

**EDUCATION EXPERTS, INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENTS, LEFT PARTIES:
THREE ESSAYS ON NEOLIBERAL POLITICS IN CHILE AND BEYOND**

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The three essays of this dissertation contribute to debates over the role of experts and technologies in the construction of market-oriented institutions regulating social life. I look at the historical contingency and specificity of neoliberal knowledge and ideas. Across diverse cases, I examine how the authority of market-minded experts and the policy devices experts create are embedded in social relations that yield historically distinct effects.

The first essay examines the political determinants of the metrics employed to govern markets. I trace how education experts in Chile –a global exemplar of market-minded technocracy– turned political decisions about how to organize the school market into a matter of technical choice over statistical measures of school quality. Despite their efforts to use putatively neutral decision technologies to produce at least the appearance of fairness and impartiality, Chilean experts could not dodge taking sides in the debate over education privatization. By building politicized judgments into presumably objective statistical models, experts can sometimes insulate themselves from political scrutiny and often shield contentious decisions from public deliberation and democratic accountability.

The second essay examines the transnational processes through which forms of market-minded technocratic governance –such as Chile’s– became globally dominant. I make the case that neoliberalism itself can be thought of as a social movement, rereading its intellectual history through such well-honed tools of movement scholarship as "political opportunities", "frame alignment", and "mobilizing structures". I show the deep debt contemporary capitalism owes to

the organizing praxis of a transnational network of market-fundamentalist scholars, philanthropists, gurus, and intellectuals who, interestingly, relentlessly refrained from collectively asserting an "identity".

The third essay takes a comparative approach to understanding the national conditions under which market-oriented regimes become more or less entrenched and institutionalized. I focus on the trajectories of Left parties and their relations with states and democratic institutions in Chile and Uruguay, and unravel the historical determinants of neoliberal resilience. My comparison shows that how political parties fit political agendas to the contours of conflicting interests in civil society enhances or limits their ability to check the otherwise unfettered expansion of market forms of governance, regulation, and social provision.

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PREFACE

These are my final words before I formally submit my dissertation, so I will make it quick. First, a complaint: It is terribly unfair that the only time one devotes to writing about the people who actually made this long, rugged, and often times tortuous journey possible happens when one is exhausted, and with literary no time left to do justice to the righteous. I am indeed tired, and I really wish I had dared to anticipate this moment of fatigue to give proper treatment to the deserved acknowledgements much earlier, when my stamina was still at decent levels. But anticipation, of course, is not my thing (ask Sam for proof), I guess this is what it is:

Thanks to all my friends in Uruguay, those who always supported me and kept caring about our friendship despite all the years I have been away from *el paisito*. Así que gracias Charly, Nacho, Ale, Majo, Gallego, Mateos, Boli, Lu, Lu, Canario, Diego, Bea, Mariana, María, María, Fafa, Pollo, Sueco, Dani, Rodrigo, Tudú, Seba, y otros tantos que se me olvidan en este momento de escritura apresurada.

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1.0 THE MORAL ECONOMY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE: FACTORING CLASS INEQUALITY INTO SCHOOL VALUATION IN CHILE

The *policies* of market-oriented reform in general, and accountability in particular, are central themes in today's educational research. The expansion of testing and ranking has led some researchers to investigate the effects of top-down rationalization and performance-based management on school organization and practices (Ball et al. 2012; Diamond 2012; Hallett 2010; Meyer and Bromley 2013; Plank and Condliffe 2013; Sauder and Espeland 2009; Spillane, Parise and Sherer 2011). Others have tried to understand how the introduction of market mechanisms such as vouchers, benchmarking, and choice affect –and are affected by– gender, race, and class inequalities (Berends 2015; Epple, Romano and Zimmer 2015; Rich and Jennings 2015). The *politics* of market-oriented education has also been subject to academic scrutiny; scholars affiliated with the critical tradition of social research have denounced the threat that corporate-sponsored reforms present to the future of public education and democracy (Apple 2013; Au and Ferrare 2014; Bartlett et al. 2002; Kretchmar, Sondel and Ferrare 2016; Ravitch 2016; Ravitch, Kohn and Hagopian 2014), documenting different forms of resistance against the advance of testing and privatization (Ravitch, Kohn and Hagopian 2014). Others have stressed the role ideas play in the political process, framing educational problems and policy solutions thereof (Mehta 2015).

Studies that take Chile –a world pioneer and epicenter of market-oriented education– as a case have significantly contributed to these two traditions of research. State sponsorship of (for-

and non-profit) charter schools and private universities, adoption of subsidiary schemes of demand-side financing such as school vouchers and student loans, and widespread use of standardized testing and rankings for school accountability, teacher compensation, and university admission, all favor privatization, competition, and choice. For this reason, educational researchers have looked to the Chilean implementation of market-based education to understand the impact of these policies on educational outcomes (Mizala et al. 2014; Mizala and Torche 2012; Thieme and Treviño 2013; Torche 2005; Valenzuela, Bellei and Ríos 2014). Whether state-funded but privately-run education management organizations prove more effective than municipally-run schools, whether tying incentives to performance improves schools, or whether a progressive voucher design reduces the SES achievement gap, constitute key issues commonly addressed by this policy-oriented research. Results are mixed and generally ambivalent; but all these studies share a perspective that sees market mechanisms as inputs for an evidence-based assessment of *policy* effectiveness.

On the other hand, from a *political* perspective, scholars have seen market-oriented education as the source of grievances fueling popular unrest. In Chile, the conflict over education reform has constituted a pivotal case of politicization of the market-oriented Washington Consensus (Babb 2013; Donoso and von Bülow 2017). The rise of the student movement was crucial to this politicization. By articulating the antagonism between education as commodity and education as social right into the general struggle against the so-called “neoliberalism” (Mudge 2008), the social movement for education crafted a powerfully appealing anti-market “master frame” (Snow et al. 1986) that has reverberated across society (Bellei and Cabalin 2013; Salinas and Fraser 2012; Somma 2017).

What is missing in both policy and political accounts is a proper consideration of the disputes over market-like devices in education from an economic sociology perspective: one that treats markets (in this case education markets) as morally, ideationally, and technologically embedded institutions. The recurrent outbreak of student protests (especially in 2006 and 2011) has turned education markets in Chile into “the theater of a morality play” (Fourcade et al. 2013:620). Not only have different political and social actors come to assess publicly what is good or bad, worthy and unworthy, right or wrong about profit, choice, or competition; allegedly neutral, value-free tools of evaluation and valuation have also come under growing scrutiny and, therefore, become sites of contestation.

My purpose is to extend the investigation of sociotechnical processes of market valuation to an overlooked case: education. I investigate when and how education policymakers resort to economic reasoning and methods to “re-perform”¹ a politicized market in a presumably objective, impartial fashion. I also demarcate the limits of technical knowledge in achieving this goal, exposing the moral judgments that underlie the process of implementation and calibration of a market regulation device. These judgements, I observe, are entangled in broader ideological standpoints about the desirability and naturalness of a hierarchically structured, class-based market order.

The institutionalization of test-based, high-stakes accountability in Chile serves the context of my case study. In particular, I focus on the enactment of the so-called *Metodología de*

¹ Adherents of the performativity school extend to economic phenomena Austin’s 1962 theory of the grammatical performative (utterances that “do things with words” – e.g., avow marriage, christen a vessel). Economics and its practitioners –who may be professional economists but also any agent, whether lay or expert, practicing “economics in the wild”– not only “represent”, “prescribe”, or “express” the economy through their theories and methods; they also “perform” it by materially assembling sociotechnical devices that make markets resemble their concepts and models (Callon 1998).

Ordenación de Escuelas –School Ordinalization Methodology (SOM)²– an assessment technology intended to perform socially optimal market outcomes by *fairly* holding providers (schools) responsible to consumers (students).

The origin of the SOM, with the explicit legal provision of *fair responsabilization*, is closely linked to broader transformations in the political economy of school reform in Chile. The SOM emerged as a byproduct of, on the one hand, social movement protests against market reforms in education, and, on the other hand, intense intra-elite controversy over the policies necessary to respond to social movement challenges. In the 1980s, the military dictatorship transferred public schools to local governments, replaced budget appropriation with voucher mechanisms of school financing to promote far-reaching privatization, and implemented mandatory testing to foster choice and competition. The center-left democratic governments that followed consolidated and even expanded the so-called “market model” of education. In 2006, an unexpected wave of high-school occupations and mass demonstrations threatened the hitherto solid policy consensus. Declaring *quality* education a universal right rather than an exclusive market good, students demanded the state reassume direct control and funding of public schools. They also petitioned against profit and discriminatory enrolment in the voucher-funded private sector, and argued that test-based rankings unfairly stigmatized public schools with high concentration of low-SES students.

Market regulation through high-stakes, outcomes-based performance, which the SOM putatively made commensurable, came out of this protracted process of politicization. Congress

² The Spanish word “ordenación” relates to the verb “ordenar”, which, like the English verb “to order”, means both to give instructions or requests, and to arrange objects or elements into groups. To avoid confusion over the cognate “ordination,” with its misleading connotation of taking or conferring holy orders, I chose to translate “ordenación” into “ordinalization”, following Fourcade’s (2016) theorizing about the “sociotechnical channels through which ordinal judgments are now elaborated” (2016, p.175). The SOM nicely fits this definition.

amended the Constitution, mandating a state-guaranteed right to *quality* education. To fulfill this mandate, the Law of Education Quality Assurance (LEQA) of 2011 created the Agency of Education Quality (AEQ) and charged it with designing and implementing the SOM so as to render the quality of all Chilean K-12 commensurate with a single ordinal metric.

I conceptualize the SOM as both a policy device and a technology of economic valuation. My goal is to reconstruct the process by which this accountability device came to assemble certain scientific conventions, administrative data, routine measurements, and econometric modeling so as to produce an allegedly “fair” ranking of school quality. Analyzing in-depth interviews with policymakers, congressional debates, official reports, technical documents, and session minutes of the regulatory agencies created by the LEQA, I underscore Chilean lawmakers’, experts’, and regulators’ active engagement in “numerical commensuration” (Fourcade 2016:178): an array of practices and procedures arranged to deliver objective, presumably impartial, and highly consequential “ordinal judgements” by removing “the sting of opinion” and turning “the production of rankings into a seemingly dispassionate exercise of quantification.”

In investigating the genealogy the SOM as a valuation technology, I unravel the evaluative schemes mobilized to address a very controversial “valuation problem” (Beckert 2009) that emerged first in the Chilean Congress, then among the experts in charge of quality assurance policy: Should the SOM establish official categorizations of school quality on the basis of “raw” test-scores as “objective” measure of schools’ compliance with achievement standards? Or should it base quality valuations on the school’s relative contribution to these achievements, net of the entering endowments of the students admitted? Underlying this technical question was a moral dilemma, one that pervades the use of benchmarking rules for high-stake accountability purposes:

to what extent is it morally fair to value schools for outcomes that may be only arguably or partially attributable to their action?

Delving into the justificatory rationales at play in this controversy, I interpret an intricate moral economy intelligible only in light of the anti-market versus pro-market cleavage that crosscuts the Chilean polity³. I show how policymakers translated burgeoning discontent with the market-like, class-segregated organization of the education field produced by decades of state-sponsored privatization into socially-sensitive invocations of fairness in public assessments of school performance. This translation led lawmakers to dictate the incorporation of class inequality into ordinal classifications of education quality. More importantly, technocrats in charge of operationalizing this mandate predictably clashed over two distinct conceptions of “quality.” While some experts invoked justice in relation to providers (schools) for the sake of a fair distribution of responsibility for educating “socially diverse” students, others, less suspicious of rankings, conceived justice on behalf of consumers (students), understanding quality in reference to achievement of learning benchmarks, irrespective of the school’s relative contribution to that outcome. Unable to address this dilemma openly, however, technocrats reduced it to the selection of the econometric method –ordinary least squares vs. hierarchical linear models – that brought post-adjustment estimates of school quality more or less close to commonsensical notions of school prestige. The chosen quality ranking, unsurprisingly, closely mirrored social class distinctions within a status-based school market (Podolny 1993).

³ I define this cleavage as market vs. anti-market, instead of a state vs. market. What characterizes the political economy of contemporary Chile is not a conflict over the state as a major player within education but whether market mechanisms are the desired way for the state to rationalize and organize the education field or, instead, other nonmarket institutional forms are preferred (see Streeck 2011).

Notwithstanding the surreptitious ideological dispute over the role of the SOM in the legitimation of the actually existing, class-segregated market order, the controversy was not enough to splinter a more fundamental consensus, one which allowed experts to get on with the SOM. Although their moral judgments on the distributive consequences associated with alternative *ordinalizations* diverged, they ultimately shared an economic style of reasoning and doing (Hacking 2002) that served as second-order “moral background” (Abend 2014). In the end, I show, experts’ translation of incommensurable economies of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) into competing claims for fairness that, nevertheless, were both rooted in shared ways of going about settling their moral disputes, helped bridge the ideological gap between a priori antithetical conceptions of market regulation and accountability.

My focus on the moral economy governing experts’ practices of evaluation and valuation contributes to a realist critique of the objectivity of high-stakes benchmarking rules, not in the sense of questioning their status as real things in the world, but of taking seriously the knowledge claims constitutive of such rules as objects of knowledge themselves (Maton and Moore 2010; Sayer 2000). Ultimately, the implications of this research are univocal. Whatever the metrics a democratic society adopts to quantify the quality of education as to hold their providers accountable, the technical construction of these measurements cannot be exclusive prerogative of scientific expertise. An informed, nonexpert, pluralistic debate on the moral and ideological foundations of performance rankings is necessary to assure their validity (Albury 1983).

I proceed as follows. In section 1, I summarize the SOM’s characteristics and pose the empirical questions that guided my inquiry. I then sketch the conceptual framework that helped me address these questions. This framework advances a sociological approach to the history of the SOM in connection to three broad theoretical issues: first, the role of policy devices in processes

of economic valuation, and its inevitable embeddedness in morality; second, the question of objectivity in experts' morally charged evaluations of quantification decision rules; and third, the role of background conventions in the making of such rules and the sociological implications thereof. A methodological note follows in Section 3. Section 4 contains the bulk of my empirical analysis. I first show how political claims against state-sponsored discrimination of public schools translated into a legal mandate aimed at making school accountability compatible with the principle of "fair responsabilization". I then examine how regulators in charge of the new accountability system handled the moral dilemma that arose when operationalizing the legal mandate that evaluations include students' socioeconomic status (SES) in school quality assessments. The paper closes with a conclusion in which I discuss my main theoretical findings.

1.1 THE DEVICE IN QUESTION: THE SCHOOL ORDINALIZATION METHODOLOGY

In fulfillment of the LEQA mandates, in March 2014, the Chilean government issued an executive order enacting the "Ordinalization Methodology of all Educational Establishments Recognized by the State"⁴. The decree details all the indicators, data sources, procedures, decision rules, and mathematical formulae that the Agency of Education Quality (AEQ) will use to classify schools into four "performance categories" (high, medium, medium-low, and insufficient), obtained by partitioning an interval scale of school quality. Detailing the equations and estimation methods, the decree stipulates that the ranking position of a particular school must be computed by

⁴ "Metodología de Ordenación de Todos los Establecimientos Educacionales Reconocidos por el Estado". See <http://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=1060182>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017.

subtraction: the effect (aggregated at the school level) of a set of student-level variables of socioeconomic status (SES) in a school, minus the predicted student test-scores (also aggregated at the school level) (see equation 16 in the decree). In turn, the two terms of this subtraction – a routine post-estimation adjustment – can be obtained through an ordinary least squares (OLS) multivariate regression at the student level that predicts the “unadjusted index” as a function of a set of socioeconomic variables, plus an error term that captures unobserved heterogeneity in student performance (see equation 15).

Strikingly, the decree makes reference to this error term not to assume its normal distribution, homoscedasticity, exogeneity, and non-autocorrelation – that is, the statistical features that help analysts gauge the likelihood that the estimated coefficients and standard errors in the model are relatively unbiased in the technical sense. Rather, the decree *rules* – and thus states performatively – that this error term measures the *true value* of schools.

In equation N°15 the individual student score consists of two parts. The first is an estimate of the student score that this methodology attributes to her characteristics and context $c + \sum \beta_{CA} \times CA_{NI}$, which corresponds to the average score of those students that share the same level of student [socioeconomic] characteristics at the individual level. The other part of equation N°15, ε_{NI} , corresponds to the fraction of the student score that is above or below that of an average student with the same level of student [socioeconomic] characteristics at the individual level. *It will be considered that this fraction of the student's score is not attributable to her context, so it will be considered of school's responsibility.* (author's translation and italics)

This passage in the 2014 legislation epitomizes the rationale reigning within the governance bodies in charge of enforcing education quality assurance policy. Firstly, the decree assumes a sharp

distinction between providers and external regulators. On the one hand, there are the schools that provide education services. On the other, there are the rating agencies that assess the “value” of the work these schools do, keep families informed about differences in service quality, and allocate positive or negative sanctions and/or compensatory support to the schools they rank. Confident enough in their capacity to represent differences in the quality of service provision through a single metric and seeing the latter as a function of a transparent combination of independent measurable inputs – “the education production function”, to use the language of education economics (Hanushek 1986; Todd and Wolpin 2003) – the specialist behind this decree declare by fiat that schools can – so they must – be liable for the variance in test-scores not accounted for in the “class effects” part of the model. Hence the assertion that the error term of the estimated OLS regression is but a non-observable measure of school effectiveness⁵.

