the University of Pittsburgh between March and May of 2012. In total, 79 students voluntarily answered a survey about their president, Barack Obama. Although students of political science are not necessarily experts in heads of government, I assumed that their interest in politics and after four years of exposure to President Obama they would be able to state an opinion about him (being the content of the answers incidental to the general goal of the pilot survey).

Conducting the pilot survey was useful for important reasons. First, it served the purpose of checking if the answers demanded an excessive knowledge of the presidents. If such was true, then students would have left a high number of unanswered questions. Given that students are not experts in Obama, their answers provided a baseline to the responses that could be expected from presidential experts. Fortunately, there was no clear pattern of unanswered questions. Almost all students who completed the survey answered every question. Second, the response rate was useful to reveal if the participants considered the survey exhausting. Among the 79

students that started the survey, 79.7% finished it. I interpreted the drop out number as a warning.

Third, the survey served the purpose of checking how long it takes participants to finish it. Most of the participants answered the survey in the expected range of 15-20 minutes. Fourth, the survey allowed to check if the order of the questions was logical, such that they would help to keep an intuitive flow of the answers. Most of the students that withdrew from the survey did it when they turned from the first to the second page (nine participants) and from the second to the third page (five additional respondents dropped out). The participants did not drop out when the nature of the questions shifted from one topic to another (e.g., from questions about the background of the presidents to questions about the leaders' personality traits). This suggested that the order and nature of the questions did not particularly introduce "noise" to the questionnaire. Fifth, the pilot survey helped to confirm that the questions were unambiguous and clearly written. The participants were invited to provide feedback on the survey and did not raise any concerns on the clarity and preciseness of the questions being asked.

Despite the results of the pilot survey did not raise major red flags, some changes were introduced. To shorten the survey and avoid redundancy, I cut a question that asked the BFI-10 (Rammnstedt and John 2007), an alternative questionnaire to capture the Big Five personality traits. Moreover, suspecting that some raters could have difficulties in answering the question that captures the Risk Taking Index (Nicholson et al., 2005) presented in table 4.1, as described above I included a question that directly asked about the leaders' risk taking ("In general, how would you describe the president's attitude toward risk?"). I also included a question inviting raters to provide the name of scholars who could fill out the survey for the same subject they assessed.

APPENDIX D

RATERS AND POTENTIAL BIASES

As aforementioned, some questions in the survey captured the potential biases of survey experts to estimate if they drive the assessment of the presidents. Table D.1 shows that a large percentage of raters described feeling neither sympathy nor antipathy toward the president that they assessed (28%), although more felt some kind of sympathy (46%) rather than antipathy (26%). Similarly, more raters positively evaluated the president's performance than not (45% versus 36%). Arguably, the slight bias may explain why the scholars became experts in the presidents they rated; scholars tend to research subjects that they admire. Interestingly, raters tend to lean toward the center in their political ideology, and its two components, economic and social ideology. This trend suggests that the raters hold moderate positions.

Table D.1: Relation with Presidents and Ideology

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	N°
Personal contact	0= not met; 1= met 1-2 times; 2= 3-5 times, 3= 6-10 times; 4= 11-20 times; 5= 21 or >	1.23	1.705	0-5	467
Contact type	1= professional; 2= friendly; 3= family; 4= 1&2; 5=1&3; 6= 2&3; 7= 1&2&3	2.102	1.522	1-7	215
Feeling toward the President	1= strong antipathy; 2= slight antipathy; 3= neither sympathy nor antipathy; 4= slight sympathy; 5= strong sympathy	3.320	1.341	1-5	488
President's Performance	1= strongly disapprove; 2= disapprove; 3= neither 2 nor 4; 4= approve; 5= strongly approve	3.470	1.307	1-5	489
Political Ideology		3.322	1.099	1-7	482
Economic Ideology	1= far left; 2= left; 3= center-left; 4= center;	3.583	1.215	1-7	472
Social Ideology	5= center-right; 6= right; 7= far right.	3.117	1.097	1-7	472

SOURCE: Presidential Database of the Americas (2013).

APPENDIX E

PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

Table E.1: Presidential Legislative Powers

Variable Definition	Coding
Veto override threshold	No veto=0; Veto subject to simple majority override =1; Veto subject to qualified majority override = 2; No override =3
Number of chambers intervening in veto override and voting procedure	No veto=0; Veto, one chamber=1; Veto, two chambers voting together=2; Veto, two chambers voting separately=3
Partial observations and override threshold	No partial observations=0; Partial observations subject to simple majority override =1; Partial observations subject to qualified majority override =2; No override =3
Whether the president can promulgate the non-observed parts of a bill	1 if partial promulgation; 0 otherwise
Whether the president can veto the budget bill	1 if budget veto; 0 otherwise
Whether the president can convene Congress for extraordinary sessions	1 if power exists; 0 otherwise
Whether president has exclusive initiative on important financial or economic legislation	1 if power exists; 0 otherwise
Urgency bills and reversionary outcome	No bills = 0; Power to submit bills =1; Power to submit bills and proposal becomes law if Congress does not approve in a constitutionally defined period=2
Whether president has a residual authority to issue decrees of legislative content in emergency situations	1 if power exists; 0 otherwise
Constitutional decree authority and restrictions on content	No decree authority = 0; Decree authority restricted to certain areas= 1; No substantive restrictions on decree authority = 2
Constitutional decree authority and reversionary outcome	No decree authority = 0; Decree lapses in the absence of Congressional approval =1; Decree stands in the absence of Congressional approval = 2

Presidential authority to submit a bill to referendum	No authority= 0; Authority subject to Congressional approval=1; Authority to call a referendum but outcome non-binding= 2; Unilateral authority and outcome binding = 3
Whether Congress can increase spending	1 if Congress cannot increase spending; 0 otherwise
Whether the presidential proposal is the reversionary outcome in the absence of approval	1 if proposal becomes the reversionary outcome; 0 otherwise

SOURCE: Negretto (2013).

Table E.2: Presidential Non-Legislative Powers

Variable Definition	Coding
Whether pres. appoints sub-national executive authorities	Mayors and regional executives elected=0; Mayors elected but pres. appoints regional executives=1; No subnational elections=2
Whether pres. appoints constitutional court magistrates	No participation=0; Pres. nominates with other institutions=1; Pres. nominates and Congress ratifies by simple majority=2; Pres. nominates and Congress ratifies by qualified majority=3; Pres. appoints or charter does not establish procedure =4
Whether pres. appoints the head of the Public Ministry	No participation=0; Pres. nominates with other institutions=1; Pres. nominates and Congress ratifies by simple majority=2; Pres. nominates and Congress ratifies by qualified majority=3; Pres. appoints or constitution does not establish procedure=4
Whether pres. appoints the Comptroller General	No participation=0; Pres. nominates with other institutions=1; Pres. nominates and Congress ratifies by simple majority=2; Pres. nominates and Congress ratifies by qualified majority=3; Pres. appoints or charter does not establish procedure=4
Congress can interpellate ministers	Congress can interpellate ministers=0; Executive decides whether the minister attends=1; No interpellation=2
Congress can censure ministers	Binding censure=0; Nonbinding censure=1; No censure=2
Censure is restricted by the dissolution of Congress	Censure unrestricted by dissolution=0; Censure restricted by dissolution=1; No censure=2
Censure initiation requires less or more than a majority	Initiation by less than a majority=0; Initiation by simple majority=1; Initiation by qualified majority=2; No censure=3
Censure vote requires simple or qualified majority	Censure by simple majority=0; Censure by qualified majority=1; No censure=2
Whether one or two chambers intervene	One chamber=0; Two chambers=1; No censure=2
Impeachment needs the intervention of one or two bodies	Impeachment, one body=0; Impeachment, two bodies=1; No impeachment=2
Accusation requires qualified majority	Accusation by simple majority=0; Accusation by qualified majority=1; No impeachment=2
Final vote requires qualified majority	Decision by simple majority=0; Decision by qualified majority=1; No impeachment=2
Impeachment can proceed for political reasons	Impeachment for political reasons=0; Impeachment for legal crimes only=1; No impeachment=2
Congress can dismiss the pres. for mental or	Congress can dismiss=0; Congress cannot dismiss=1

physical incapacity

Congress must declare/ratify the declaration of emergency	Congress declares/ratifies=0; Pres. declares and notifies Congress=1
---	--

Whether there are limits on the rights that can be suspended	A limited number of rights can be suspended=0; No limits or generic limits=1
--	--

Emergency is subject to an explicit temporal limit	Temporal limit=0; Congress can postpone emergency=1; No temporal limit or pres. can extend it=2
--	---

SOURCE: Negretto (2013).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, Philip. 1990. *The exemplary presidency: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the American political tradition*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Amorim Neto, Octavio .2006. "The Presidential Calculus: Executive Policy Making and Cabinet Formation in the Americas." *Comparative Political Studies* 39(4): 415-440.
- Anckar, Dag, and Lauri Karvonen. 2002. "Constitutional amendment methods in the democracies of the world." *Paper to the 13th Nordic Political Science Congress, Aalborg, Denmark*.
- Arana Araya, Ignacio. 2013. *Presidential Database of the Americas*. Department of Political Science, University of Pittsburgh.
- Arjomand, Said, ed. 2007. *Constitutionalism and Political Reconstruction*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Baltzell, E. Digby, and Howard G. Schneiderman. 1988. "Social class in the oval office." *Society* 25(6): 42-49.
- Barber, James D. 1972. *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Baron, Jonathan. 1994. "Nonconsequentialist decisions." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 17(1): 1-10.
- Barry III, Herbert. 1979. "Birth order and paternal namesake as predictors of affiliation with predecessor by presidents of the United States." *Political Psychology*: 61-66.
- Beagrie, S. 2005. "How to... Excel at Psychometric Assessments." *Personnel Today*: 25-28.
- Benet-Martínez, Verónica, and Oliver P. John. 1998. "Los Cinco Grandes Across cultures and ethnic groups: Multitrait-multimethod analyses of the Big Five in Spanish and English." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75(3): 729-750.
- Benoit, Kenneth, and Michael Laver. 2006. *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*. London: Routledge.

- Byrnes, James P. 2013. *The nature and development of decision-making: A self-regulation model*. Psychology Press.
- Butler, Christopher K. 2007. "Prospect theory and coercive bargaining." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51(2): 227-250.
- Cameron, Charles M. 2000. *Veto bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2010. *Who leads whom? Presidents, policy, and the public*. University of Chicago Press.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2009. "Game Theory and the Study of the American Presidency." In George C. Edwards III and William Howell, eds., *Oxford Handbook on the American Presidency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cannon, Barry. 2009. *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution: Populism and Democracy in a Globalised Age*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Carreras, Miguel. 2012. "The Rise of Political Outsiders in Latin America, 1980-2010: an Institutional Perspective." *Comparative Political Studies* 45(12): 1451-1482
- Carter, David B., and Curtis S. Signorino. 2010. "Back to the future: Modeling time dependence in binary data." *Political Analysis* 18(3): 271-292.
- Cassandro, Vincent J. 1998. "Explaining Premature Mortality across Fields of Creative Endeavor." *Journal of Personality* 66: 805-833.
- CIA, U. 2013. *The World Factbook 2013-14*. Central Intelligence Agency.
- Cohen, Jeffrey E. 2008. *The Presidency in the Era of 24-hour News*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Colomer, Josep M. 2001. *Political Institutions: Democracy and Social Choice*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Congleton, Roger D., and Yongjing Zhang. 2013. "Is it all about Competence? The Human Capital of US Presidents and Economic Performance." *Constitutional Political Economy* 24(2): 108-124.
- Corr, Philip J., and Gerald Matthews, eds. 2009. *The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Corwin, Edward Samuel. 1940. *The President, Office and Powers: History and Analysis of Practice and Opinion*. New York, University Press.