Moreover, what the law stipulates the state must observe and manipulate – statistically, albeit not in practice – is the multiplicity of social conditionings that class inequality exerts on student performance:

[The ordinalization] of schools will consider the student’s characteristics, including, among others, her *vulnerability*, and, when appropriate, *indicators of progress or value added*. All in all, gradually, the ordinalization of schools will tend to be performed *independently of the socioeconomic characteristics* of the students, to the extent to that the [quality

⁵ Statistically controlling for student and contextual factors does not suffice to produce unbiased residual estimates of school effects, unless two conditions are met: a) the estimation method considers the hierarchical structure of the data (students nested in schools); b) students are randomly allocated to schools. In the absence of pure experimental conditions, relatively unbiased estimates of school effect can only be obtained if specific school practices are made observable and tested as fixed effects, which requires a theory of how schools work (see Raudenbush and Willms 1995). None of these conditions is met in the case of the SOM.

assurance] system corrects the achievement gaps attributable to such characteristics.

(author's translation and italics)

Clearly, policymakers' most elemental aspiration is to institute a regime of valuation that discounts social class determinations from the assessment of the quality of a particular school, defined by the level of compliance with standards of proficiency. In a second stage, should – as we will see – the extension of testing make it possible, the expectation is that adjusted value assessments also include prior measures of proficiency of the same students to approximate statistical estimates of *value added*, understood as the school contribution to students' learning⁶. In the long term, however, the goal is to progressively deindex school quality valuation from socioeconomic factors, insofar as the incentives set in motion by accountability policy succeed in reducing the SES achievement gap to a minimum. Meanwhile, when holding schools accountable for the service quality they offer, “class handicaps” need be counted in. Doing otherwise might be unfair; it might do an injustice to schools and families in “vulnerable contexts”. And yet, the paradox is that the state will nonetheless “value” schools for whatever they do that remains, precisely, unobserved by the commensuration device the state is putting in place to bring order and stability to the school market.

How did this economic but socially sensitive “style of reasoning and doing” (Hacking 2002) come to shape so remarkably the techniques of commensuration and valuation devised to regulate the market of Chilean schools? What kinds of knowledge had to be mobilized to make this policy device possible? And who are the experts behind this sophisticated quest for quality

⁶ Value added models require panel data on students' test scores. Although the use of these methods in high-stakes accountability systems has expanded significantly in the last decade, both the American Statistical Association (2014) and the American Educational Research Association (2015) have warned about their potentially adverse consequences.

appraisal? What ethical dilemmas do they face when they debate and choose among different evaluation methods? And when they do so, to what extent do they take the distributional outcomes of each method into consideration? Most importantly: Why is the statistical differentiation of school and class effects so central to the just attribution of liability? What moral/ideological motives underlie the aspiration to measure and sanction the *quality* of schools via the *quantity* of (unobserved) school effect on student proficiency? To what extent might a specific quantity of school quality have varied had other statistical assumptions and estimation methods been adopted?

1.2 TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE DEVICES

In his monumental history of statistical reasoning, Alain Desrosières (2002) concludes with a suggestive hypothesis: one can find, in different times and places, an elective affinity between the production and usages of statistical information for policy purposes, and a certain mode of regulation of social relations. In brief, an “original consistency” exists between state-market regimes, modes of public action, and forms of statistics. Hence, for instance, the legitimate forms of state action prevailing in the state-centered, Fordist/Keynesian era such as macroeconomic management, industrial planning, collective bargaining, and welfare provision relied on a common language and procedures concerning statistical objects, e.g., unemployment rates, price indexes, poverty lines, monetary quantities, or demand aggregations.

The political economy of market-oriented regimes of regulation entails, too, a distinct grammar of statistical objects and procedures, also correlative to certain forms of public (and

private) action. Because the prevailing “conceptualization of society and of the economy” is that of “an extensive market”, of “free and undistorted competition” – one that distributes “the decision-making centers into a network”– its dominant mode of action consists of “moving from rights to incentive”, of “turning administrations into agencies” (Desrosières 2010:45). Concomitant forms of statistics comprise “the construction and use of indicators to evaluate and classify performance”, such that “benchmarking supplements, or replaces, directives and regulations” (2010:45) – or such that directives and regulations simply mandate benchmarking.

Just because statistical conventions and regimes of socioeconomic regulation attain a certain consistency in time and place does not mean they are immune to controversy. Desrosières finds the Keynesian era plagued by public debates on the appropriate measurement and use of unemployment rates or price indexes. But a shared repertoire of “referential elements”, “stabilized connections”, and “routinized equivalences” (2002:332-33) provided common ground for social and political actors to engage in and eventually settle such debates. Background conventions offered “a language in which to express things, to state the aims and means of the action, and to discuss its results”. Informed by the operations of econometric modeling and adjustment, a certain ontology – roughly, what we believe actually exists and what does not – conveniently presupposing “the realism of the object[s]” (2002:332), proved crucial to both objective description and political intervention.

Market-oriented regimes look more complicated. For statistical tracking and monitoring for governmental purposes is, by definition, polycentric. Calculative agencies located in markets and supranational entities compete with the state in what the literature has termed “governing by numbers” (Fourcade 2017; Fourcade and Healy 2017; Grek 2009; Miller 2001; Rose 1991). This not only questions the state’s “monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence” (Bourdieu and Farage

1994). It also shifts the loci and character of “public” debates over the objectivity and fairness of systems of assessment and categorization (see e.g., Fourcade and Healy 2013). Growing decentralization and privatization of data collection and analysis means that the conventions underlying instruments and protocols become invisible or at best secluded in semi-public regulatory bodies controlled by experts and “run almost like a business enterprise” (Desrosières 2010:46; see also Diaz-Bone 2016).

What sort of controversies over objectivity and fairness characterize market-oriented forms of socioeconomic regulation? What kinds of statistical constructs comprise the subject of such controversies? And what sort of conventional ontologies make for their shared grammar?

Empirically, I use policymakers’ debates on the SOM in Chile to grapple with these questions. Theoretically, I build on different bodies of scholarship that, together, help me make sense of 1) the role of policy devices in processes of economic valuation and its inevitable embeddedness in morality, 2) the uncanny question of how a sense of objectivity can be established when experts’ evaluations of quantification decision rules are themselves morally charged, and 3) the relevance of background conventions at play in the making of such rules and the sociological implications thereof.

1.2.1 The moral embeddedness of policy devices for economic valuation

At the intellectual origins of my inquiry about the SOM lies the proposition that the politics of education quality assurance can be addressed through the lens of a sociology of markets perspective. Education fits perfectly into the category of “enrichment” (Boltanski and Esquerre 2016) or “peculiar” (Fourcade 2011) goods, the valuation of which are inevitably larded with moral disputes. That the economic status of education as market good may in itself be widely contested

means that its commensuration immediately yields claims on incommensurables (Espeland and Stevens 1998), and invites public invocations of irreducible orders of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). Assessments of education quality also overlap with aesthetic judgements (Karpik and Scott 2010), or simply instantiate preexisting status hierarchies of both producers and consumers (Podolny 1993).

In light of this economic sociology approach, the SOM can be defined as a “policy device” for market regulation: a statistical tool devised to help regulators “see and make decisions about the world in economic ways” (Hirschman and Berman 2014:782), making markets governable at a distance (Rose and Miller 2010). More specifically, the SOM works as a technology of economic valuation, that is, a set of quantification rules and procedures arranged to intervene in the school market by performing (that is, simultaneously declaring and producing) “objective” categorizations of quality.

Defining the SOM as a policy device implies that “quality” is not a natural attribute of market goods (in this case, education services), but rather an “outcome of a collective process in which products become seen as possessing certain traits and occupying a specific position in relation to other products in the product space. Hence goods and services become ‘qualified’” (Beckert and Musselin 2013:1). These processes of quality valuation aim at reducing market uncertainty, and normally entail both the intervention of institutional intermediaries (Beckert 2009) and the development of sophisticated technologies. Economics’ knowledge and methods play a critical role in these mediations (Çalışkan and Callon 2009; Callon 2007; MacKenzie 2011; Muniesa, Millo and Callon 2007). I investigate the SOM as an assemblage of expert intermediaries, technologies, and knowledge endowed with the capacity to act – sociotechnical *agencements*, in the language of Çalışkan and Callon (2009).

The scientific/technical character of this assemblage does not mean, however, that the SOM can be regarded as value-neutral. I claim that this valuation device embodies an “intensely moralized” technopolitical project, one aimed at the creation of within-market “classification situations”: technologically generated market positions that are highly consequential in terms of the classified’s opportunities and experience (Fourcade and Healy 2013:560; 2017:10). Allegedly, policymakers explicitly intended the SOM to perform the market of education as a socially inclusive – hence “moral” – institution by carrying out “objective”, presumably “fair” quality valuations. My focus on the technical controversies concerning the design of the SOM makes sense of its moral embeddedness, in connection to the built-in status hierarchies of a highly stratified school market. My analysis shows how the specialists in charge of technically handling political mandates for less socially unequal market outcomes maneuver to encode (and camouflage) moral judgments about the desirability and naturalness of a hierarchically structured market order into technically neutral procedures of economic valuation.

1.2.2 Experts, morality, and the politics of objectivity

The issue of experts’ engagement in moral judgments when calibrating policy devices raises, in turn, the question of objectivity. Theodore Porter (1996) argues that the proliferation of quantitative rules of “mechanical objectivity” such as the adoption of cost-benefit thresholds by the US Congress for the allocation of public works, or the diffusion of test-based benchmarking within US education, normally results from a combination of elements that, jointly, have an elective affinity with pluralist democratic regimes (see also Carson 2007: for intelligence testing). Contrary to conventional wisdom, then, technocracy, as government by means of experts’ discretionary judgment, is opposed to the pursuit of inflexible quantitative rigor. When expert

authority remains unchecked and generally shielded from public scrutiny, there may be little call for quantitative decision rules for the purpose of external accountability (Porter 1996:46).

Quantification rules flourish, instead, where public mistrust of the arbitrariness of expert judgment is widespread, professional jurisdictions are porous and contested, and liberal conceptions of limited government prevail. It is no coincidence that U.S. political institutions were early adopters of economics' technical instrumentalism and mathematization. As Fourcade (2009) contends, the historically late and weak institutionalization of the civil service, a political environment where government action is permanently under scrutiny, the prevalence of regulatory instead of administrative forms of economic governance, and the reliance on market mechanisms as morally optimal legal structures – all characteristic features of the U.S. democratic polity – turned economists' technical knowledge into a highly valuable commercialized good. Common to all these features is a moral imperative: the quest for objectivity as remedy for pervasive situations of contested authority. Politicization is what drives the jurisdictional expansion of applied quantification to public policy, law, business, and other neighboring academic professions. As Porter (1996:8) explains, “mechanical objectivity” provides “an answer to a moral demand for impartiality and fairness. Quantification is a way of making decisions without seeming to decide. Objectivity lends authority to officials who have very little of their own”.

No doubt the SOM fits the latter case. As the empirical section makes clear, the set of presumably objective rules for school valuation that became the cornerstone of the system of quality assurance originated in mounting controversy over the regulation of the school market. Demands for fairness and impartiality led to the adoption of would-be objective procedures. In this sense, this paper reasserts the thesis on the political origins of the growing reliance on numbers for public decision-making (see also Espeland and Stevens 1998).

Yet my account goes further. I provide evidence that, as far as the SOM is concerned, the quest for mechanical objectivity could not carry on without expert judgments and conventions informing rule-making. I highlight the unmistakable moral character of such judgments and conventions, exposing the limits of objectivity: a situation in which the neutralizing, depoliticizing work of expert intervention in public affairs fails to eschew political contamination (Henig 2009). In arbitrating between competing definitions of fairness, ideologically grounded appeals to morality are specialists' last resort. Just as objective methods of quantification are necessary to rule over subjects equally entitled to diverse moral judgments, so too are moral judgements necessary to rule over objective methods of quantification.

1.2.3 Econometric conventions and the moral background

I also make sense of the conditions for the commensurability of competing moral judgments. I start from Abend's (2014) analytical distinction between first and second orders of morality. A first-order morality concerns questions such as what different moral views exist about something and what kinds of behaviors are associated with different moral standpoints. A second-order morality, on the other hand, concerns more fundamental issues such as what type of objects can be morally evaluated, what kinds of reasons can be legitimately invoked to support these evaluations, what repertoires of concepts and ontologies ground such reasons, or whether moral arguments themselves can be arbitrated by recourse to objective procedures. Together, these issues make for a common moral background (Abend 2014), operating as a coherent set of tacit conventions.

I show that the moral divide that ultimately organized the controversy over factoring SES into quality assessments belongs to the first order. In Chile, the policymakers' dilemma involved

questions as to what counts as a “fair responsabilization”, and what criteria for school valuation fulfill this moral imperative. I offer evidence that this controversy mapped onto the ideological cleavage of pro- vs. anti-market reforms. But I also depict the effective workings of a common moral background. Because the policymaking community shared a faith in science, a consequentialist perspective of reason-giving, a repertory of concepts and methods for causal attribution, and a realist social ontology, it managed to paper over the first-order moral divide and implement the SOM. My account shows that despite their moral qualms about choosing a school valuation method that might not fit a particular conception of fair responsabilization, policymakers’ recourse to the quasi-experimental methods of applied microeconomics – the empirical estimation of an unbiased parameter thought to statistically identify school quality – proved critical to framing both the terms of and solutions to this controversy (Breslau 2013; Panhans and Singleton 2015).

1.3 RESEARCH METHODS

My method consists of a qualitative analysis of experts’ real-world application of quantitative methods, as well as experts’ interpretations of these methods’ performative consequences. To make sense, both technically and politically, of the statistical debate through which Chilean policymakers addressed the moral dilemma of “fair responsabilization”, I delve into an archive of legislative acts, policy documents, official minutes, social movements’ public statements, and reports I collected and sorted chronologically. This archive includes the Law of Education Quality Assurance (LEQA), the executive order enacting the SOM, the report of the Presidential Advisory Commission of 2006, the reports issued by the Education Commission in Congress to inform

plenary sessions about reform bills, the minutes of these plenary sessions when these bills were addressed, the session minutes of two of the independent agencies created by the LEQA – the AEQ and the National Council of Education (NCE) – and two key policy documents: the report the so-called “SOM Commission” submitted to the AEQ and NCE for consideration, and the report of the Taskforce created in 2014 for the revision of the test-based accountability regime. These texts explicitly discuss accountability policy, and address the techniques and procedures that were eventually adopted. I examined all these materials paying particular attention to the use of moral judgments (claims of fairness or unfairness) to justify policy decisions regarding the appropriate methods to assess the quality of schools.

I supplement this archival work with some of the fifty-seven in-depth interviews I conducted in Chile in the summer of 2014 and the fall of 2015. Interviewees were selected through strategic and snowball sampling techniques (Maxwell 2012), and included different stakeholders involved in the controversies over the regulation of education markets in Chile. Many of the interviewees were experts who hold (or have held) key positions in the governance structures of education, in think tanks involved in education policy networks, or in leading institutes of educational research. Among other key informants, I interviewed the current CEO of the AEQ, the former president of AEQ’s board, the president of the NCE, and the experts in charge of writing some of the hallmark reports and policy documents leading to the implementation and subsequent revision of the quality assurance system. Although the empirical material cited in this paper comes almost exclusively from my archival analysis, much of the conceptual issues, questions, and information that helped me reconstruct the SOM’s genealogy came out of conversations with my informants.

I complemented these two data sources with the cataloging and systematic reading of newspaper articles and websites covering educational issues during the last five years in Chile. Although I do not use this material as a primary source, it does help me understand the public controversies over accountability in the public sphere.

One final methodological note is necessary. The analytical strategy adopted to open the “black box” of the SOM as a valuation device is greatly inspired by Latour’s (1987) method for the study of what he terms “science in action.” Analyzing the “the SOM in the making” means “following policy specialists around” – and “back into the policy lab” – so as to inquire about the controversies they face when debating the device’s design. It also means paying particular attention to when, how, and why they manage to eventually settle such controversies. This involves examining the decision-making process through which technocrats deem some facts and criteria about school assessment useful or useless; how they render effective some valuation methods and not others. It also entails looking at how the relevant people with an authoritative say in matters of school assessment are enlisted and convinced. In short, the goal is to understand how, when all these things hold, people accept the quality assessments performed by the SOM as reality.