- Costa, Paul T. Jr., and Robert R. McCrae. 1988. "Personality in adulthood: A six-year longitudinal study of self-reports and spouse ratings on the NEO Personality Inventory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 54(5): 853-863.
- Costa, Paul T. Jr., and Robert R. McCrae. 1992a. "Normal personality assessment in clinical practice: The NEO Personality Inventory." *Psychological assessment* 4(1): 5.
- Costa, Paul T. Jr., and Robert R. McCrae. 1992b. "Four Ways Five Factors are Basic." *Personality and Individual Differences* 13(6): 653-665.
- Costa, Paul T. Jr., and Robert R. McCrae. 1992c. *Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2001. "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes." In Stephan Haggard and Matthew D. McCubbins, eds., *Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- C-Span Survey of Presidential Leadership. 2000. Retrieved November 17, 2013, from <http://www.americanpresidents.org/survey/historians/overall.asp>
- Dahl, Robert. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Davidson, Jonathan RT, Kathryn M. Connor, and Marvin Swartz. 2006. "Mental illness in US presidents between 1776 and 1974: A review of biographical sources." *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 194(1): 47-51.
- Deluga, Ronald J. 1997. "Relationship among American Presidential Charismatic Leadership, Narcissism, and rated Performance." *Leadership Quarterly* 8(1): 49-65.
- Deluga, Ronald J. 1998. "American Presidential Proactivity, Charismatic Leadership, and Rated Performance." *Leadership Quarterly* 9(3): 265-291.
- DeMause, Lloyd Ed. 1974. *The History of Childhood*. Psychohistory Press.
- DeMause, Lloyd. 2002. *The Emotional Life of Nations*. Karnac Books.
- De Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. 1999. "An institutional explanation of the democratic peace." *American Political Science Review* 93(4): 791-807.
- Donley, R. E., & Winter, D. G. (1970). Measuring the motives of public officials at a distance: An exploratory study of American Presidents. *Behavioral Science*, 15, 227-236.
- Donley, Richard E., and David G. Winter. 1970. "Measuring the Motives of Public Officials at a Distance: An Exploratory Study of American Presidents." *Behavioral Science* 15(3): 227-236.

- Doyle, David and Robert Elgie. 2015. "Maximizing the Reliability of Cross-National Measures of Presidential Power." *British Journal of Political Science*: 1-11.
- Edwards III, George C. 1983. "Quantitative Analysis." *Studying the Presidency*: 99-124.
- Edwards III, George C., and Andrew Barrett. 2000. "Presidential Agenda Setting in Congress." *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan era*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Edwards, George C., John Howard Kessel, and Bert A. Rockman, eds. 1993. *Researching the Presidency: Vital Questions, New Approaches*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Eidelman, Scott, and Christian S. Crandall. 2012. "Bias in favor of the status quo." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 6(3): 270-281.
- Elms, Alan C. 1994. *Uncovering lives: The uneasy alliance of biography and psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elkins, Zachary, Tom Ginsburg and James Melton. 2007. "Baghdad, Tokyo, Kabul: Constitution-making in Occupied States." *William and Mary Law Review* 49: 1139-78.
- Elkins, Zachary, Tom Ginsburg, and James Melton. 2009. *The Endurance of National Constitutions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Elovitz, Paul H. 2003. "Psychoanalytic Scholarship on American Presidents." *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 31: 135-149.
- Emrich, Cynthia. G., Holly H. Brower, Jack M. Feldman, and Howard Garland. 2001. "Images in Words: Presidential Rhetoric, Charisma, and Greatness." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46(3): 527-557.
- Felzenberg, Alvin S. 2008. *The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn't): Rethinking the Presidential Rating Game*. Basic Books.
- Feldman, Noah. 2004. "Imposed Constitutionalism". *Connecticut Law Review* 37: 857-89.
- Flett, Gordon L., and Katherine B. Starzyk. 2008. "Personality Theory and Research: An International Perspective." *Canadian Psychology* 49(2): 178.
- Franck, Thomas M., ed. 1981. *The Tethered Presidency: Congressional Restraints on Executive Power*. New York: New York University Press.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1910. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. Oxford, UK: Norton.
- Frye, Timothy. 1997. "A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post-Communist Presidencies." *Comparative Political Studies* 30(5): 523-552.
- Furby, Lita, and Ruth Beyth-Marom. 1992. "Risk taking in adolescence: A decision-making perspective." *Developmental Review* 12(1): 1-44.