1.4 ANALYSIS: FOLLOWING POLICY-SPECIALISTS AROUND

1.4.1 Experts, morality, and the politics of objectivity

The institutionalization of external evaluation and benchmarking within Chilean education has been historically associated with the action of market-minded technocrats, who have recurrently experimented with the theories and methods of economic science to perform –and even

improvise—new market arrangement in myriad policy fields (see e.g., Farías 2014; Montecinos 1998a; Silva 2008). In the 1980s, the military regime, following the Chicago Boys’ market-fundamentalist prescriptions, invited economists and engineers to create the SIMCE –*Sistema de Medición de la Calidad Educativa*– a standardized test explicitly conceived as a tool to inform parental choice in the context of far-reaching privatization and decentralization. Testing brought controversy, as it was clearly aligned with a tacit agenda: to produce scientific evidence of the superiority of private education (Benveniste 2002). Yet, initially, rankings and high-stakes accountability played only a secondary role. Market-minded reformers assumed consumers’ sovereignty would promote competition, entrepreneurship, and innovation, thereby measurably boosting school quality.

The democratically-elected administrations of the center-left coalition *La Concertación* consolidated and even expanded the “market model” in the following fifteen years (1990-2005), only introducing pragmatic fixes. Although test-based school rankings were popularized by mainstream media, the government, too, increasingly appealed to the SIMCE to target resources to underperforming schools, award premiums to teachers, set curricular benchmarks, and account for the effectiveness of public investments (Falabella 2015; Mizala and Schneider 2014; Schneider 2010).

The decisive shift to high-stakes accountability that paved the way to the SOM began in 2006, when hundreds of thousands of high-school students took to the streets and occupied schools across the country (Donoso 2013). Although the student protests were short-lived, they caused remarkable political turmoil, dragging market-oriented education into the spotlight. In their

insightful manifesto⁷, the students denounced the so-called “subsidiary role of the state”, a state-sponsored market model of “such levels of social stratification and segmentation” that produced “unequal levels of quality and prestige”, perpetuating “the process of social reproduction of existing social inequalities”. Against the market, they defined education as a “social right”, that is, a “social, secular, public good”, the quality of which could not “be different for some than for others”. To eradicate “the deep segmentation of the education supply according to the class origin of children and youth”, the students called upon the state to regain direct control over municipal schools, restore budget appropriation mechanisms of school financing, and strongly limit and regulate the rapidly expanding voucher-funded private sector, which in 2006 amounted to almost 45% of total enrollment.

Critics also subjected testing to anti-market critique. The students proposed to “enrich the indicators of quality” through an exhaustive revision and reformulation of the SIMCE, which they found in “complete coherence” with the “basic principles” of the market model. After all, standardized testing was used “for ranking schools based on their scores, stigmatizing those that obtain low results, mostly in the public sector.” As a tool for “the imposition of a privatization logic”, the SIMCE did not “take account of the particularities within schools”, nor did it consider “cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences”. Student critics observed the futility of test-based rankings, given that “variation in students’ educational outcomes depends on what happens within schools only in a marginal percentage (no more than 30%), and on greatest percentage on extra-

⁷ See *Resoluciones I Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes Secundarios* at http://www.opech.cl/bibliografico/doc_movest/resoluciones_congreso_nacional_de_estudiantes_secundarios.pdf, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author’s translation.

school variables such as children's socioeconomic, cultural, and family background (more than 70%).”⁸

The students' demands, including the claim that assessments of quality not be confounded with the school's SES composition, sketched the roadmap for the long and complicated reform path that led to the creation of the SOM. In the wake of the protests, President Michelle Bachelet appointed a large advisory council of education experts and lawmakers from across the political spectrum, charging them with issuing recommendations on education reform. Although the so-called Presidential Advisory Council for the Quality of Education did not uphold the return to state *dirigisme* advocated by the students, it did officially acknowledge that the unregulated and increasingly segmented school market failed to deliver quality for all. The workable consensus⁹ was that students' constitutional right to education had been trumped by providers' constitutional right to freely operate educational institutions and receive government vouchers. For the right to education had hitherto been “conceived as a right to access a free system, without reference to its quality, and bereft of any guarantee” (p.16).

The adjective “quality”, therefore, was elevated to indispensable component of the right to education. Recognizing this right to a quality education (*educación de calidad*) entailed a special mandate for the state: to define, assess, and enforce quality standards. Citizens, in turn, were entitled to demand of the state that provision be of a “previously established minimum quality” (p.16).

⁸ See *Resoluciones I Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes Secundarios* at http://www.opech.cl/bibliografico/doc_movest/resoluciones_congreso_nacional_de_estudiantes_secundarios.pdf, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author's translation.

⁹ See *Informe Final de Consejo Asesor Presidencial para la Calidad de la Educación* at <http://unicef.cl/web/informe-final-del-consejo-asesor-presidencial-para-la-calidad-de-la-educacion>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author's translation.

Anti- and pro-market reformers, however, sharply disagreed on how to translate this consensus into policy. While the former sought to give preferential treatment to public schools and set restrictive barriers for private voucher schools to operate in the market, the latter contended that the state ought to remain impartial regarding the type of provision and focus merely on overseeing and enforcing quality standards (Falabella 2015; Larroulet and Montt 2010). After two years of political stalemate, and confronted with the powerful opposition of an alliance of private providers, mainstream media, and influential think tanks against excessive state interference (Corbalán Pössel and Corbalán Carrera 2012), the government crafted a bipartisan compromise that paved the way for reform but alienated the social movement that had demanded it.

Against the students' statist claims, bipartisan accords made "quality assurance" the official leitmotif of market regulation.¹⁰ High-stakes accountability, therefore, was explicitly framed within the greater project of building institutional capacities to regulate the school market. From then on, through different legislative acts, lawmakers significantly amended the education policy regime, redefining the role of the state as the guarantor of equity, now understood as quality for all. The Law of Preferential School Subvention (Feb 2008) partially institutionalized means-tested accountability, granting supplementary vouchers to vulnerable students and demanding that schools recruiting these students implement test-based "quality improvement plans." The General Law of Education (Sept 2009), moreover, gave legal force to the new consensus, consecrating quality education as a constitutional entitlement vis-à-vis freedom of (state-sponsored, private) education.

¹⁰ See the terms of the compromise incorporated in the History of the General Law of Education at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4713/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017.

Finally, the Law of Education Quality Assurance (LEQA, Aug 2011) completely reorganized the governance of the education system into a “National System of Quality Assurance of Preschool, Elementary, and Secondary Education”¹¹ – an array of semi-independent agencies with specialized roles and regulatory competences: the Ministry of Education (Mineduc), the National Council of Education (NCE), the Superintendence of Education, and the Agency of Education Quality (AEQ). The latter, formerly a division of the Mineduc, was converted into a specialized entity in charge of the SIMCE and tasked with implementing the SOM as to officially rank the quality of all Chilean schools.

1.4.2 Narrowing quality to test-scores adjusted by SES

Not only was the LEQA born of political conflict over the regulation of education markets; the SOM itself, with its peculiar design, was also a byproduct of politicization. To preempt regulatory authorities’ discretionary judgment on the performance evaluation of low-status professionals such as school principals and teachers, policymakers required safeguards. A close inspection of congressional debates reveals education experts played a key role in persuading lawmakers of ethical apprehensions about equating quality to outcomes –such as test scores– for which the school is, at most, only partially responsible. In particular, they warned about the complexity of comparing standards across schools with very different characteristics (student bodies especially), and pushed for factoring SES and, when possible, value added measures into assessments of school performance. Tying high stakes to school outcomes implied impartial, transparent measurement

¹¹ “Sistema Nacional de Aseguramiento de la Calidad de la Educación Parvularia, Básica y Media y su Fiscalización.” See <https://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=1028635>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author’s translation.

procedures that produce “fair” quality valuations. In market terms, regulating the supply of education services required objective parameters, designed in conformity with authoritative scientific conventions. Accountability required accountability.

The issue of “fair responsabilization” meant that policymakers needed to engage with terms of procedural justice. They could not legislate without writing at least basic guidelines and criteria into the law. Thus, in her introduction to the revised version of the bill that finally included the SOM as detailed above, the minister of education pointed out that “in order to improve the quality of education, it is necessary to control by those factors depending on students' characteristics, in particular their socioeconomic level, those depending on the school, especially [on the work done inside] the classroom, and those factors related to the environment, which involve political and structural variables.” In light of these criteria, the law mandated the AEQ to classify schools into “four levels of performance” in “learning outcomes” that nonetheless considered “student characteristics and value-added indicators, on the basis of two or three consecutive measurements”¹².

And yet, that the ordinalization of schools be adjusted by SES and allow for value added estimates remained controversial. While, for some, the SOM’s legal provisions were *not enough* to capture schools’ true effectiveness and thus guarantee equal treatment, for others, these very provisions opened the door for *too much* unequal treatment in the enforcement of proficiency standards. Still tacit were competing conceptions of fairness.

The first position was fairly represented by the president of the deans of education faculties, who warned the Education Commission of the Senate that, ultimately, census tests such as the

¹² See *Segundo Informe de Comisión de Educación, Primer Trámite Constitucional: Senado* in the History of the LEQA at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author’s translation.

SIMCE¹³ were useless when it comes to determining schools' value added. Moreover, he recalled the scientific convention that assessing the effectiveness of a specific teaching methodology requires longitudinal, “pre- and post-test” measures of students randomly assigned to school conditions, an evaluation design impossible to implement when schools are free to manipulate admissions. For him, the testing regime only reinforced the socioeconomic stratification of the system, unnecessarily stigmatizing one type of schools (public schools). The SOM, he added, would just legitimize the existing stratification without really fostering quality improvement¹⁴.

In contrast, pro-market stakeholders contended that too much reliance on SES adjustments tacitly validated double standards. Thus, a representative of the Federation of Institutions of Private Education argued that the inclusion of “student socioeconomic characteristics” into assessments of quality “does not seem pertinent”, for the classification “must have an absolute reference; there cannot be ‘good schools for the rich’ and ‘good schools for the poor’”¹⁵. On the same page, the speaker of the National Corporation of Chilean Private Schools contended that this inclusion “may lead to setting [different] learning goals depending on children’s SES, which would be unacceptable”¹⁶ (more on this in the next section).

¹³ Census tests are standardized assessments implemented to all the students in all schools in a particular grade and subject. The SIMCE’s 8th grade reading test is an example of a census test.

¹⁴ See *Segundo Informe de Comisión de Educación, Primer Trámite Constitucional: Senado* in the History of the LEQA at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author’s translation.

¹⁵ See *Informe Comisión de Educación, Segundo Trámite Constitucional: Cámara de Diputados* in the History of the LEQA at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author’s translation.

¹⁶ See *Informe Comisión de Educación, Segundo Trámite Constitucional: Cámara de Diputados* in the History of the LEQA at <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017. Author’s translation.

1.4.3 Between student proficiency and school effectiveness: standards of whose performance?

The urgency of establishing safeguards for a fair responsabilization only worsened in the wake of the triumph, for the first time since the democratic transition, of a rightwing coalition in the 2009 Presidential election. Even as the new government reaffirmed its support to the LEQA –still in Congress– to honor bipartisan accords, it implacably insisted on holding failing schools accountable to sovereign consumers. Therefore, in June 2010, the Mineduc, in charge of Chicago-trained economist and Opus Dei member Joaquín Lavín, released the 2009 SIMCE results and mailed them to every family in Chile along with a map in which all the schools of the district – including their kids’– were colored, resembling a stoplight, in red, yellow, or green, based on average test-scores.

“Lavín’s stoplights” –*los semáforos de Lavín*, as they became popularly known– further validated the market-fundamentalist claim that voucher-funded private schools generally outperform municipal schools. For anti-market forces, quite the contrary, the maps merely showcased the extreme overlapping of educational opportunity gaps with spatial patterns of class-based segregation¹⁷. So powerfully did SES predict test scores that some of the poorest districts in dense metropolitan areas had not even a single school in yellow or green¹⁸. Anti-market critics pointed to the tautology of performance measures that merely reified pro-market reformers’ trashing of public schools serving mostly poor students.

¹⁷ See <http://ciperchile.cl/2011/03/03/las-desigualdades-sociales-que-desnudo-el-controvertido-semaforo-del-mapa-simce>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017.

¹⁸ Several of my interviewees recognized the release of these maps as a very controversial policy, for it illustrated quite well the government’s extreme pro-market ideology. Lavín was removed in 2011, at the peak of the student protests of that year.

This implacable approach to school accountability certainly resonated within the still-unfinished legislative debate. Once the newly elected Congress resumed negotiations to get the LEQA passed, a scholar from a prestigious private university center of educational research complained to the Senate Education Commission, considering “the publication of the maps with average SIMCE test-scores at the district level” to be a big mistake, for “these results are for the most part due to other factors, such as SES or parents’ educational attainment”. Instead of contributing to quality improvement, he argued, this policy just created more “social segregation and stigmatization.”¹⁹ Government use of the “stoplights” even alienated centrist congressmen of the former government, who had played a key role in moving bipartisan compromise forward. An influential senator of the major centrist party endorsed the abovementioned critical position. After reasserting the importance of standardized testing, he complained that the way test-scores were being reported “distorts reality”, insofar as parents were not informed that “65% of their results are due to socioeconomic factors”. He went on to warn that the maps could “produce a generalized stampede of students away from municipal schools” – an outcome that indeed privatizers expected and desired. He concluded by deeming the SIMCE “useless to classify schools”.

This final round of legislative debate remained plagued by skirmishes over the use of “raw” test-scores –that is, percentage of students attaining *proficiency*– as the yardstick of school quality, petitions to compute adjustments by SES or even incorporate value added measures to capture *effectiveness* –the specific effect of instruction on student growth–, and suspicion of the distortions these statistical manipulations might introduce to the universal enforcement of common core standards. Nevertheless, lawmakers passed the LEQA early in 2011, right before the outbreak of

¹⁹ See *Informe de Comisión de Educación, Tercer Trámite Constitucional: Senado* <http://www.bcn.cl/historiadelaley/nc/historia-de-la-ley/4584/>, retrieved on January 19th, 2017.

a new wave of student protests generalized conflict over the market model of education, monopolizing the public agenda for the rest of the year.

1.4.4 Simulating commensuration

It was in this polarized atmosphere that the Mineduc and the newly created AEQ undertook the dirty job of developing a “fair” and “socially sensitive” methodology to commensurate schools with a single metric of quality. Already in late 2010, upon the imminent enactment of the LEQA, the government set up an ad hoc commission of specialists and tasked it with proposing a tentative SOM to the soon-to-be AEQ. The so-called “Ordinalization Commission” was made up of government technocrats related to the SIMCE administration and other divisions of the Mineduc, and worked in consultation with economists hired by the United Nation Development Program. Over the next three years, the commission reviewed the international literature and surveyed national systems of high-stakes accountability. It also gathered and consolidated all the necessary data sources, revised and calculated all the necessary indicators, and, more crucially, conducted simulations based on alternative model specifications and estimation methods. To validate and review drafts, the commission convened three rounds of meetings with school administrators and principals, and organized twelve workshops with independent experts (mainly economists, psychometricians, and educational researchers). In total, the commission consulted with more than 140 people.

The work of the Ordinalization Commission was documented in detail in the report *Fundamentos Metodología de Ordenación de Establecimientos* (Foundations of the School Ordinalization Methodology). The bulk of the language and formulae of the 2014’s Executive

Order²⁰ came out of this report. After recognizing *quality* and *equity* education as a political mandate stemming from the student movement of 2006 and then made official by the Presidential Council, as well as the subsequent bipartisan consensus on preserving the voucher-funded public-private scheme of service delivery, the report made it clear that the proposed design of the SOM sought to fulfill simultaneously two different requirements: the “fair responsabilization” of schools, and the achievement of “learning standards” by students (p. 39). This attempt at reconciling in a single instrument competing claims for valuing school effectiveness *and* enforcing proficiency benchmarks severely constrained the commission’s decisions and justifications. But it also facilitated the translation of the moral conundrum (proficiency vs. effectiveness) into a technical matter concerning the identification of the “correct” econometric equation.

The statistical aspects of this controversy are at least puzzling, if not downright confusing. Yet they are central to the school valuation problem at stake. That the school performance categories stipulated in the LEQA were drawn from a composite index generated technical consensus among experts. Experts similarly agreed that index scores overwhelmingly reflected schools’ average proficiency in common core standards, measured by routine standardized tests.²¹ Experts further concurred that, through statistical modeling and adjustment, *absolute* proficiency levels could be rendered *relative* to individual- and school-level data that roughly approximated student socioeconomic status (SES), thereby honoring the principle of fair responsabilization. Finally, the alleged requirement of balancing presumably incompatible quality standards with a

²⁰ The 575-page document also includes a detailed account of the elaboration process as well as the statistical simulations discussed in this paper. I especially thank Francisca Dussailant, Luz María Budge, and Carlos Henríquez for giving me access to this crucial piece of evidence.