- Galton, Francis. 1869. *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences*. London: Macmillan.
- Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geller, A. 2004. "Now, tell the computer why you want this job: PCs take lead role in screening hourly workers." *Calgary Herald* F.3.
- George, Alexander L., and Juliette L. George. 1964. *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: a Personality Study*. Dover Publications.
- Ginsburg, Tom, Zachary Elkins, and Justin Blount. 2009. "Does the Process of Constitution-Making Matter?" *Annual Review of Law and Social Sciences* 5(5).
- Ginsburg, Tom, Zachary Elkins, and James Melton. 2011. "On the Evasion of Executive Term Limits." *William and Mary Law Review* 52(6): 1807-1872.
- Goldberg, Lewis R. 1990. "An Alternative 'Description of Personality': The Big Five Factor Structure." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59: 1216-1229.
- Goldberg, Lewis R. 1999. "A Broad-Bandwidth, Public Domain, Personality Inventory Measuring the Lower-Level Facets of Several Five-Factor Models." *Personality psychology in Europe* 7: 7-28.
- Goldberg, Lewis R., John A. Johnson, Herbert W. Eber, Robert Hogan, Michael C. Ashton, C. Robert Cloninger, and Harrison G. Gough. 2006. "The International Personality Item Pool and the Future of Public-Domain Personality Measures." *Journal of Research in Personality* 40(1): 84-96.
- Goldgeier, James. 1994. *Leadership and Soviet Foreign Policy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Google Cites. 2014. Retrieved February 15, 2014, from <http://scholar.google.com/>
- Gottschalk, Louis A., Regina Uliana, and Ronda Gilbert. 1988. "Presidential candidates and cognitive impairment measured from behavior in campaign debates." *Public Administration Review* 48: 613-619.
- Gough, Harrison G., and Pamela Bradley. 2005. *CPI 260: manual*. Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Greenstein, Fred I. 1969. *Personality and Politics: Problems of Evidence, Inference, and Conceptualization*. Chicago: Markham Publishing Company.
- Greenstein, Fred I., and Nelson Polsby, eds. 1975. *The Handbook of Political Theory: Micro-Political Theory*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Greenstein, Fred I. 2004. *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to George W. Bush*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Greenstein, Fred I. 2009. *Inventing the job of president: leadership style from George Washington to Andrew Jackson*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hagopian, Frances, and Scott P. Mainwaring, eds., 2005. *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hamilton, Michael Braun. 2009. "Online survey response rates and times: Background and guidance for industry." *Tercent, Inc.* Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Hargrove, Erwin C. 1993. "Presidential Personality and Leadership Style." In George Edwards, John H. Kessel, and Bert A. Rockman, eds. *Researching the Presidency: Vital Questions, New Approaches*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Heckman, James J. 1976. "The Common Structure of Statistical Models of Truncation, Sample Selection and Limited Dependent Variables and a Simple Estimator for such Models." *Annals of Economic and Social Measurement* 5(4): 475-492.
- Heclo, Hugh. 1977. *Studying the Presidency: A Report to the Ford Foundation*. Ford Foundation Press.
- Heimberg, Richard G., and Dianne F. Harrison. 1980. "Use of the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule with offenders: A question of questions." *Behavior Therapy* 11(2): 278-281.
- Hermann, Margaret G. 2003. "Validity and Limitations of Generational Change." *The Next* (2003).
- Hermann, M. G. (2003). "Validity and limitations of generational change." In Strategic Assessment Group, eds., *The Next Generation of World Leaders*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency.
- Hernández, Silvio. 1998. "PANAMA: Guerra de encuestas antecede referendo por reelección." Retrieved November 17, 2013, <http://www.ipsnoticias.net/1998/08/panama-guerra-de-encuestas-antecede-referendo-por-reeleccion/>.
- Hetherington, Marc J. and Jonathan D. Weiler. 2009. *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Holmes, Jack E., and Robert E. Elder. 1989. "Our Best and Worst Presidents: Some Possible Reasons for Perceived Performance," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 19: 529-557.
- Hooghe, Liesbet, Ryan Bakker, Anna Brigevid, Catherine De Vries, Erica Edwards, Gary Marks, Jan Rovny, Marco Steenbergen, and Milada Vachudova. 2010. "Reliability and validity of the 2002 and 2006 Chapel Hill expert surveys on party positioning." *European Journal of Political Research* 49(5): 687-703.
- Horowitz, Michael C., and Allan C. Stam. 2014. "How prior military experience influences the future militarized behavior of leaders." *International Organization* 68(3): 527-559.

- House, Robert J., William D. Spangler, and James Woycke. 1991. "Personality and charisma in the US presidency: A psychological theory of leader effectiveness." *Administrative Science Quarterly*: 364-396.
- Howell, William G. 2003. *Power without persuasion: The politics of direct presidential action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Huber, John, and Ronald Inglehart. 1995. "Expert Interpretations of Party Space and Party Locations in 42 Societies." *Party Politics* 1(1): 73-111.
- International Republican Institute. 1999. "Venezuela's 1998 Presidential, Legislative, and Gubernatorial Elections. Election Observation Report." *International Republican Institute*.
- Irwin, C. E., and S. G. Millstein. 1991. "Risk taking behaviors during adolescence." *Encyclopedia of adolescence* 2: 934-943.
- Ivancevich, John, Robert Konopaske, and Michael Matteson. 2013. *Organizational Behavior and Management*, 10th edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- James, Scott C. 2009. "Historical Institutionalism, Political Development, and the Presidency." In William Howell and George C. Edwards III, eds., *The Oxford Guide to the American Presidency*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- John, O. P., L.P. Naumann, and C.J. Soto. 2008. "Paradigm shift to the integrative Big Five trait taxonomy: history, measurement, and conceptual issues." In O. P. John, R.W. Robins and L. A. Pervin, eds., *Handbook of personality: theory and research*, 3rd edition: 114-58. New York: Guilford Press.
- Jones, Mark P. 1995. *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Jones, Bart. 2007. *Hugo! The Hugo Chávez story from mud hut to perpetual revolution*. New Hampshire: Steerforth.
- Jost, John T., and Mahzarin R. Banaji. 1994. "The role of stereotyping in system-justification and the production of false consciousness." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 33(1): 1-27.
- Jost, John T., Mahzarin R. Banaji, and Brian A. Nosek. 2004. "A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo." *Political Psychology* 25(6): 881-919.
- Judge, Timothy A., Chad A. Higgins, Carl J. Thoresen, and Murray R. Barrick. 1999. "The Big Five Personality Traits, General Mental Ability, and Career Success across the Life Span." *Personnel Psychology* 52: 621-652.
- Kahneman, Daniel, and Amos Tversky. 1979. "Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk." *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* 47(2): 263-291.
- Kennedy, Peter. 2003. *A Guide to Econometrics*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

- Kernell, Samuel. 1993. *Going public: New strategies of presidential leadership*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal politics: A theory of US lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kimble, Charles E., Nancy B. Marsh, and Andrew C. Kiska. 1984 "Sex, age, and cultural differences in self-reported assertiveness." *Psychological Reports* 55(2): 419-422.
- King, Anthony. 1975. "Executives." In Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science* 5. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.
- King, Gary. 1993. "The Methodology of Presidential Research," in George Edwards, III, John H. Kessel, and Bert A. Rockman, eds., *Researching the Presidency: Vital Questions, New Approaches*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh: 387-412.
- Kluegel, James R., and Eliot R. Smith. 1986. *Beliefs about inequality: Americans' views of what is and what ought to be*. Transaction Publishers.
- Koenig, Louis William. 1964. *The chief executive*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- König, Thomas. 2005. "Measuring and Analysing Positions on European Constitution-building." *European Union Politics* 6(3): 259-267.
- Kowert, Paul A. 1996. "Where Does the Buck Stop? Assessing the Impact of Presidential Personality." *Political Psychology* (1996): 421-452.
- Lambsdorff, Johann Graf. 2009. "The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 1999: Framework Document." *Transparency International, Berlin*.
- La Prensa. 2009. "Mel acepta que desea seguir en el poder". Retrieved on November 8, 2013, from <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/515284-97/mel-acepta-que-desea-seguir-en-el-poder>.
- Latin America Weekly Report. 1999. "Chavez's constitutional reform; a hard look at the rationale & proposals." Venezuela; Politics; WR-99-02; P. 18.
- Legales, Textos. 1999. *Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela*. Gaceta Oficial 36.
- Leites, Nathan. 1951. *The operational code of the Politburo*. No. RAND/CB-104-1. Rand Corp Santa Monica CA.
- Levine, Daniel H. 1973. *Conflict and Political Change in Venezuela*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lewis, David E. 2005. "Staffing Alone: Unilateral Action and the Politicization of the Executive Office of the President, 1988-2004." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35(3): 496-514.
- Lewis, David E. 2008. *The politics of presidential appointments: Political control and bureaucratic performance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Lijphart, Arend. 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lilienfeld, Scott O., Irwin D. Waldman, Kristin Landfield, Ashley L. Watts, Steven Rubenzer, and Thomas R. Faschingbauer. 2012. "Fearless dominance and the US presidency: implications of psychopathic personality traits for successful and unsuccessful political leadership." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 103(3): 489-505.
- Lindberg, Staffan I., Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, and Jan Teorell. 2014. "V-Dem: A New Way to Measure Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 25(3): 159-169.
- Linz, Juan. 1978. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Linz, Juan. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69.
- Linz, Juan. 1994. "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it Make a Difference?" In Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, 3-87. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Lopes, Lola L. 1987. "Between hope and fear: The psychology of risk." *Advances in experimental social psychology* 20(3): 255-295.
- Lorenz, Astrid. 2005. "How to Measure Constitutional Rigidity Four Concepts and Two Alternatives." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17(3): 339-361.
- Lowi, Theodore J. 1985. *The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lutz, Donald S. 1994. "Toward a Theory of Constitutional Amendment." *American Political Science Review* 88(2): 355-370.
- Llanos, Mariana, and Leiv Marsteintredet. 2010. "Ruptura y continuidad: la caída de «Mel» Zelaya en perspectiva comparada." *América Latina Hoy* 55 (2010): 173-197.
- Mahoney, James, and Kathleen Thelen. 2010. *Explaining institutional change: Ambiguity, agency, and power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mainwaring, Scott, and Matthew Shugart, eds. 1997. *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- Mainwaring, Scott, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán. 2014. *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- Maranell, Gary M. 1970. "The evaluation of presidents: An extension of the Schlesinger polls." *Journal of American History* 57(1): 104-113.

- Marcano, Cristina, and Alberto Barrera Tyszka. 2007. *Hugo Chávez: The Definitive Biography of Venezuela's Controversial President*. New York: Random House.
- Marshall, Bryan W., and Richard L. Pacelle. 2005 "Revisiting the Two Presidencies: The Strategic Use of Executive Orders." *American Politics Research* 33(1): 81-105.
- Martínez-Gallardo, Cecilia. 2010. "Inside the Cabinet: The Influence of Ministers in the Policymaking Process." In Carlos Scartascini, Ernesto Stein and Mariano Tomassi, eds., *How Democracy Works. Political Institutions, Actors, and Arenas in Latin American Policymaking*. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank.
- Mauger, Paul A., David R. Adkinson, D. R. (1993). *Interpersonal Behavior Survey (IBS)*. Los Angeles, California: Western Psychological Services.
- Matthews, Gerald, Ian J. Deary, and Martha C. Whiteman. 2003. *Personality traits*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mayer, Kenneth R. 2002. *With the stroke of a pen: Executive orders and presidential power*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- McCann, Stewart J.H. 1995. "Presidential candidate age and Schlesinger's cycles of American History (1789-1992): When younger is better." *Political Psychology* 16: 749-755.
- McCarty, Nolan. 2009. "Presidential Vetoes in the Early Republic: Changing Constitutional Norms or Electoral Reform?" *The Journal of Politics* 71(2): 369-384.
- McCormick, Iain A. 1985. "A Simple version of the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule." *Behavior Assessment* (7): 95-99.
- McCrae Robert R., Paul T. Costa Jr. 1997. "Personality Trait Structure as a Human Universal." *American Psychologist* 52(5): 509-516.
- McGregor, James. 1994. "The Presidency in East Central Europe." *RFE/RL Research Report* 3(2): 23-31.
- McGhee, Ronnie L., David J. Ehrler, Joseph A. Buckhalt, and Carol Phillips. 2012. "The Relation between Five-Factor Personality Traits and Risk-Taking Behavior in Preadolescents." *Psychology* 3(8): 558-561.
- Metcalf, Lee K. 2000. "Measuring Presidential Power." *Comparative Political Studies* 33(5): 661-685.
- Meyer, Mary A., and Jane M. Booker. 1991. *Eliciting and analyzing expert judgment: a practical guide*. Vol. 7. SIAM.
- Moe, Terry M. 1985. "The politicized presidency." In John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, eds., *The New Direction in American Politics*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