²¹ The Law stipulates that at least two thirds of the index scores must reflect students’ proficiency levels in common core standards, the other third corresponding to measures of “student growth” and “other indicators of quality” (taken from surveys and administrative records). Because between-school variation in these other indicators is considerably lower than in test scores, proficiency weighted considerably more than two-thirds in the final distribution of the unadjusted index.

single ordinal measurement justified a second correction: the introduction of proficiency “thresholds” that, once the SES adjustment had been computed, automatically reassign very high or very low performing schools (in terms of absolute test scores) to the upper and lowest categories of the ordinalization – a sort of automatic exemption from the effectiveness standard.

Which regression equation should be used to estimate the index and then perform balanced post-estimation recalibrations became the most critical decision. To aid decision-making, the commission simulated and compared the predicted distribution of five alternative SOMs, each corresponding to a different modeling strategy: Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), Fixed Effects model (FE), and three different specifications of Hierarchical Linear Models (HLM). As Table 1-1 and Figure 1-1 show, the weight of SES adjustments significantly varied according to the estimation method and model specification. While FE and HLM-1 brought the SOM closer to the unadjusted index of absolute test-scores, HLM-2 and HLM-3 returned adjusted rankings that greatly deviated from proficiency scores. OLS fell in the middle, allowing for moderate, Solomonian adjustments.

Table 1-1: Characteristics of the models considered to compute SES adjustments

<i>Model</i>	<i>Student-level Input variables</i>	<i>School-level input variables</i>	<i>School Quality Identification</i>	<i>Coincidence with absolute test-scores (proficiency)</i>
<i>Ordinary Least Squares (OLS)</i>	Vulnerability Mother's education School recent enrollment of high and low achievers Indigenous background School is in rural area School District Crime Rate		School average of adjusted (student-level) residuals	65% (elementary) 72% (secondary)
<i>Fixed Effects (FE)</i>	Vulnerability Mother's education School recent enrollment of high and low achievers Indigenous background School is in rural area District Crime Rate School ID (dummy)		School average of adjusted (student-level) residuals	76% (elementary) 87% (secondary)
<i>Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM-1)</i>	Vulnerability Mother's education School recent enrollment of high and low achievers Indigenous background School is in rural area School District Crime Rate	School is in rural area	Adjusted (school-level) random effect component	79% (elementary) 89% (secondary)
<i>Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM-2)</i>	Vulnerability Mother's education School recent enrollment of high and low achievers Indigenous background School is in rural area School District Crime Rate	Mother's education (averaged) School is in rural area	Adjusted (school-level) random effect component	57% (elementary) 51% (secondary)
<i>Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM-3)</i>	Vulnerability Mother's education School recent enrollment of high and low achievers Indigenous background School is in rural area School District Crime Rate	Vulnerability (averaged) Mother's education (averaged) School recent enrollment of high and low achievers Indigenous background (averaged) School is in rural area School District Crime Rate	Adjusted (school-level) random effect component	54% (elementary) 47% (secondary)

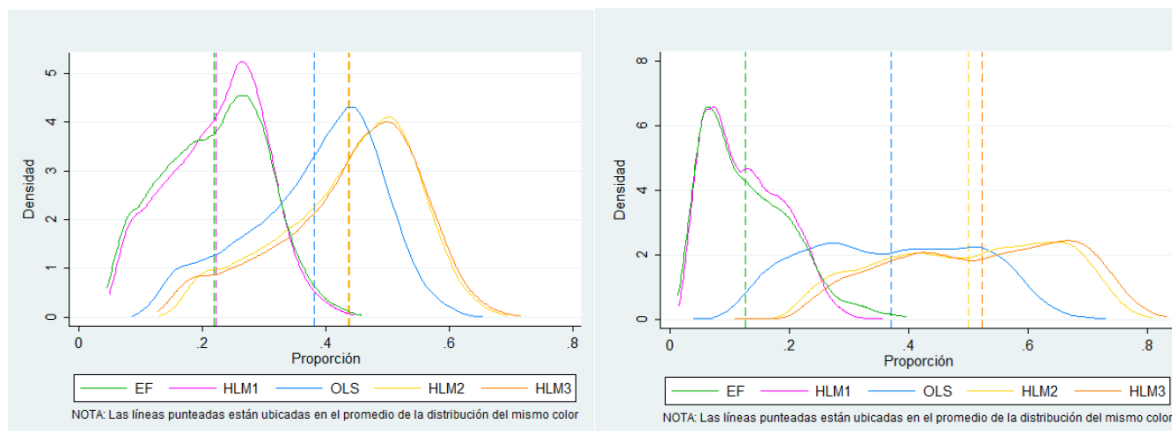


Figure 1-1: Simulations of weights of the SES adjustment produced by the Ordinalization Commission. This can be interpreted as a measure of the degree to which each model modifies the original distribution of average test scores (proficiency) in elementary schools (left) and secondary schools (right). Note: Taken from the document Fundamentos Metodología de Ordenación de Establecimientos, prepared by the Ordinalization Commission and the Research Division of the Agency of Education Quality

Table 1-2: Some characteristics of the simulated ordinalizations based on OLS (model choice) and HLM-2 (alternative).

Simulations of alternative ordinalizations	HLM-2	OLS
Vulnerable/non-vulnerable schools gap in test scores necessary to change category (elementary)	60	45
% Weight of SES adjustment (elementary)	45	38
% Weight of SES adjustment (Secondary)	51	37
% schools in High Performance with proficiency below schools in Insufficient Performance (elementary)	20	2
% students below proficiency in High Performance schools (elementary)	24	18
% schools to be reclassified by absolute proficiency thresholds (elementary)	15	4

Note: Constructed based on statistics reported in the document Fundamentos Metodología de Ordenación de Establecimientos, prepared by the Ordinalization Commission and the Research Division of the Agency of Education Quality.

Although the report never made it explicit, this gap in levels of SES adjustment depended on the degree to which the contextual effects of SES (that is, at the school-level) were made endogenous to the model and estimated separately from the individual effects of SES (at the student level). This contextual effect –namely, the impact of the overall context of poverty or wealth in which a school operates– was better captured by HLM-2 and HLM-3 when key students’ socioeconomic characteristics such as mother’s education or vulnerability were averaged and added back in at the organizational level (see model specifications in Table 1-1). In class-segregated education systems (e.g., large between-school SES variation) such as Chile’s, the contextual effect of SES is usually large, so its parametrization and subsequent inclusion in post-estimation adjustments significantly reduces the remaining between-school variance –in this case, the variability of school quality, thus defined. Hence the contrast with the other models was sharp. Although HLM-1 and the FE model did consider the clustering of students into schools, their (mis)specification of school effects simply ignored the contextual dimension of SES. The OLS regression, on the other hand, directly assumed no nesting of students within schools, so the model only partly captured the between-school SES effect but confounded it with the within-school SES effect.

Model choice, and the weight of SES adjustment the decision carries with it, therefore appeared highly consequential for determining the ultimate prevalence of proficiency vis-à-vis effectiveness in the predicted ordinalization, something the report made crystal clear:

The higher β , the higher the adjustment (SES index) and less will be required from the most vulnerable vis-à-vis non-vulnerable schools in the Unadjusted Index [that is, absolute proficiency] in order to move up in the Ordinalization categories. Then, if the adjustment

level is high, vulnerable schools may achieve high values in the Final Index with low scores in the Unadjusted Index. (p. 486)

The interpretation of the distributional consequences associated with alternative calibrations of the instrument indicates that fear of *effectiveness* outweighing *proficiency* standards prevailed over any other consideration. After sorting the five models by SES effect size and discarding HLM-1 and FE for yielding meager adjustments, the report noted that in HLM-2 and HLM-3 “there are schools that are required up to 60 points less in terms of the Unadjusted Index to move from one Ordinalization category to another” (487). In these models, “the adjustment level is such that a considerable number of schools with similar test scores will be classified in three different categories” (p. 487). Moreover, what seemed totally unacceptable for the Ordinalization Commission was the degrading of prestigious elite schools, popularly known in media rankings for their high level of proficiency. In this respect, the report warned that choosing HLM-2 or HLM-3 would mean that “nearly all the least vulnerable schools with the best test scores of the country classify into the Medium Performance”, which “explains why these models require the disproportionate use of [post-adjustment proficiency] thresholds” (p. 490). Finally, the report contended that analyses of model stability proved HLM-2 or HLM-3 to be the most sensitive to cross-time variation in the number of schools classified at the bottom of the ordinalization. For the commission, adopting such a time-sensitive model meant compromising the high-stakes purposes built into the design of the policy device. For “it will be more unlikely for a school to be systematically classified into the Insufficient Performance category for five years” (p. 515) – the legal requirement to make a school subject to intervention and closure.

Thus construed, the distributional consequences associated with different alternative models made the Ordinalization Commission’s choice of model obvious: OLS, deemed the model

that better achieves an equilibrium between too-much and too-little, was preferable. In this model “the weight of SES adjustment is more similar to that of the models that correct the most, and it does not yield counterintuitive results.” – counterintuitive in the sense of degrading high-proficiency and boosting low-proficiency schools. Therefore, OLS “achieves a better balance between the two objectives of the SOM: to hold schools responsible with fairness and create equal expectations for all the students in the country” (p. 517).

1.4.5 The moral life of econometric equations

In October 2012, the board²² of the AEQ began holding official sessions. The first order of business was due deliberation and decision on the proposal drafted by the Ordinalization Commission. To form judgment on the suggested statistical model, the board solicited the opinion of two independent consultants²³. The first of these experts was generally sympathetic to the commission’s suggestions. He acknowledged OLS’s weaknesses in terms of endogeneity and misspecification, problems that could be easily fixed if value-added models were used. However, the latter would require panel data, currently unavailable. And anyway – he went on – value-added models would not resolve all these problems. Likewise, for this specialist, hierarchical linear models could offer a reasonable alternative to handling selection biases, but these models “do not necessarily dominate over OLS” (p. 550). All in all, he fundamentally agreed on the two criteria followed by the commission, that is: classifying according to whether predicted school residuals

²² At the AEQ’s board seat five technocrats with recognized trajectory in educational affairs, appointed by the President every three years in tandem of two and three. Appointments must follow a “plurality criterion”: they are expected to reflect diversity of policy perspectives.

²³ See session minutes Apr-03-2013

fall below or above to the line produced by regressing test scores to SES, but also reclassifying when schools reach minimum and maximum levels of absolute proficiency.

The second expert, however, was less sympathetic. He manifested his positive appreciation of adjusting the index by factors beyond school control, which “acknowledges the well-known fact that achieving a certain level of quality education is harder or easier depending on conditions such as the ones this proposal considers”. In this regard, he welcomed that the SOM “seeks to represent in fairer fashion what is possible to achieve in different educational context” (534). And yet, the choice of statistical model concerned this consultant greatly. For him, OLS’s assumptions on the distribution of the error term were simply untenable, which raised serious validity issues concerning what in applied economics is known as “identification strategy”. Using HLM, instead, would have at least allowed for a better treatment of residuals as to identify the parameter of interest, namely, school quality:

To hold schools responsible for their outcomes, it is necessary to make sure that the utilized analysis model clearly identifies that portion of the examined variability that actually depends on the school and not on other factors. In this sense, the use of residuals of a conventional regression equation (with student-level data), as baseline to establish school effects, in practice confounds the part attributable to the school with another that depends on the student-level error. The use of HLM allows for separating these components (...) These models identify a school-level residual that is different from the student-level residual, which provides better statistical support to assert that a particular residual represents the school effect once all the control variables are included (the proposed method averages the individual residuals of all students in the school as expression of the school effect, after having run a regression at the individual level). (pp. 535-536, 540-541)

The question at stake, again, was how much of the SES contextual effect was being disguised as school quality, supposedly captured by the residual part of the model. Underlying the apparently esoteric technical quandary about statistical artifacts was a serious ideological clash: one over the extent to which the “order of worth” performed by the soon-to-be valuation device might potentially deviate from the status hierarchies already built in the highly-segmented Chilean school market. Simply put, should absolute proficiency, better reflected by OLS post-estimation adjustments, prevail as valuation criterion, the resulting order of worth would tacitly validate the class-based tiers in which the market is organized. Should the valuation device be more sensitive to the specific school effect on proficiency – as in HLM-2 and HLM-3 post-estimation adjustments – the performed hierarchy of school quality might potentially invert, or at least counter, the market’s status order²⁴.

In light of this discrepancy, opinions split between board members representing the government (rightwing), and those representing the opposition (left-of-center). They did not, however, openly and explicitly face this ideological disagreement. Instead, board members, contrasting the statistical simulations based on HLM-2 and OLS –that is, comparing the orders of worth performed by this or that calibration strategy –, resorted to moral judgements to justify their technical decisions for this or that econometric equation.

What did technocrats make of the comparison of ante- and post-adjustment simulations based on both estimation methods? (See Table 1-2 for a small sample of this comparison). A

²⁴ Indeed, Muñoz-Chereau and Thomas (2016) estimated contextualized value-added models for Chilean secondary education and found school practices account for only 13.2% of the between-school variation in test scores. Also, San Martín and Carrasco (2012) found that a 60% of Chilean schools change their effectiveness status if assessed by value added relative to SIMCE raw scores. Moreover, 48.3% of public schools would improve their performance category if reclassified using value added, while 41.4% of private voucher schools would be degraded – Pure political dynamite!

minority of board members voiced their preference for HLM-2, under the explicit argument that greater adjustments by SES better captured school effectiveness²⁵. School quality, they contended, could only be gauged relative to school practices. A “fair responsabilization” of schools for the service they provide must value schools for effects they can reasonably be assumed to cause. And by no reasonable standard, they claimed, should the responsabilization of schools in disadvantaged communities depend on their students’ social class background.

The board’s majority, however, opted for OLS. One board member warned that larger adjustments by SES would significantly alter low-SES public secondary schools’ rank in the final ordinalization (e.g., many of them move up two positions, from "insufficient" to "satisfactory"), which might constitute a disincentive for failing schools (in terms of absolute levels of proficiency) to seek improvement.

Correcting [by SES] does justice [to these schools] because it takes into account the hardships these schools face, but on the other hand, this does not necessarily provide the proper signal for the system to improve and take charge of students' [learning] difficulties. For that reason I choose the model that adjusts to a least extent, knowing that only value added models really allow for a fair classification of schools.

This perspective was seconded by the president of the board, who argued that smaller adjustments by SES prudently prevented too much distortion of gross results, thereby taking account of “vulnerable schools' greater learning hardships”. Endorsing the president’s position, a third member deemed HLM-2 adjustments “unfair” to the poor, since the same (absolute) score would categorize well-off schools as “unsatisfactory” quality and vulnerable ones as “high” quality; a

²⁵ Session minutes of Apr-08-2013.

situation that would “crystalize too-low expectations [for the poor] and result in inadequate targeting of state resources”.

The argument for adopting a conservative approach to SES adjustment was then made explicit in a policy brief²⁶ detailing the School Classification Methodology (note the adoption of the new terminology) released by the AEQ:

Some HLM specifications generate very different achievement expectations between students from different SES contexts, which would go against the principle of quality and equity in education provided by art. 3 of the General Education Law. In practice, using a method that generates very different expectations implies giving a signal that would consider low-SES students' results as excellent, when those same results would be considered unacceptable for students in more favorable contexts. In other words, the classification generated by some ... methods risks masking the inequities in the educational opportunities that schools provide in our country. (pp. 7-8)

And beyond the performative effects that higher SES adjustments might have on expectations, the AEQ also alleged pragmatic reasons concerning the correct targeting of resources to those who actually need them. As the law mandated that schools classified at the bottom automatically qualify for government supervision and guidance, assigning low-quality status to a larger number of poor schools yielded a “fairer” pattern of resource allocation. Adjusting by HLM-2, however, “would fail in the correct identification of schools that need support”, which would “deprive underperforming low-SES schools from the chance of receiving Orientation and Evaluation Visits

²⁶ See <https://slidedoc.es/minuta-informe-metodologia-de-clasificacion-en-categorias-de-desempeno-pdf>, retrieved on September 15th, 2017.

and, then, Technical Pedagogical Support, benefiting those schools from less vulnerable contexts" (p.8).

To base these arguments on evidence, the AEQ presented simulation results of pre- and post-adjustment ordinalizations for different model selection, indicating that adjusted HLMs "with averaged variables" yielded "classifications in which more than 20% of schools in the category High Achievement (schools with students relatively more vulnerable), would have worse learning results [in terms of absolute SIMCE scores] than schools with less vulnerable students in the category Insufficient Performance" (p.14).

1.4.6 The sanctification of common sense

In December 2013, a second regulatory body, the National Council of Education (NCE), released, in accord with the LEQA, a technical report²⁷ on the SOM design proposed by the Ordinalization Comission and approved by the AEQ. The report was based on a study conducted by eight researchers (five national, three international), who evaluated whether the valuation device followed the criterion that "the resulting categories be fair according to the diverse (socioeconomic) contexts, and that they favor mobility [of poorly performing schools] to superior levels" (p. 1). Overall, the NCE celebrated the careful and responsible work done by the AEQ, and suggested a smooth, cautious implementation of the new classification system, in order to protect its legitimacy. The NCE further acknowledged the technical challenges that constructing these measurements represent in terms of internationally validated scientific standards, which implied

²⁷ See <https://www.cned.cl/resolucion-de-acuerdo/informe-metodologia-de-ordenacion-de-establecimientos>, retrieved on September 15th, 2017.

“a deep knowledge of psychometric and econometric topics” (p. 6). The NCE finally stated that it was acutely aware that the SOM’s legitimacy depended not only on technical aspects but also on its appropriation and implementation by users, and on its consequences.

In terms of how the SOM understood quality, the NCE applauded the inclusion of a conception of equity as a key component of quality. It also praised the methodological consideration of definitions of quality commonly used by the empirical literature on effective schools. More or less explicitly, however, the NCE validated a notion of quality reduced to schools’ ability to “produce” students who “overcome Insufficient Learning Levels” (p. 7). In other words, quality amounted to schools’ meeting cognitive learning benchmarks in specific areas of knowledge, that is, proficiency. Allegedly an inherent component of quality, equity meant nothing but the achievement of such basic proficiency standards by all.

In light of this conception of quality, it is no coincidence that the report approved of the econometric model finally adopted to compute the scores used in the classification. After acknowledging the lack of academic consensus on the best method to separate school and class effects on student learning, the NCE noticed that the AEQ’s decisions were empirically grounded in “an analysis of the obtained classification”; simulations that considered “to an important degree different educational realities” (p. 8). Hence the NCE endorsed the AEQ in its intent to produce estimates that guarantee that “schools be held responsible [after] controlling for those associated factors that are out of their intervention possibilities” (p. 8). On the other hand, however, the NCE’s report agreed with the AEQ’s criteria of preempting “different learning expectations for students from different SES backgrounds” (p. 8). These provisions, ultimately, were necessary “to guarantee a fair classification” (p. 8).

1.4.7 Afterlife: Adjusting the adjustment

Controversy did not subside with the NCE's ratification. The enactment of the SOM not only implied that public categorizations of school quality would now be rendered official and legally binding; it also entailed the intensification and expansion of mandatory testing to more grades and curricular areas. This was made explicit in the Testing Plan of 2012²⁸, wherein the Mineduc predicated the increase of national tests from nine to seventeen in 2015 upon the adequate implementation of the SOM. For the conservative government, making testing ubiquitous was necessary "to carry out a valid and reliable ordinalization of elementary and secondary schools" (p. 7). Only with testing would it be possible to estimate and compare "progress and/or value-added indicators", based on "significant information about schools' efforts at making their students progress, no matter their point of departure" (p.10). In accordance with the LEQA, then, achieving robust measures of school effectiveness – so far elusive in the SOM actually validated by the NCE – amounted to a moral imperative, the fulfillment of which was "fundamental to contributing to a fairer and more equitable ordinalization of schools" (p.10).

This generalization of high-stakes testing served the context of *Alto al SIMCE* (Stop the SIMCE), a public campaign "in rejection of the standardization rationality and the effects of the measurement and quality assurance system." ²⁹ Launched in mid-2013 – right before the Presidential election – by a small group of young educational researchers, *Alto al SIMCE* advocated for "a form of evaluation in concord with an education understood as a social right and not as a commodity". The campaign soon enlisted the endorsement of hundreds of renowned

²⁸ See http://www.agenciaeducacion.cl/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Plan_de_Evaluaciones_Actualizado.pdf, retrieved on September 15th, 2017.

²⁹ See <http://www.altoalsimce.org>, retrieved on September 15th, 2017.

educational researchers, artists, and intellectuals. It also enlisted the teachers' union, the main student federations, as well as their popularly acclaimed former leaders – now running for Congress.

In March 2014, a new center-left coalition rose to power with the explicit programmatic commitment of rolling back market-oriented policies in education, including a revision of the testing regime. The new authorities of Mineduc commissioned a group of education specialists of diverse political background to produce a report³⁰ on possible fixes to accountability policy: the so-called “taskforce for SIMCE revision”. *Alto al SIMCE* was among the myriad stakeholders invited to the taskforce's hearings. There the campaign proposed to suspend national testing for three years, stop the implementation of the SOM, and smoothly transition to a new evaluation system based exclusively on survey tests, complemented with formative assessments at the district and school level (p. 28).

Although this proposal received the endorsement of a group of seventeen lawmakers, most of them belonging to the government coalition³¹, only a minority of the taskforce, linked to the student movement and the teachers' union, and more sympathetic with *Alto al SIMCE*, firmly pushed for a significant rollback. This group of experts recommended a two-thirds reduction in annual testing (p. 86-88). They also argued, straightforwardly, for the suppression of the SOM, and its replacement with a mechanism of targeted assistance for those schools that fall below a proficiency threshold, measured by unadjusted test scores.

³⁰ See <https://www.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2015/11/Informe-Equipo-de-Tarea-Revisi%C3%B3n-Simce.pdf>, retrieved on September 15th, 2017

³¹ See http://www.altoalsimce.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Carta_Parlamentarios_Cambios_Legales_al_SIMCE-Dic-2014.pdf, retrieved on September 15th, 2017

The majority report adopted much of the revisionist language, acknowledging the excesses of testing, and openly criticizing the undesirable consequences of high-stake accountability. After asserting that “rankings and comparisons based on average test scores” only indicate “socioeconomic advantage”, the taskforce disapproved of the publication of “hierarchical listings” of schools ordered by “the proportion of students” that achieve proficiency in common core standards (p.122). This majority of experts, nevertheless, did approve of moving forward with the pilot implementation of the SOM, highlighting that at least the new ordinalization “takes students’ socioeconomic characteristics into account”. The SOM, therefore, represented “progress relative to communicating only average scores in SIMCE, which induces erroneous interpretations on school effectiveness” (p.43).

And still, the report recognized multiple validity issues regarding the design of the SOM. The taskforce voiced concerns about the ordinalization’s high sensitivity to the number of tests included when computing the unadjusted index (p. 61). More crucially, the experts questioned the application of proficiency “thresholds” at the two bounds of the post-adjustment index distribution, which assign “schools with high SIMCE in[to] the highest category, even if they have not been effective when considering their SES.” Thresholds also “leave in the lowest category those schools with very low absolute results, even if they achieve better scores than other schools in the same SES level” (p. 62). Thus, in what appeared to be a re-instantiation of the moral conundrum pervading the design of the SOM, the report alerted to the dangers of schools being classified in the extremes categories according to two different criteria: their “absolute results” (proficiency), or “their effectiveness” (value added).

As I note in the previous section, ambiguity of criteria stemmed from the intricate coexistence of apparently incommensurable standpoints towards school accountability. On this

matter, this time experts' adjudication was crystal clear: using proficiency thresholds in the SOM restricted, if not directly contradicted, the SES adjustment mandate that "seeks to give weight to factors attributable to schools and approximate to an evaluation of their effectiveness as to hold them responsible in a fair way and reflect their performance" (p.62). On the closely related but more "technical" matter of whether the estimation method chosen to compute adjustments fairly honored such mandate, experts made no comments at all. Others, it seems, had already adjudicated.

1.5 CONCLUSIONS

The long road that goes from the politicization of market-based inequality in education, to the adoption of accountability mechanisms that intentionally factored between-school SES variation into assessments of school quality, reveals that a moral economy was constantly at play in the design of the SOM. Policymakers' quest for fairness in putatively objective, impersonal assessments of school quality required forming subjective, personal judgment on the potential performative effects associated with different adjustments of the new commensuration instrument. The clash between two notions of "quality" and two distinct conceptions of "fairness" became inevitable. And yet, reducing this disagreement to a controversy over econometric adjustments and post-estimation thresholds blurred the ideological divide at stake. Probably the SOM's most consequential "performativity effect" consisted of rendering commensurable alternative moral ways of making the SOM "performative". This was, for the most part, a depoliticizing effect.

Eventually, despite warnings and appeals to fair responsabilization by progressive experts, the conservative method of SES adjustment prevailed, better suiting the standpoint of market-minded policymakers. The official narrative justifying this decision was that, beyond the scientific

convention that evaluations of school quality should rely on unbiased estimates of school effects on student progress, classifications based on greater adjustments by SES might lead to policy inefficient, if not politically illegitimate, results. Models that (at least for some) produced less biased estimates of school effects might have "valued" two schools with very different SES composition as equally *effective* when in fact there was a wide *proficiency* gap between them. To put it bluntly, even if proven more robust, classifying according to models that give especial treatment to school effects might have conveyed the (false) impression that students in poor but effective schools were learning as much reading, math, and sciences as those in rich but ineffective schools, when in reality the opposite held true.

Thus, what the majority of experts in charge of quality assurance tacitly established was that the optimal calibration of the SOM was one that expressed a fine-tuned balance between scientific conventions about the technical aspects of quality valuation and socially accepted conventions that the education that really "qualifies" as "valuable" is, ultimately, the kind of education privileged kids get in the schools they attend. What, from the prevailing standpoint, seemed to make the ordinalization "legitimate" was not (only) that it conformed to the best standards of scientific expertise, but also that it better approximated commonsensical expectations about the actually existing social distribution of learning, sanctioning schools' academic prestige accordingly. The quest for "fairness", in the end, concerned much more this moral commitment to matching each school's statistically predicted value with its socially expected value, rather than merely honoring the professional maxim of delivering the most scientifically valid measure of school quality.

Still unsolved is the puzzle of why the minority of progressive experts acquiesced with a version of school accountability that fell short of expectations for fair responsabilization. This is

obviously a matter of interpretation, but evidence on experts' reason-giving suggests that a common moral background facilitated accommodation. This moral background, I contend, provided "the criteria for morality's or moral considerations' being relevant in a situation in the first place" (Abend 2014:30), in this case, whether in the evaluation of the SOM's fairness morality was at all applicable. In this sense, experts shared a faith in scientific procedures (e.g., econometrics) as appropriate for moral evaluation. They diverged in the specific empirical method to perform an index of school quality. Whether an empirical method was necessary to base judgments on fairness was not under question.

More importantly, the shared scientism that facilitated experts' deliberations also implied that the definition of the "school valuation problem" as an explicitly moral one was difficult to articulate. Although they repeatedly evoked vague notions of goodness and badness, rightness and wrongness, correctness and incorrectness in order to attribute different "value" to different objects (schools vs. students), they did not frame their acts of value attribution as moral practices. Had they proceeded otherwise, they would have likely compromised their authority as experts endowed with a sense of scientific objectivity and, therefore, moral impartiality. Thus, what Abend calls "moral grounding" – the substantive reasons that justify peoples' moral judgments – assumed in the case of the SOM a paradoxical form. As guardians of the rules of mechanical objectivity (Porter 1996), experts were expected to avoid engaging in moral argument. Their moral background therefore dictated that there must be no ground for moral grounding. When grounding judgment (as in the case of SES adjustments or proficiency thresholds) required giving moral reasons, they were conveniently camouflaged as technical decisions. Certainly, such technical decisions were openly deemed good or bad insofar as they measured the quality of schools fairly or not. But neither the interpretation of the legal mandate for fairness nor the way of technically handling it

that finally prevailed were overtly framed as object of a pluralistic, rational moral evaluation (Albury 1983). Indexed to an allegedly indisputable notion of quality – one that safeguarded proficiency benchmarking against an unrestricted application of the SES adjustment mandate – the SOM was rendered both technically and morally infallible.

Experts’ moral background, finally, comprised a tacit agreement that only consequentialist arguments count as valid “technical” claims. This tacit agreement drove the importance of simulations of the distributive consequences associated with different calibrations of the SOM in adjudicating fair responsabilization. Consequentialism, moreover, presupposed a realist social ontology: the convention that “objects preexist – at least in theory —the work of identification, definition, and delimitation” (Desrosières 2002:307). The statement, decreed by executive order, that what remains unaccounted for by the regression model – the purely statistical artifact of the equation’s error term– *is* an indicator of school effectiveness, bears witness to this realism. Ultimately, the SOM’s performative power as policy device laid in an *econometric* style of reasoning and doing that construed “education quality” as something that exists independently of the methods for its measurement, in the form of a single, quantifiable trait unevenly distributed across a population of schools that could (and therefore must) be hierarchically sorted accordingly (Espeland and Sauder 2007). More consequentially, the variance-partitioning approach espoused to account for this trait further rationalized and reified school practices as an “environmental” effect that, albeit unobservable (hence its definition as a residual), could nevertheless be statistically delimited, calculated, and thus treated independently of “inherited” social endowments, thereby refurbishing a reversed version of the traditional nature-vs.-nurture debate (Carson 2007; Tabery 2014) whereby student-SES came to be seen as a sort of school’s “genetic makeup.”

Again, the only thing experts did not share was a common definition of fairness itself, a moral disagreement of first order. Paradoxically, progressives leaned towards a classic meritocratic argument: unfairness meant disregarding considerations of schools' merit in the attainment of student proficiency. Valuing school efforts mattered, especially considering the history of discrimination and abandonment of failing public schools after decades of state-sponsored privatization. Thus, merit-based valuation was necessary to compensate for a history of unfair treatment.

Market-minded experts' standpoint was, in contrast, radically consequentialist: whether schools were strictly valued for their merit mattered less than whether standards of proficiency were universally enforced in all cases. They equated unfairness with the adoption of double standards in school valuation – an unacceptable signal of market distortion. Because what was fair to poor schools was unfair to their students – the ultimate subjects of the right to quality education – the “valuation problem” must be resolved on behalf of the latter.

2.0 RETHINKING NEOLIBERALISM, RETHINKING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A prickly yet still unacknowledged paradox haunts social movement scholars. On the one hand, in the last decade, they have rediscovered neoliberalism as an indispensable phenomenon (the omnipresent enemy) for the study of collective action. At the same time, they have collectively avoided the difficult and thankless job of providing an analytically workable conceptualization of neoliberalism, coherent enough to justify its pervasive use in a context characterized by a virtually unanimous academic consensus on the term's endemic malfunction as a social science concept. The situation gets worse considering that intellectual histories of neoliberalism –whatever it means– confirm time and again the centrality of organized collective action in its protracted ascent to global hegemony, a fact that should have drawn the attention of social movement scholars. But it has not.

The first goal of this paper is, then, to tackle this paradox. I make the case that neoliberalism can be thought of as a social movement and therefore analyzed with the well-honed tools of movement scholarship. I reread the voluminous academic work on neoliberalism through the standard conceptual tools of "political opportunities", "frame alignment", and "mobilizing structures", showing that neoliberals' organized praxis of intellectual advocacy and ideological mobilization really mattered for building the socioeconomic and political institutions so many social movements worldwide seek to resist, transform, or destroy.

Beyond probing into neoliberalism with the tools of social movement theory, the second goal of the paper is to probe social movement theory with the case of neoliberalism. I conceptualize neoliberalism as a peculiar type of movement: a transnational movement of market-minded intellectuals that relentlessly refrained from collectively asserting a common "identity". The status

of neoliberalism as an intellectual movement that, following Mirowski (2014), “dares not speak its own name,” makes it a case ill-suited to canonical ways of describing social movements. Hence my aim here is not only to rethink what neoliberalism is but also to stretch a bit what we think movements are.

The third goal of the paper is to amend the pessimistic consensus among scholars on neoliberalism that increasingly depicts it as a vacuous analytical category, which is therefore useless for academic purposes. I argue that the neoliberal movement’s remarkable success, and the burgeoning antagonism it incited overtime, help explain –at least partly– the concept’s paradoxical evolution from “an esoteric term, used scarcely, and only by economists”, into “one of the most widely used terms across many social science disciplines, except in economics” (Venugopal, 2015, p. 168). Blurring the artificially constructed boundaries between politics and the academy, my collective action approach to neoliberalism sheds light on the mechanisms driving the term’s conceptual stretching and its use mainly by its political/intellectual foes. Intended or not, neoliberalism’s growing politicization has just contributed to its reification as a totalizing, regime-like phenomenon, obliterating the enormous amount of collective effort involved in its making.

I proceed in three steps. First, I assess recent contributions to the scholarship on neoliberalism that subject the concept to critical scrutiny. Thoughtful analyses of neoliberalism as a social science concept unequivocally diagnose both its growing polysemy and its extremely asymmetric use across ideological divides and disciplinary boundaries. The scholarly agreement leans towards the undesirability of the concept’s endemic ambiguity and misspecification (Barnett 2005; Ferguson 2010; Hilgers 2012; Jessop 2013; Kipnis 2007; Nonini 2008; Peck 2010). Reasonable appeals to its complete abandonment as an academic concept (Dunn 2017; Venugopal

2015) gain more and more adepts. And yet, such a consensus seems at least problematic in light of the term's growing politicization. The term's negative valence and exclusive use by its critics, along with its rare appearance in mainstream economics, are themselves *political* phenomena to be explained *sociologically*.