- Moe, Terry M. 1993. "Presidents, Institutions, and Theory." In George C. Edwards III, John H. Kessel and Bert A. Rockman, eds., *Researching the Presidency: Vital Questions, New Approaches*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Moe, Terry M. 1995. "The politics of structural choice: Toward a theory of public bureaucracy." In Oliver E. Williamson, ed., *Organization theory: from Chester Barnard to the present and beyond*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moe, Terry M. 2009. "The Revolution in Presidential Studies." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39(4): 702-725.
- Mondak, Jeffery J. 2010. *Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mumford, Michael D., Wayne A. Baughman, K. Victoria Threlfall, Charles E. Uhlman, and David P. Costanza. 1993. "Personality, Adaptability, and Performance: Performance on Well-Defined Problem Solving Tasks." *Human Performance* 6(3): 241-285.
- Murray, Robert K., and Tim H. Blessing. 1983. "The presidential performance study: A progress report." *The Journal of American History*: 535-555.
- Murray, Robert K., and Tim H. Blessing. 1988. *Greatness in the White House Rating the presidents, Washington through Carter*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Musson, David M., Gro Sandal, and Robert L. Helmreich. 2004. "Personality characteristics and trait clusters in final stage astronaut selection." *Aviation, space, and environmental medicine* 75(4): 342-349.
- Nathan, Richard P. 1983. *The administrative presidency*. New York: Wiley.
- Negretto, Gabriel, and Josep Colomer. 2003. "Gobernanza con Poderes Divididos en América Latina." *Política y Gobierno* 10(1): 13-61.
- Negretto, Gabriel. 2006. "Choosing How to Choose Presidents: Parties, Military Rulers, and Presidential Elections in Latin America." *The Journal of Politics* 68(2): 421-433.
- Negretto, Gabriel. 2008. *The Durability of Constitutions in Changing Environments: Explaining Constitutional Replacements in Latin America*. Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies.
- Negretto, Gabriel. 2009. "Political Parties and Institutional Design: Explaining Constitutional Choice in Latin America." *British Journal of Political Science* 39(1): 117-139.
- Negretto, Gabriel L. 2010. "La reforma política en América Latina. Reglas electorales y distribución de poder entre presidente y Congreso." *Desarrollo Económico* 198: 197-221.
- Negretto, Gabriel. 2012. "Replacing and Amending Constitutions. The Logic of Constitutional Change in Latin America." *Law & Society Review* 46(4): 749-779.

- Negretto, Gabriel. 2013. *Making Constitutions: Presidents, Parties, and Institutional Choice in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, Brian A. 2009. The silence and the scorpion: the coup against Chávez and the making of modern Venezuela. New York: Nation Books.
- Neustadt, Richard. 1960. *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership*. New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Nicholson, Nigel, Emma Soane, Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, and Paul Willman. 2005. "Personality and domain-specific risk taking." *Journal of Risk Research* 8 (2): 157-176.
- North, Douglass, and Barry R. Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." *Journal of Economic History* 49(4): 803–832.
- Norris, Pippa. 2014. *Why Electoral Integrity Matters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oconitrillo, Eduardo. 2004. *Cien años de política costarricense 1902-2002*. San José: EUNED.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo, and Philippe C. Schmitter. 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- O'Malley, Eoin. 2007. "The Power of Prime Ministers: Results of an Expert Survey." *International Political Science Review* 28(1): 7-27.
- Ones, D. S., Viswesvaran, C., & Dilchert, S. 2004. Cognitive ability in selection decisions. In Oliver Wilhelm and Randall W. Engle, eds., *Handbook of understanding and measuring intelligence*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.
- Onyeizugbo, Eucharia U. 2003. "Effects of gender, age, and education on assertiveness in a Nigerian sample." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 27(1): 12-16.
- Oreg, Shaul. 2003. "Resistance to Change: Developing an Individual Differences Measure." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88(4): 680–693.
- Orren, Karen, and Stephen Skowronek. 2004. *The search for American political development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Peake, Jeffrey S. 2002. "Coalition Building and Overcoming Gridlock in Foreign Policy, 1947-1998." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 32(1): 67-83.
- Pennebaker, James W., and Laura A. King. 1999. "Linguistic styles: Language use as an individual difference." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77(6): 1296–1312.
- Pérez-Liñán, Aníbal, Juan Carlos Rodríguez Raga, Néstor Castañeda Angarita, John Polga-Hecimovich, Yasaman Sadeghipour, Mike Samras, and Sofía Estévez. 2014. "Legislatures in Latin America" [v.5]. Unpublished Dataset, University of Pittsburgh.

- Pérez-Liñán, Aníbal, Agustín Grijalva, Javier Vásquez D'Elia, and María José Romero. 2015. "Presidential Powers Database" [v. 3]. Unpublished dataset, University of Pittsburgh.
- Persson, Torsten and Guido Tabellini. 2003. *The Economic Effects of Constitutions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Pika, Joseph A. 1981. "Moving Beyond the Oval Office: Problems in Studying the Presidency." In *Congress and the Presidency: A Journal of Capital Studies* 9(1): 17-36. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Porter, Carol A., and Peter Suedfeld. 1981. "Integrative complexity in the correspondence of literary figures: Effects of personal and societal stress." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40(2): 321-330.
- Post, Jerrold M., ed. 2003. *The psychological assessment of political leaders: with profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Powell, Jr., G. Bingham. 2000. *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam. 1991. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam. 2000. *Democracy and development: political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990*. Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pulver, Aleksander, Jüri Allik, Lea Pulkkinen, and Minna Hämäläinen. 1995. "A Big Five personality inventory in two non-Indo-European languages." *European Journal of Personality* 9(2): 109-124.
- Rammstedt, Beatrice, and Oliver P. John. 2007. "Measuring personality in one minute or less: A 10-item short version of the Big Five Inventory in English and German." *Journal of research in Personality* 41(1): 203-212.
- Rathus, Spencer A. 1973. "A 30-item schedule for assessing assertive behavior." *Behavior Therapy* 4(3): 398-406.
- Ray, Leonard. 1999. "Measuring party orientations towards European integration: Results from an expert survey." *European Journal of Political Research* 36(2): 283-306.
- Renshon, Jonathan. 2008. "Stability and change in belief systems: The operational code of George W. Bush from governor to second-term president." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52(6): 820-849.
- Ridings William, J., and Stuart B. McIver. 1997. *Rating the Presidents: A Ranking of US Leaders, from the Great and Honorable to the Dishonest and Incompetent*. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press.

- Rockman, Bert A. 2009. "Does the Revolution in Presidential Studies Mean 'Off With the President's Head'?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39(4): 786-794.
- Roelofs, H. Mark. 1992. "The prophetic president: Charisma in the American political tradition." *Polity*: 1-20.
- Rose, Richard. 1988. *The postmodern president: The White House meets the world*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Rother, Larry, 1998. "Re-election Struggle in Panama Could Affect Transfer of Canal." *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 23, 2014, from <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/29/world/re-election-struggle-in-panama-could-affect-transfer-of-canal.html>.
- Rubenzon, Steven J., Thomas R. Faschingbauer and Deniz S. Ones. 2000. "Assessing the U.S. Presidents Using the Revised NEO Personality Inventory." *Assessment* 7(4): 403-420.
- Rubenzon, Steven J., and Thomas R. Faschingbauer. 2004. *Personality, character, and leadership in the White House: Psychologists assess the presidents*. Potomac Books, Inc.
- Salgado, Jesús F. 1997. "The five factor model of personality and job performance in the European Community." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 82(1): 30-43.
- Salomon, Leticia. 2009. "Políticos, empresarios y militares: protagonistas de un golpe anunciado". *Revista Envío*.
- Schafer, Mark, and Scott Crichlow. 2002. "The Process-Outcome Connection in Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Quantitative Study Building on Groupthink." *International Studies Quarterly* 46(1): 45-68.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M., Sr. 1948. "Historians rate the U.S. presidents." *Life* 25(18): 65-74.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M. 1997. "Rating the presidents: Washington to Clinton." *Political Science Quarterly*: 179-190.
- Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed pluralism: Institutional innovation and the development of the US Congress*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sehnbruch, Kirsten, and Peter M. Siavelis. 2014. *Democratic Chile: the politics and policies of a historic coalition, 1990-2010*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Incorporated.
- Seligson, Mitchell A., and Edward N. Muller. 1990. "Estabilidad democrática y crisis económica: Costa Rica 1978-1983." *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 16(2): 71-92.
- Shugart, Matthew S., and John M. Carey. 1992. *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- Simon, Arthur M., and Joseph E. Uscinski. 2012. "Prior Experience Predicts Presidential Performance." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42(3): 514-548.