Having criticized contemporary neoliberalism's inability to apprehend neoliberalism not only as a concept but also as a political signifier, in the second section of this paper I turn to the uses of neoliberalism by social movement scholars. Building on recent endeavors to bring capitalism back into social movement studies, I present evidence that the latter's failure to address neoliberalism's movement-like character lies in the systematic undertheorizing of intellectuals as potential subjects of autonomous collective action. I then offer a definition of intellectual/scientific movements, and address the tricky issue of whether collective actors' self-identification is a necessary condition for analysts to attribute movementness to a putative movement.

Finally, in light of this conceptual discussion, I devote the third section of the paper to the neoliberal social movement. I advance an actor-centered approach to describe not what neoliberalism *is* but what neoliberals have *done* as real-world historical subjects. Without any hope of being exhaustive, and only for illustrative purposes, I resort to social movement theory to account for the transnational movement of organic intellectuals that made neoliberalism an historic success. Building a movement infrastructure, seizing political opportunities, and constructing collective action frames appear as key elements of the neoliberal project. I also touch on the outcome of neoliberals' political/ideological mobilization: the formation of a new political "common sense" that was legitimated by expert knowledge, embedded in political programs, and enacted through institutional regulations.

2.1 ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED SIGNIFIERS

A governmental rationality, an economic theory, a class strategy, a policy script, a mode of regulation, a political ideology... capitalism today: Scholars' use of the term neoliberalism has grown exponentially in the last decade, etiolating the concept's descriptive and analytical power. Reified into "a kind of all or nothing phenomenon" (Flew 2012:45) that "manifests itself everywhere and in everything" (Gamble 2001:134), the concept of neoliberalism lapses into adjectival promiscuity, risking "being used to refer to almost any political, economic, social or cultural process associated with contemporary capitalism" (Nonini 2008:149). Hence a growing number of scholars, backed by copious empirical evidence of neoliberalism's lack of definition, moralistic connotation, and incontinent polysemy (Barnett 2005; Boas and Gans-Morse 2009; Clarke 2008; Dunn 2017; Venugopal 2015), convincingly recommend against using the concept for academic purposes.

One common response to this pessimistic diagnosis has been to engage in second order observation (Luhmann 1993) of the concept's trajectory, and of the different disciplinary and theoretical approaches to neoliberalism. Thus, for instance, Birch (2015) distinguishes among neoliberalism as a set of ideas, policies, and governmental technologies; neoliberalism as a moral/ideological project; neoliberalism as capitalist class rule; and neoliberalism as a process of market building and expansion. These four types map only awkwardly onto the five most common uses of neoliberalism listed by Ferguson (2010:171-2). Similarly, Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010b) examine how neoliberalism is differently conceptualized by three schools of heterodox political economy: the varieties of capitalism approach, the historical materialist school of international relations, and the governmentality perspective. And Centeno and Cohen (2012) make a case for distinct economics, politics, and culture of neoliberalism. When it comes to

periodization, the picture looks no better. For instance, Tickell and Peck (2003) identify proto-neoliberalism, roll-back neoliberalism, and roll-out neoliberalism as three different phases in the process of neoliberalization, each characterized by distinct dominant discourses, key institutions, political practices, totemic figures, heartlands, and even ethics.

Collective efforts at dealing with concept stretching bear witness to the irresolvable tension between scholars' vindication of the term and their malaise with its dysfunctionality. In a debate hosted by *Social Anthropology*, Wacquant (2012) depicts the field as polarized between a political economy (neoclassic or Marxist) approach concerned with market rule, and (again) a governmentality perspective, proposing his own synthesis. Peck and Theodore (2012:184) assess the contribution of four types of analysis of neoliberalization processes. Jessop (2013) reckons five main approaches and distinguishes four types of transitions to neoliberalism. Confirming the trend of serial typologization, Hilgers (2012) even opts to expand the concept's scope by suggesting three dimensions for the study of "neoliberal implementations". Likewise, the editors of a special issue of *Partecipazione e Conflitto* (Moini and d'Albergo 2016) echo the pessimism proclaimed by the editors of yet another special issue of *Territory, Politics, Governance* (Pinson and Morel Journal 2016). Moini & d'Albergo then reject to eliminate the term, conditioning its "epistemological relevance" on the "ontological reason" that neoliberalism works as "the connective tissue of contemporary capitalism" (Moini 2016:279). Finally, the editors of the *Handbook of Neoliberalism* (Springer, Birch and MacLeavy 2016) acknowledge that the concept is "slippery", that it means "different things to different people", that its politicization has turned it into "a means of identifying a seemingly ubiquitous set of market-oriented policies", that it is primarily used "indiscriminately and quite pejoratively to mean anything 'bad'", and that "such a lack of specificity reduces its capacity as an analytic frame" (pp. 1-2). Moreover, some of the

introductory contributions advise against “shifting among meanings inadvertently”, and suggest “removing it from the analysis” unless neoliberalism is carefully defined “at the outset” (O’Neill and Weller 2016:91). Others directly deem it “as a fuzzy and politicized, but as-yet *irreplaceable*, concept” (Mudge 2016:93). And yet, the remaining chapters relapse into harboring, again, a kaleidoscope of perspectives on a variety of phenomena concerning politics, social tensions, knowledge production, spaces, nature and environments –all of them presumably informed by the concept of neoliberalism.

Should not we take this ceaseless proliferation of variegated uses, contradictory definitions, meta-analytical typologies, synthesizing approaches, and public recognitions of uselessness as the most salient symptom of the death of neoliberalism as a conceptual tool for designating contemporary phenomena?

2.1.1 Neoliberals without neoliberalism?

Second-order observations have certainly made our understanding of neoliberalism as concept more complex and sophisticated, adding nuance to the debate. But this sort of “actually existing nuance” looks more like “a holding maneuver”: something “one does when faced with a question for which one does not yet have a compelling or interesting answer” (Healy 2017:119). For, hardly a signal of intellectual virtue, nuance “typically obstructs the development of theory that is intellectually interesting, empirically generative, or practically successful.” (p. 118). At the end of the day, welcoming –but futile– calls for nuance in using the concept of neoliberalism can barely live up to well-elaborated invitations to get rid of the term.

A good example of the latter is Venugopal’s (2015) insightful analysis of the work the concept of neoliberalism does within the field of development studies. Reviewing the concept’s

evolution, Venugopal (2015) notes its uses shift from “a category of economic ideas” in the 1930s-60s (the Mont Pelerin Society, the Ordoliberal and Chicago schools), to a policy paradigm (“market deregulation, privatization and welfare withdrawal”) in the 1980s, to a “political, ideological, cultural, spatial phenomenon” in 1990s, to an “epochal phenomenon” or “dystopian zeitgeist” in the 2000s (p. 168). He also surveys “three conceptual variants of neoliberalism within the political economy of development” (p. 176): a technocratic pro-market policy regime, a political project serving capitalist class rule, an international strategy of neo-colonial domination. More crucially, Venugopal identifies a series of more or less friendly critiques that judge neoliberalism as “technically inadequate and also over-technocratic, de-politicized and deeply political, obsessed by economic growth and responsible for the lack thereof” (p.178). He concludes, straightforwardly, that (i) neoliberalism has come to describe an incomprehensible, unconnected, and even contradictory, set of ideas and real life phenomena; (ii) hence the concept resists basic definitions and theoretical generalizations; and (iii) even so, the many terminological critiques that have attempted remedial solutions and syntheses have done nothing but complicate the thing, adding “new, more deeply nuanced, analytically dense personalities to an already burdened signifier” (p. 171).

Venugopal is right: The growing *neoliberalology* falls short of expectations. It generally acknowledges the risk of fetishizing neoliberalism, but its remedies and accommodations do more harm than good. Still, Venugopal’s conclusions go even further: the endemic malfunction that affects neoliberalism as concept only superficially resembles other frequently invoked cases of conceptual stretching in the history of social sciences (e.g., populism, democracy, culture) (Venugopal 2015:173). Remarkably, neoliberalism’s misspecification also performs ideologically motivated “boundary work” (Gieryn 1983; see also Lamont and Molnár 2002). It helps those who

oppose it make *legible*, without really getting their hands dirty, the otherwise inscrutable/impenetrable field of knowledge that today constitutes the monopolist professional jurisdiction (Abbott 2014) of economics. Semantic dysfunctionality does have a function: it works as a “rhetorical tool and moral device” for “critical social scientists” to engage in mystifying, derogatory tactics with the sole goal of dealing with (for them) unintelligible economic theorizing “from a safe distance” (Venugopal 2015:180), thereby reinforcing the sharp divide between economics and the rest of the social sciences.

For Venugopal, the lessons to be learned from the concept of neoliberalism’s becoming a disciplinarily-specific rhetorical weapon are crystal-clear. To begin with, social scientists should leave behind neoliberalism’s “over-worked conceptual engine”, preserving only its “descriptive shell” as “a broad indicator of the historical turn in macro-political economy” (Venugopal 2015:182). Second, they ought to acknowledge the concept’s inadequacy as an intellectual tool for engaging in a deep, sophisticated, and still necessary critique of mainstream economic knowledge. Third, scholars need to abandon a delusory, distorting, mystifying type of critique the routine proceedings of which consist, as the actual functioning of neoliberalism as concept illustrates, of constructing the *object of critique* (e.g., neoliberalism) as a “rhetorical device” such that the *subject of critique* (e.g., critical social scientists) can “grasp, label and attach moral sensibility to a range of economic, social, political, spatial and cultural phenomena” (p. 182).

Insightful and well-grounded as these implications may be, they miss a crucial point, one that concerns the *political* character of the controversy at stake. How are we to understand the politics (and their agents) that, among other real-world effects, endowed neoliberalism with such a morally negative valence across all social sciences but economics, and that, at the same time, witnessed its complete disappearance from mainstream economics? How can we account for the

fact that neoliberalism as a concept has come to perform the function of signifying and reproducing “the mutual incomprehensibility and the deep cognitive divide” between economics and non-economics (Venugopal 2015:180)? Can we attribute the operation of such excision to an academic crusade headed by a gang of social scientists against an “intellectually vapid”, “mathematically sophisticated”, and hence “inscrutable/impenetrable” discipline such as economics (p.180)? Should not we, instead, treat this intellectual contest over neoliberalism as concept as expression of a broader political/ideological conflict that includes, but is by no means confined to, the sort of terminological dispute across academic disciplines that Venugopal diagnoses?

The analytical interrogation Venugopal and others undertake risks rationalizing the debate as a purely academic contest of exclusively academic interest, thus reifying neoliberalism as a phenomenon completely devoid of historical agency and bereft of any practical implication in the real world. Underlying neoliberalism’s evolution from “an esoteric term, used scarcely, and *only by economists*”, into “one of the most widely used terms across many social science disciplines, *except in economics*” (Venugopal 2015:168), there is political/ideological mobilization (and counter-mobilization), which constitutes a matter of analytical consideration in its own right. Misrecognizing the antagonistic forces involved in such struggles reduces neoliberalism to mere academic ideation, the only agents of which are the critiquing subjects opposing their critiqued object. The far-reaching political/ideological work of neoliberal intellectuals (not the work of their foes), as a practical activity with material effects in the real world, never enters the picture. Thus the *neoliberals* –the agents of neoliberalism– come to be those who bring it into existence as a concept. *Only* as a concept, for there seems to be no such thing as neoliberalism as an objectively specifiable, thereby scientifically apprehensible, real-world phenomenon. The paradox now becomes evident: it is not – as the literature suggests in regard to the Third Way or the Latin

American Left— that there is “neoliberalism without neoliberals”; we are left only with “neoliberals without neoliberalism”!

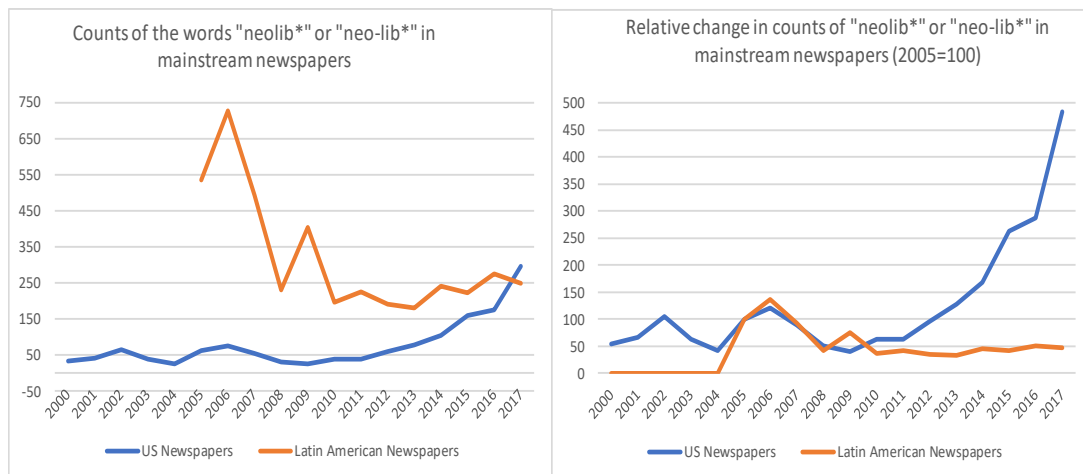
2.1.2 From an academic concept to a political signifier

Neoliberalism is not (and has never been) *only* a social science concept. It is also a political signifier, mobilized to produce real-world social antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Myriad social movements, populist and leftist political parties, and anti-establishment intellectuals have long vied to politicize the term. Zapatistas taking over the villages of Chiapas, *Piqueteros* blocking the provincial roads in Argentina, indigenous peasants and workers waging the water and gas wars in Cochabamba and El Alto (Bolivia), and *Pingüinos* students occupying Chilean high schools — not academics at conferences — turned neoliberalism into a political antagonist. The advent of the Great Recession in the Global North just gave final momentum to the politicization of neoliberalism, now antagonized by the *indignados* who crowded into the central plazas of Southern European cities. Neoliberalism, as a political signifier, served the development of “shared languages of contention” that allowed movements to coordinate “the messy but practical business of confronting the institutions and cultural power of global elites” (Barker et al. 2013:29).

It is then not surprising that the term has filtered into ordinary language, becoming common in public discussions (Peck, Theodore and Brenner 2010:96-98). A quick count of mentions of neoliberalism and related terms in mainstream newspapers across the Americas documents the term’s permeation into everyday political conversation (see Figure 2-1).³² Public invocations of

³² The US Major Dailies database encompasses five major media outlets: The New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Chicago Tribune. To boost comparability with the Latin American Newsstream database, I restricted my search to five newspapers in Latin America —El Universal (Mexico), El Comercio (Peru), O Globo (Brazil), El Mercurio (Chile), El Pais (Uruguay)— following the criteria that a) the

neoliberalism were most frequent in Latin America in the mid-2000s, when the social movements and Left governments' challenge to the Washington Consensus was at its heyday (Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Silva 2009). The popularity of neoliberalism faded as the so-called “pink tide” lost momentum. Yet it moved north in recent years, to the point that today US newspapers even surpass their Latin American counterparts in absolute mentions (left panel). Interestingly enough, the term's meteoric popularization in the US since 2011 (note the exponential growth in the right panel) coincides with the outbreak of Occupy Wall Street and, more recently, the challenge posed by the left wing of the Democratic Party to its (allegedly) “neoliberalized” establishment after the Bernie Sanders' campaign.³³



selected outlet leads national rankings of readership, and b) data are available at least from 2005 (the database only includes Mexican newspapers before that year).

³³ It is also worth noting that, historically, nowhere but in the US has the term “neoliberalism” been so absent from political conversation. One good reason why Americans have been so reluctant to utilize the term is that “liberalism”, unlike in the rest of the world, is the most common label for progressive politics (for further discussion, see Mirowski 2009). Why this is changing requires further elaboration. But it is likely a byproduct of the decline of the market-friendly Third Way the Clintons and their New Democrats so eagerly embraced, a process concomitant to the rise of a challenging left that, mobilizing both within and outside the Democratic party, publicly demands a return to class politics and brings up the term “neoliberalism” to fight those within the progressive camp who still work to prevent such a return (for illustration of the ongoing debate, see e.g., Chait 2017; Klein 2016; Konczal 2017; Peyser 2017). In this sense, Americans' recent “discovery” of neoliberalism as a political signifier appears to be driven by the increase of political polarization in an era of growing economic inequality.