- Simonton, Dean K. 1981. "Presidential greatness and performance: Can we predict leadership in the White House?" *Journal of Personality* 49(3): 306-323.
- Simonton, Dean K. 1986. "Presidential personality: Biographical use of the Gough Adjective Check List." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51(1): 149-160.
- Simonton, Dean K. 1988. "Presidential style: Personality, biography, and performance." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 55(6): 928-936.
- Simonton, Dean K. 1996. "Presidents' wives and First Ladies: On achieving eminence within a traditional gender role." *Sex Roles* 35 (5-6): 309-336.
- Simonton, Dean K. 2002. "Intelligence and predicted greatness: Equation replication using updated IQ estimates." In Serge P. Shovov, ed., *Advances in psychology research*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Simonton, Dean K. 2006. "Presidential IQ, openness, intellectual brilliance, and leadership: Estimates and correlations for 42 US chief executives." *Political Psychology* 27(4): 511-539.
- Simonton, Dean K. 2009. "Presidential leadership styles: How do they map onto charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic leadership?" In Francis J. Yammarino, and Fred Dansereau, eds., *Multi-level issues in organizational behavior and leadership*. Vol. 8. Emerald Group Publishing.
- Skowronek, Stephen. 1986. "Notes on the presidency in the political order." In Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, eds., *Studies in American political development: An annual*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Skowronek, Stephen. 1993. *The politics presidents make: leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*. Harvard University Press.
- Skowronek, Stephen 2008. *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Slovic, Paul, Sarah Lichtenstein, and Baruch Fischhoff. 1988. "Decision-making." In Hal Pashler, ed., *Steven's handbook of experimental psychology*. Vol. 2: *Learning and cognition*. New York: Wiley.
- Song, A. V., and Simonton, Dean. K. 2007. "Personality assessment at a distance." In Richard W. Robins, R. Chris Fraley, and Robert F. Krueger, eds., *Handbook of Research Methods in Personality Psychology*. New York: Guilford.
- Srivastava, Sanjay, Oliver P. John, Samuel D. Gosling, and Jeff Potter. 2003. "Development of personality in early and middle adulthood: set like plaster or persistent change?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84(5): 1041-1053.
- Stepan, Alfred. 1978. "Political Leadership and Regime Breakdown: Brazil." In Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, Vol. 3, *Latin America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Stewart, Louis H. 1991. "The world cycle of leadership." *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 36(4): 449-459.
- Steenbergen, Marco R. and Gary Marks. 2007. "Evaluating Expert Judgments." *European Journal of Political Research* 46(3): 347-366.
- Suedfeld, Peter, Raymond S. Corteen, and Carroll McCormick. 1986. "The Role of Integrative Complexity in Military Leadership: Robert E. Lee and His Opponents." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 16(6): 498-507.
- Sulloway, Frank J. 1996. *Born to rebel: Birth order, family dynamics, and creative lives*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Sunstein, Cass R. 2001. *Designing Democracy: What Constitutions Do*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor-Robinson, Michelle M. 2009. "Honduras: una mezcla de cambio y continuidad". *Revista de Ciencia Política* 29(2): 471-489.
- Taylor-Robinson, Michelle M., and Joseph Daniel Ura. 2012. "Public opinion and conflict in the separation of powers: Understanding the Honduran coup of 2009." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 25(1): 105-127.
- Taranto, James, and Leonard Leo (Eds.). 2004. *Presidential Leadership: Rating the Best and the Worst in the White House*. New York: Wall Street Journal Books.
- Tetlock, Philip E. 1981. "Pre- to postelection shifts in presidential rhetoric: Impression management or cognitive adjustment." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41(2): 207-212.
- The Maddison-Project, 2013 version. Retrieved November 24, 2013, from <http://www.ggdnc.net/maddison/maddison-project/home.htm>.
- The World Bank. 2014. *World Development Indicators 1960-2014*. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>
- Thoemmes, Felix J. and Lucian G. Conway. 2007. "Integrative Complexity of 41 U.S. Presidents." *Political Psychology* 28(2): 193-226.
- Tsebelis, George. 1995. "Decision making in political systems: Veto players in presidentialism, parliamentarism, multicameralism and multipartyism." *British Journal of Political Science* 25(3): 289-325.
- Viswesvaran, Chockalingam, and Deniz S. Ones. 2000. "Perspectives on models of job performance." *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 8(4): 216-226.
- Waite, Robert G.L. 1977. *The psychopathic god: Adolf Hitler*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wagner, William F. 2000. "All Skill, No Finesse. Personality fit is every bit as important as your new hire's technical ability." *WORKFORCE-COSTA MESA*- 79(6): 108-117.

- Wagner, Mazie E., and Herman J. Schubert. 1977. Sibship variables and United States presidents. *Journal of individual Psychology* 33: 78-85.
- Walker, Stephen G., Mark Schafer, and Michael D. Young. 1998. "Systematic procedures for operational code analysis: Measuring and modeling Jimmy Carter's operational code." *International Studies Quarterly* 42(1): 175-189.
- Walker, Stephen G. 2009. "Operational Code Analysis and Foreign Policy Decision Making." In Alex Mintz and Steven B. Redd, eds., *Methods and Theories of Foreign Policy Analysis*. New York: Palgrave.
- Walker, Stephen G. 2009. "The Psychology of Presidential Decision Making". In: George C. Edwards III, and William G. Howell, eds., *The Oxford handbook of the American presidency*. Oxford University Press.
- Wanberg, Connie R., and Joseph T. Banas. 2000. "Predictors and outcomes of openness to changes in a reorganizing workplace." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85(1): 132-142.
- Wayne, Stephen J. 1983. "An Introduction to Research on the Presidency." *Studying the Presidency*: 4.
- Weko, Thomas J. 1995. *The politicizing presidency: The White House personnel office, 1948-1994*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Wendt, Hans W., and Paul C. Light. 1976. "Measuring 'greatness' in American presidents: Model case for international research on political leadership?" *European Journal of Social Psychology* 6(1): 105-109.
- Wigfield, Allan, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. 1992. "The development of achievement task values: A theoretical analysis." *Developmental review* 12(3): 265-310.
- Wildavsky, Aaron, and Duane Oldfield. 1989. "The two presidencies thesis revisited at a time of political dissensus." *Society* 26(5): 53-59.
- Wilpert, G. 2007. *Changing Venezuela: The History and Politics of the Chavez Government*. Verso Books.
- Wilson, Margo, and Martin Daly. 1985. "Competitiveness, risk taking, and violence: The young male syndrome." *Ethology and sociobiology* 6(1): 59-73.
- Winter, David G. 1987. "Leader appeal, leader performance, and the motive profiles of leaders and followers: A study of American presidents and elections." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52(1): 196-202.
- Winter, David G., and Leslie A. Carlson. 1988. "Using motive scores in the psychobiographical study of an individual: The case of Richard Nixon." *Journal of Personality* 56(1): 75-103.
- Winter, David G. 2002. "Motivation and political leadership." In Linda O. Valenty and Ofer Feldman, eds., *Political leadership for the new century: Personality and behavior among American leaders*. Westport, Ct: Praeger.

- Winter, David G. 2005. "Things I've learned about personality from studying political leaders at a distance." *Journal of Personality* 73(3): 557–584.
- Wood, B. Dan. 2007. *The politics of economic leadership: The causes and consequences of presidential rhetoric*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wood, B. Dan. 2009. "Pontificating About Moe's Pontifications." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39(4): 805-818.
- Zogby International. 2002. Zogby Presidential Greatness Poll. Retrieved November 8, 2013, from www.zogby.com.
- Zuckerman, Marvin. 1991. "Sensation seeking: The balance between risk and reward." In Lewis Paeff Lipsitt and Leonard L. Mitnick, eds., *Self-regulatory Behavior and Risk Taking: Causes and Consequences*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Zullov, Harold M., and Martin E.P. Seligman. 1990. "Pessimistic rumination predicts defeat of presidential candidates, 1900 to 1984." *Psychological Inquiry* 1(1): 52-61.