Figure 2-1: The politicization of Neoliberalism. Source: ProQuest searches on Latin American Newsstream and US Major Dailies Databases

If, as a political signifier, neoliberalism does the work of demarcating antagonistic forces, the endless controversy over the term's meaning and usages should not be simply reduced to an irresolvable scientific contest by enlightened seekers of conceptual clarity (Markoff 2017:134) or “nuance” (Healy 2017). Serious as their efforts at conceptual clarification may be, scholars are not the only contestants who participate in the contest. And even when the contest takes place within the narrow confines of the seminar, it is likely that its walls “are not very thick, that its participants participate in many other things as well, and that their debates are part of larger ones” (Markoff 2017:147). An observation that comes with methodological implications: Dealing with neoliberalism as an essentially contested (and politicized) concept means shifting “the focus from the concept to the contest”, focusing “more on the actors, their actions, and the consequences” (p. 149). In other words, “[w]e certainly need to understand those actors’ concepts but we need to understand them as actors’ concepts, including understanding who the actors are, and the circumstances in which they act and in which those concepts are used” (p. 149).

The fact that the productivity of neoliberalism as an academic concept seems exhausted precisely as its usage as an actor-centered political signifier gains momentum globally warns us against ruling it out as a meaningless notion. Neoliberalism's current status within the social sciences can only be judged in the context of broader political/ideological struggles across social, economic, and cultural fields. If, as Venugopal shows, neoliberalism as concept is not only scientifically obsolete but also morally and ideologically charged, it is because the academy has been (and still is) one of the many battlefields for a politics aimed at rendering neoliberalism and its historical agents a visible antagonistic force. Any attempt to write the obituary for neoliberalism

as concept must first do justice to this politics. In particular, it must take account of (i) neoliberal intellectuals and institutions as social actors; (ii) the ideology they mobilize as a collective practice, and (iii) the political effects of this praxis as mobilized/enacted by these social actors.

Perhaps there is not, as Venugopal (2015) contends, such a thing as “neoliberal theory” (p. 181); nor is neoliberalism a “seamless historical project” (p. 168) to be grappled with by a “minimum common definition” (p. 179). There has been, however, a neoliberal *praxis* fully endowed with historicity: the political/ideological work done in diverse social fields by a movement of market-minded intellectuals. This work, as the abstract sum of a practical intellectual activity, constitutes “the matter” –or in semiotic terms, the referent the signifier signifies– of neoliberalism not as concept, but as praxis. Such a praxis, in turn, is what its opponents have consistently designated under the name of neoliberalism, precisely to render it antagonistic.

2.2 INTELLECTUALS AS MOVEMENT SUBJECTS, AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

If there is an actuality of neoliberalism beyond the “empty signifier” utilized in excess by left-leaning scholars and activists, that actuality *is* about real-world neoliberals and, more crucially, what they have *done* (and still *do*): a practical work of networking and mobilization for the advocacy, diffusion, and implementation of market-minded knowledge and ideas that has played a crucial role in organizing the actual hegemony of global capitalist elites. Indeed, the history of contemporary capitalism owes much to the organizing *praxis* of neoliberal intellectuals as collective historical subjects.

The centrality of neoliberals' organized collective action notwithstanding, social movement studies have paid little attention to it. One good reason for this collective avoidance is that social movement scholars have systematically undertheorized the role of intellectuals – especially elite intellectuals that do not belong to the left camp– as subjects of organized collective action. Another good reason is that neoliberals, unlike canonical social movements, do not claim an identity as neoliberals.

This section argues, then, that: 1) despite recent efforts to recuperate the political economy of capitalism in social movement studies, neoliberalism has not merited sufficient attention; 2) a sociological conceptualization of intellectuals as potential subjects of collective action is necessary to make up for this absence; 3) the recognition of neoliberals as collective action subjects means they are relatively autonomous with respect to other social groups; 4) subjects' self-identification with the term “neoliberalism” should not be a requisite for the actual existence of neoliberals as the collective subjects of neoliberalism.

2.2.1 Neoliberalism in social movement scholarship

That social movement scholars have not thought of neoliberalism as a social movement is not as surprising given that capitalism itself, as Hetland and Goodwin (2013) recall, has “strangely disappeared” from social movement scholarship. Reviewing the two leading journals in the field, recent award-winning books and articles, and current textbooks and handbooks, the authors find that concerns with political economy are generally absent. Moreover, unlike classical works that canonized social movements as a field of study, today's research largely ignores the intertwining between the contemporary dynamics of capitalism and protest movements.

And yet, Hetland and Goodwin's tacit conceptualization of the capitalism-movements nexus falls short of expectations. For it is depicted as a one-directional relationship: how capitalist dynamics "inhibit or facilitate the formation of new collective identities and solidarities", how class struggle "shapes the way movements evolve", how capitalism generate "class divisions" that "penetrate and fracture" within-movement "goals and strategies", or how the "ideologies and cultural idioms" promoted by capitalist institutions "influence movement strategies and goals" (p. 91). In short, what is missing for them is precisely an adequate consideration of "the ways in which capitalism shapes social movements" (p. 83), not the ways social movements influence capitalism, or the ways these two co-evolve dialectically, or the ways in which Capital sometimes becomes a social movement, or the ways in which social movements become institutionalized as capitalist institutions. When social movement scholars attempt to factor capitalism into an explanation (as Hetland and Goodwin do with the LGBT movement), capitalism only functions as a necessary condition for social movement mobilization, or as a set of constraints to human agency. In ignoring collective action effects on capitalism, or, more precisely, the fact that the hegemony of capitalist institutions needs be continuously organized and reorganized through significant collective work, social movement studies not only fail at conceptualizing capitalist relations as embedded in collective action; they also overlook that key socioeconomic institutions regulating social life are also coproduced in endless social conflicts between organized (and organizing) forces, thereby reifying the separation between the economic and the political (Feinig 2018).

A symptom of social movement scholars' failure at conceptualizing the role of collective action in the organization of contemporary capitalism is their misrecognition of neoliberals as historical subjects. Hence the term "neoliberalism", as in many other fields, typically designates an ossified, regime-like phenomenon, whereas "neoliberal" usually serves as a descriptive feature,

an adjective of a regime, a policy paradigm, a social formation, or an historical transition. Seldom are these two terms used to describe both a subject endowed with a capacity to act collectively on the production of historicity, and the practical activities of such an acting collective subject (Touraine 1984).

I revisited some of Hetland and Goodwin's (2013) original sources and found that, throughout the 716 pages of the *Blackwell Companion of Social Movements* (Snow, Soule and Kriesi 2004), neoliberalism (and variants) is mentioned only 13 times, mainly to refer to vague "neoliberal forces", "neoliberal policies", "neoliberal globalization", or "neoliberal regime". Only once a collective subject, the capitalist class, is identified as mobilizing "a neoliberal agenda" (p. 560), and only once technocrats of international financial institutions in charge of dictating the rules of economic globalization are seen as "proponents of neoliberalism" (318-319). The latest edition of *Contentious Politics* (Tilly and Tarrow 2015) looks no better: neoliberalism appears 5 times total, chiefly as a set of policies, or as a frame against which activists mobilize. Mentions of neoliberalism in the second edition of *Social Movements: An Introduction* (della Porta and Diani 2009) amount to 46, the overwhelming majority of them to adjectivize, again, globalization, or, less frequently, to describe capitalism, policies, or turns in history. Politicians like Tony Blair are deemed "neoliberal" once (p. 68), and another time neoliberalism is referred to as "the ideology of the capitalist class" (p. 229).

I also expanded my search to *Marxism and Social movements* (Barker et al. 2013)– the very book in which movement scholars (such as Hetland and Goodwin) lay out the new "capitalism and social movements" agenda. Here the term neoliberalism (and variants) is widely used, counting 178 mentions. As a stand-alone regime that requires no definition or adjective, neoliberalism appears 43 times. Agendas, policies, projects, programs, ideals, ideologies,

doctrines, lexica, approaches are labelled “neoliberal” other 54 times. So are capitalism, globalization, the economic order, states, and individual countries (21 times). Historicist uses such as the neoliberal turn, crisis, period, restoration, counter-revolution, or phase of capitalism are present but less frequent (12 times). Only 12 times does the term specify things some agents *do*, like a neoliberal attack, assault, offensive, strategy, disorganizing, or dismantling. When identified, the agents most often deemed as “neoliberal” are government elites, capitalist elites, all members of the ruling class in the West, middle-class activists, the United States, policymakers, or, even more vaguely, political alliances, coalitions, and blocs.

Misrecognition of the movement-like character of neoliberalism, along with definitional ambiguity, polysemy, and reification in the use of the term, are therefore pervasive even among scholars preoccupied with bringing capitalism back into social movement studies. The rare exceptions are neo-Gramscian accounts that look at the symbiosis between organized collective action and capitalist development in less deterministic ways. For Nilsen and Cox (2013), for instance, socioeconomic institutions are always “the sediment of movement struggles” (p. 66) in which issues such as skills, rationality, and common sense usually play a part. They also recall that dominant groups, despite generally enjoying strategic advantage, recurrently need to engage in collective action such as business organizing, moral campaigns, or ideological crusades: “offensive movements from above” (e.g., neoliberalism) that work collectively to reorganize capitalist institutions as to secure their hegemony (p. 66-73).

Along this line, Schneirov and Schneirov (2016) also blur the boundaries between movements and social formations, suggesting that neoliberalism, although too often attributed regime-like characteristics, originated as “a popular social *movement* that was able to transform itself into a mainstream political tendency” (p. 567). Moreover, the authors, against simplistic

narratives of elite conspiracy, cast historical neoliberalism as a cross-class movement coalition that articulated both left and right discourses, transforming “the market” into an all-encompassing, dominant social metaphor (p. 570). Schneirov and Schneirov further underscore the centrality of discursive articulation and the crucial role business organizations, foundations, and think-tanks play in coalition building. However, they never specify neoliberal *intellectuals* as an analytically distinct collective subject.

2.2.2 Intellectuals’ movements

Although I subscribe to Schneirov and Schneirov’s (2016) theorizing of capitalism as historically constituted by collective struggles over its mode of organization, my intent is to push their argument a bit further. I contend the specific contribution of neoliberal intellectuals to such struggles is worth elaborating from a social movements standpoint.

Comparative-historical sociologists have shown that national paths to economic liberalization, fiscal consolidation, privatization, or welfare retrenchment varied across time and place, with the pressure of international financial institutions, the initiative of state technocrats, the mobilization of think tanks, or the agitation of business organizations combining and taking leading roles depending on economic circumstances, state-society relations, and domestic levels of political polarization (Fairbrother 2014; Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002; Prasad 2006). Likewise, scholars of international relations and transnational capitalist class formation have underscored the influence of economic advisors and policy wonks in corporate advocacy networks as key agents of capitalist globalization (see e.g., Carroll 2013; Dreiling and Darves 2016; van der Pijl 1998)). In turn, intellectual historians (Burgin 2012; Jones 2014) have extensively documented the activities and public trajectory of the neoliberal “thought collective” (Mirowski and Plehwe

2009) that was behind the global shift in economic ideas and policies that began in the 1970s, in particular the crucial role neoliberal think tank networks played as a novel, hybrid organizational form connecting the academy, markets, media, and politics (Alvarez-Rivadulla, Markoff and Montecinos 2010; Medvetz 2012; Salles-Djelic 2017).

A common thread in all these accounts is the political/ideological work done in myriad fields –political parties, international organizations, bureaucracies, media, educational institutions, research centers, expert communities, charities, professional associations, foundations, etc.– by a diverse, decentralized, loosely coupled network of market-minded technocrats, policy entrepreneurs, consultants, politicians, academics, pro-business ideologues and gurus– those who have consistently worked, paraphrasing Gramsci (1971), on the “moral and intellectual reform” necessary for the organization of the neoliberal “collective will”. From a social movement perspective, then, the crucial question is whether what I here call “neoliberal intellectuals” have *acted* in a movement-like fashion and with enough sense of shared purposefulness as to merit recognition as historical subjects capable of autonomous collective action.

Sociologists have long reflected on the conditions that lead intellectuals to engage in autonomous political organization and mobilization. Kurzman (2009), for instance, argues that the main actor behind the democratic revolutionary wave of the early 20th century in Iran, China, Russia, Mexico, Turkey, and Portugal was pushed forward by internationally connected intellectuals. Despite national variations, these intellectuals of the world semi-periphery shared an awareness of their marginalized social position, a collective understanding of their revolutionary potential, and a cultural orientation towards modern values and ideas. Similarly, for Gouldner (1985), the international communist movement that spread throughout Eastern Europe in the decades before the October Revolution was indeed the historical realization of a tightly connected

network of radical intellectuals, constituted as an autonomous social group against established notables, aristocrats, and industrialists. Embracing Marxism as its organic ideology, but in flagrant contradiction to Marxist doctrine, the so-called *intelligentsia* refused to speak for its own class origin to become the self-designated emissary of another class: the proletariat.

The historically salient role of the socialist intelligentsia in Eastern Europe as a group with visible social contours and radical political orientations has not only provided sociologists with an exemplary case for the analysis of intellectuals and politics (see e.g., Karabel 1996); it has served as the inspiration for other intellectual movements as well. Neoliberalism is a case in point. No wonder the ascendancy of socialism in the West among demographically explosive educated groups in charge of producing, disseminating, and applying knowledge inspired Hayek's (1949) harangue to liberal-minded experts on the urgency of abandoning the comfort of the seminar to fight for a new "Utopia" of "truly liberal radicalism": a movement of "intellectual leaders (...) prepared to resist the blandishments of power and influence and (...) work for an ideal, however small may be the prospects of its early realization" (p. 432). Underlying neoliberals' sustained efforts at transnational organizing and advocacy was Hayek's and his Mont Pelerin Society fellows' antagonistic relationship with socialist intellectuals. Building a counter-hegemonic alternative, a (neo)liberal intelligentsia committed to imbuing market capitalism with both moral and scientific foundations, was the self-proclaimed historical *raison d'être* of the neoliberal movement (Burgin 2012:107).

2.2.3 The question of autonomy

The core of the neoliberal movement, this paper contends, primarily comprised public intellectuals and learned scholars that, as such, and following Frickel and Gross's (2005) definition, a)

coalesced around a relatively coherent program of intellectual change, a program that b) challenged the normative assumptions around which established scientific paradigms were organized. As members of an intellectual movement, therefore, neoliberals were c) politically motivated to reconfigure the power relations within the fields they attempted to transform, a goal they accomplished through d) sustained collective organizing and advocacy across space and time. Still, against Frikel and Gross, and with Gramsci (and Hayek), I argue that in particular instances, the scope of some intellectual movements –e.g., neoliberalism– may be significantly more vast; rather than merely effecting paradigmatic changes in academic fields –something neoliberals did in economics, law, political science, and business education–, their activism may seek to transform more broadly the role of knowledge in the organization of politics, economy, and society.

Yet the proposition that neoliberals engaged in movement-like collective action in their quest to restore the moral and scientific foundations of market society does not mean they constituted a class in and for itself. It does imply, nevertheless, that neoliberals enjoyed reasonable degrees of autonomy as intellectuals vis-à-vis other social groups. The question of the autonomy and class-boundedness of intellectuals is an empirical one: the formation and structural differentiation of the cultural field vary across time and place (for a review of this issue, see Kurzman and Owens 2002). Bourdieu (1984; 1990; 1991), for instance, deemed intellectuals as the (relatively autonomous) dominated fraction of the dominant class. Yet his observations were historically circumscribed to a vertically integrated, state-centered national polity (France), one in which intellectuals, albeit economically dependent on the capitalist state, enjoyed wide leeway to exercise their cultural leadership as bearers of universal causes (socialism included).

Bourdieu's paradigmatic view looks more like an anomaly in contemporary globalization. The internationalization of a knowledge-based economy creates both opportunities for and

constraints to the political autonomy of intellectuals. On the one hand, the economization of knowledge production and distribution adds more and more heteronomous pressures to the specialized activities that characterize intellectual life within the cultural, educational, and artistic fields. Thus, the “currency” of intellectuals’ work becomes increasingly commensurate with the economic value it yields, which biases knowledge production towards technical expertise. On the other hand, knowledge-producers and experts, or at least the fraction of them who command highly valuable technical knowledge, gain political autonomy from nationally constituted democratic institutions as economic governance transnationalizes and specialized organizations expand worldwide (Meyer and Bromley 2013). Indeed, the rise of economics as an global professional field is a good example of how supranational technocratic structures provide the infrastructure for economic experts, imbued with almost uncontested authority in economic affairs, to become more autonomous from political parties and the state, while at the same serving as global agents of market rationalization (Fourcade 2006; Mudge 2015; Mudge and Vauchez 2012) (more on this point later).

It is in this sense that I argue for viewing the organic connectedness of neoliberal networks to the capitalist class not as given and immutable, but as a by-product of neoliberals as agents of social change. Exploiting existing opportunities, but also creating their own, neoliberals successfully mobilized to challenge established forms of incorporation of “traditional intellectuals” –“universalistic rather than organically tied to social classes” (Plehwe, Walpen and Neunhöffer 2007)– within national fields, reducing their heteronomy from the state and political parties, while rearticulating themselves into a transnationalized field of expert governance increasingly interconnected with globalizing capitalist elites. In strict sense, as I explain in the third section, neoliberal activism organized its own modes of production and distribution; a

transnational network infrastructure that gave materiality –in the sense of embeddedness in social relations– to their knowledge and ideas (p. 5).

2.2.4 A movement that dared not speak its name

Still puzzling is the question of whether intellectuals' identity as members of a movement is a necessary condition for analysts to attribute movementness to a putative movement. Indeed, a major objection to the usefulness of neoliberalism as a valid category of analysis –including the analysis of an alleged neoliberal movement– is that almost no one claims a neoliberal identity. Peculiar enough as a movement of intellectuals, neoliberalism is also a movement that “dares not speak its own name” (Mirowski 2014).

The issue becomes even trickier considering that some of the European and American “founding fathers” of the neoliberal movement proudly vindicated the term in the name of positive science and for the sake of honorable values such as freedom and liberty (Amable 2011; Plehwe 2009a). As Burgin's (2012) archival research shows, members more closely connected to the think tanks that clustered along the Mont Pelerin Society and, later, the Atlas Network, explicitly addressed the question of the movement's name in meetings and personal correspondence. However, they could not agree on the best identifier. Although a majority of neoliberal activists of the 40s and 50s believed in significantly revamping classic liberalism, the prefix “neo” did not represent all of them, mainly because some (e.g., von Mises) disagreed on how much revisionism was necessary to rehabilitate nineteenth-century liberalism (e.g., laissez faire vs. the state as guarantor of competitive markets). In lack of consensus, movement members' “increasingly identified themselves with divergent labels and focused intensively on the differences their respective choice entailed” (p.73).

Besides failed initial attempts at collective self-naming, there are two additional reasons why only some neoliberals identified with the moniker, and only for a short period of time. The first is that in the 60s and 70s neoliberal activism radicalized as its epicenter shifted from Europe to the US, where the term liberalism meant something quite different. The rank and file of the rapidly expanding network infrastructure was also overflowed by economists, thereby abandoning much of the original concerns with moral philosophy. Exalting private enterprise through the mythical figure of the creative entrepreneur, rather than restoring the moral and political conditions for market competition, became the focus of the neoliberal creed. In this context, Milton Friedman, the new public ideologue of the movement (and president of the Mont Pelerin Society), stopped identifying himself with neoliberalism, as he had done in the past (see e.g., Friedman 1951). With the movement now on the offensive, Friedman abandoned revisionism of 19th century liberalism, praising the frontier capitalism of the early republic, and calling himself a radical, free-market liberal. Once members of the movement won Nobel Prizes and gained significant political influence with Pinochet, Thatcher, and Reagan, the word neoliberalism no longer meant much to them.

The second reason is that as neoliberals managed to convert their knowledge into a state-sanctioned program of economic restructuring, the term “neoliberalism” became taboo among advocates of market reforms (Mirowski 2009). Evidence shows that the concept’s turn from a self-descriptive category into a negative moniker and its subsequent abandonment by its hitherto proud carriers resulted from neoliberals’ (the Chicago Boys, supervised by Hayek and Friedman) success at radically transforming the Chilean political economy and the reactions this elicited (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009). Soon the “Washington Consensus” would be publicly adopted as the politically acceptable label for the neoliberal creed (Babb 2013; Peck 2010), whereas the use of

the term would be left for its (at that time) politically marginalized foes –chiefly, old-fashioned intellectuals, social movements in retreat, and discredited leftist parties. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as the new policy paradigm led to recurrent failures and crisis tendencies (Babb 2013), the term neoliberalism gained currency anew. As discussed above, the growth of social discontent with (and overt resistance to) neoliberalism (its ideas, practices, and practitioners), first in Latin America (Silva 2009), then elsewhere, fomented its conversion into a highly politicized signifier.

To what extent should neoliberals’ misrecognition of themselves as neoliberals as well as the signifier’s adoption by their political adversaries count as valid criterion to form judgement on the existence of a neoliberal movement? Historiographical accounts of the activities of the Mont Pelerin Society’s members and their spinoff think thank network concur that, although reluctant to collectively assume a single label to characterize their shared convictions, they were always guided by a strong *esprit de corps* (Burgin 2012; Jones 2014). They also shared a tacit vision of their mission, and a basic understanding of their politics. Both Hayek and Friedman –the leading figures of two generations (and historical phases) of the neoliberal movement—clearly saw the role of ideas as critical for shaping policy and institutions. They conceived politics as a long-term endeavor aimed at incremental political change, led by a creative, enlightened, vanguard-like minority. And both, with many of their fellows, agreed on the importance of movement-like organizing for sustained, long-term mobilization. Many, many people at some point saw themselves as active participants in this intellectual enterprise. Is the absence of a neoliberal “identity” critical despite abundant evidence they all agreed on basic principles, shared a repertoire of contention, and engaged in collective action?

The puzzle, I contend, can be satisfactorily solved following Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000) advise against the use of “identity” as a category for the analysis of social movements. Instead of

the reified meaning the word “identity” carries with it, for analytical purposes these authors prefer alternative terms such as “identification” (both with oneself and by others) and “self-understanding”.

First, actors’ work of external and self-identification are practices intrinsic to social life. Moreover, the two often “take place in dialectical interplay”, although they “need not converge” (p. 15). As explained above, focusing on the dynamic of the contest and contestants reveals that, over decades of political struggle, both neoliberals and their opponents did a great deal of identification work. Yet the two sides eventually disagreed on a specifiable identifier for what neoliberals were and did. Indeed, this gap widened as the identifier itself became more politicized. Although self-identification was common initially, growing antagonism meant that opponents managed to charge certain practices with a negative valence, holding their practitioners (neoliberals) responsible for their presumably negative outcomes. Thus neoliberals, against their own will, became externally identified as a collective actor bearing a negative moniker with which they seldom identified.

Second, and more crucially, even though only few movement members shared a short-lived self-identification with the word “neoliberal” as identifier, many more of them shared a collective self-understanding of themselves as active participants of an historical project. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) define “self-understanding” as a set of practical dispositions configuring a “‘situated subjectivity’: one’s sense of who one is, of one’s social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act” (p. 17). Indeed, unlike self-identification, self-understanding does not require “explicit discursive articulation” in order to “exist and inform action”, even when it is “formed in and through prevailing discourses” (p.18).

As I discuss in the next section, neoliberals' self-understanding comprised a tacit awareness of themselves as possessors of a common attribute, namely, a shared sense of "categorical commonality" developed in opposition to collectivism as liberal-minded intellectuals committed to the preservation of a free society. Neoliberals also shared a sense "relational connectedness" rooted in their common inscription in networks of market-minded think-tanks, foundations, and research centers. Crucially, as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) make clear, even if a bounded sense of groupness is generally absent, commonality and connectedness jointly make for the sufficient conditions that facilitate collective action (p. 20).

2.3 NEOLIBERALISM AS ELITE SOCIAL MOVEMENT: INTELLECTUALS, IDEOLOGY, AND TRANSNATIONAL HEGEMONY

The diffusion and growing politicization of neoliberalism attest to its status as a highly contested concept both *within* and *beyond* the social sciences. The transnational process of struggle and collaboration in academic, bureaucratic, and political fields generated a zigzag path of diffusion and politicization from the core to the periphery and then back to the core (Mudge 2008:704). Politicization notwithstanding, by the turn of the century neoliberal activism had radically reshaped politics worldwide, creating a new "common sense" over questions of state power, markets, and society (Mudge 2011:354-56).

A crucial question then is how neoliberalism entered and transfigured different settings through the ideological/political work of a coalition of professional entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, political actors, and cultural reformers exercising collective agency. In their "process of Becoming", neoliberals "converged over time on a shared political philosophy and worldview"

(Mirowski 2009:418), and engaged in a long-term reform program that encompassed the “entire fabric of society” (p. 431). They organized transnationally, worked through myriad national and international organizations, and, with their expertise, contributed to institutionalizing contemporary global capitalism. Their efforts “aimed primarily at winning over intellectuals and opinion leaders of future generations, and their primary tool was redefining the place of knowledge in society, which also became the central theme in their theoretical tradition” (p. 431). They constituted a movement of intellectuals of transnational reach that, in Gramscian terms, undertook a fundamental “hegemonic struggle” for the sake of global capitalist elites (Miller 2010). Let us consider these propositions more in depth.

2.3.1 Mobilizing structures: the formation of a transnational network infrastructure

I view the making of neoliberalism through the lens of mainstream social movement theory (Tarrow 2011) to unravel the political/ideological process behind its development. Although neoliberalism never took the form of an organized canon of political and economic philosophy, nor was it envisioned by a single institution, it was a long-term collective enterprise whose chief practiced doctrine consisted of advocating the mechanisms of market competition as a way of organizing social life and understanding human freedom (Amable 2011; Mudge 2008). To extend their influence and spread their “thought collective” (Mirowski 2009), neoliberals built *a transnational network-infrastructure* (McAdam 2010:44-48) through which they mobilized resources and conducted their intellectual activism.

The incubators of such a transnational infrastructure originated, and were materially anchored, mainly in the Anglo-American institutions of welfare/Keynesian/state-managed capitalism (Mudge 2008): private members of handpicked organizations such as the pioneering

Mont Pelerin Society, academic departments of elite universities, charitable foundations such as the William Volker Fund and Lilly Endowment, and think tanks such as the British Institute of Economic Affairs or the American Heritage Foundation.³⁴ However, neoliberal activism expanded globally by both seeding think tanks in the Third World and colonizing neo-Keynesian policy transfer networks of IFIs such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. What at first looked like a weakly coordinated, disarticulated infrastructure, turned by the late 1980s (amidst the Latin American debt crisis and the collapse of the Soviet bloc) into a “tightly networked, transnationally orchestrated formation of mutually recursive, inter-referential policy reform strategies” (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010a:338). A new global-rule regime definitely took shape in the 1990s when supranational institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the North American Free Trade Agreement and other regional treaties parameterized practices of regulatory restructuring (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010a).

Crucial to this development was the formation of an international community of economists, hierarchically organized around the standardized canons of professional practice and licensing sanctioned by the research departments of elite American universities (Fourcade 2006; see also Markoff and Montecinos 1993). The rise of the “Chicago Boys” under Pinochet is by far the best-known example (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002; Harvey 2007; Klein 2007; Montecinos 1998b; Silva 2008), but this was only an early and highly consequential milestone in the longer process of mutation and expansion of economics’ professional jurisdiction. This involved “the *intellectual* reconstruction of neoclassical economics around the free market”, as well as “the ‘privatization’ of economics as a *professional* enterprise and its reconstruction as a

³⁴ See Mirowski (2009) for the exhaustive list.

corporate activity in its own right” (Fourcade 2006:184), a project that underpinned, but that was also underpinned by, the global expansion of market-institutions. Market-oriented governance thus had an elective affinity for the project of economics imperialism (e.g., Becker 1976). The neoclassical paradigm helped spread and consolidate economics as a universal science thanks to the transferability of mathematical formalism and abstract theorizing. The establishment of a broadly universalistic rhetoric, though, came along with “the transformation of economic knowledge into a technology of political and bureaucratic power”. It also entailed “the existence of transnational linkages dominated by the United States” (Fourcade 2006:156) that gave “economic professionals the authority to reconstruct societies according to the principles of the dominant economic ideology” (p.157)—all extra scientific factors that have much more to do with politics and ideology than with the disciplinary dynamics of economics itself.

The global professionalization of economics was therefore a byproduct of neoliberal activism (and entrepreneurship). Rendering neoliberal political economy into a paradigm was the work of a transdisciplinary knowledge community; neoliberalism cannot be reduced to schools of economic theorizing such as neoclassical marginalism, monetarism, or the theory of human capital (Bockman 2012; Plehwe 2009a). Hayek himself postulated core neoliberal principles in highly philosophical terms, predicating the inexorable incompatibility between liberty and equality upon the epistemological superiority of markets as (legally enforced) “spontaneous orders” (Atria 2010; Mirowski 2009). Lawyers and political scientists, as Fisher’s (2009) study of Chile shows, also shaped the making of the paradigm, using new theories of public choice and management to redesign democratic institutions and reform bureaucracies along market principles. The long arm of the neoliberal movement even sought to reform the corporate world via the promotion of a new philosophy of management (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Mirowski 2009). Key components of

this trend were, on the one hand, the ascendancy of Chicago-style financial economics in business education (Fourcade and Khurana 2013) and, on the other, the rationalization of capitalist enterprises as ethically motivated social forces via the rise of Corporate Social Responsibility (Kinderman 2012).

Likewise, Babb's (2013) historization of the Washington Consensus demonstrates that the paradigmatic protocol of conditionality (the provision of loans in exchange for structural adjustments) did not spring from academic genius but slowly emerged from an iterative process driven by a group of top international technocrats. These officials, acting with "relative autonomy" from core capitalist countries, and from the US government especially, mobilized multilateral institutions' coercive power to exert pressure on developing countries. The dominance of the Washington Consensus as a "solution" for chronic underdevelopment had little to do with mainstream economic scholarship, and even faced opposition from Congressional Republicans, who "argue[d] that ... the market, not large bureaucracies, should take care of development problems" (Babb 2013:279). By developing coordination capacities within an increasingly dense network of multilateral institutions, transnational corporations, and international finance, neoliberal activism in the international arena played a fundamental role in the process of formation of what Sklair (1997) calls the "transnational capitalist class".

2.3.2 The political process: crisis as political opportunity

Building and mobilizing a neoliberal transnational network-infrastructure was possible thanks to a *political process* that enabled neoliberals to craft an entirely new policy paradigm. Exploiting the shift in the *political opportunity structure* triggered by economic downturns, neoliberals systematically incorporated lessons from policy failure, thereby testing, revising, and perfecting

their epistemic approach to political economy. Just as in protest cycles the escalation of conflict between movement challengers and powerholders brings new programs into existence and creates opportunities to institutionalize new agendas (Markoff 1997a; Tarrow 2011), so did neoliberals take advantage of the recurrent crisis tendencies of postwar capitalism (Offe and Keane 1984; Silver 2003).

Here, as it were, politics and knowledge walked hand in hand. The intellectual formation and subsequent institutionalization of the neoliberal policy paradigm followed a Kuhnian dynamic (Hall 1993; Kuhn 2012). It resulted from five decades of confrontation in which the “anomalies” of a particular paradigm of political economy –state-regulated, inward-oriented postwar capitalism– provided intellectual entrepreneurs (neoliberal professionals, politicians, and bureaucrats) with the lessons necessary for the making of an alternative paradigm –the market-coordinated, outward-oriented capitalism of the globalization era. Phenomena that appeared anomalous in the Keynesian paradigm appeared paradigmatic in neoliberalism. In particular, inflationary spirals and balance of payment bottlenecks served as “natural experiments”, granting “symbolic resources to political elites in the form of explanations for the failures of Keynesian and developmental policies and a new set of recommendations for economic recovery” (Mudge 2008:708). Ultimately, the paradigm shift was so thorough that the dominant approach to crisis management switched from “failure prevention” to “failure containment”, thereby incorporating financial volatility as endogenous to the routine functioning of globalizing markets (Gindin and Panitch 2012). And, in so doing, the neoliberal paradigm rehabilitated crises of capitalism as an endless process of creative destruction (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010b; Harvey 2007; Schumpeter 2013).

Thus, for neoliberals, crisis meant opportunity. Harvey (2005) cites the Chilean coup of 1973 and the corporate takeover of New York City after its bankruptcy in 1975 as milestones in a long period of neoliberal experimentation, while Fisher (2009) argues that the IMF's program that allowed Chile to overcome debt insolvency in 1982 pioneered the structural adjustment policy template imposed throughout Latin America (and elsewhere) in the years to come. Again, Babb's (2013) genealogy of the Washington Consensus confirms neoliberals used recurrent debt crises around the globe to work out the major advances and fixes in the transnational policy paradigm with which they would come to identify. This crisis tendency allowed neoliberal technocrats to reorient policy design from mere macroeconomic stabilization to deep structural reform packages and test the effectiveness of conditionality instruments. As crises unfolded, the IFIs set in motion efficient mechanisms to increase inter-institutional coordination and enhance the coercive capacities of powerful international creditors. By 2000, in light of cumulative evidence of devastating financial turmoil in countries that had obediently complied with IFIs' programs, the Washington Consensus went through a "second generation" of adjustment and amplification. With the goal of improving market coordination, it incorporated reforms in governance structures and legal frameworks (independent judiciaries, bankruptcy law, corporate mergers). It also sought to protect the business climate by preventing social unrest via means-tested cash transfers programs, thereby making human capital theory a key component of the (now) "socially sensitive" policy paradigm (Lavinas 2013). Finally, the paradigm allowed for mission creep, promoting flat tax systems, capital account liberalization, and education, health, and pension privatization (Babb 2013).

2.3.3 Frame alignment: the making of a new capitalist ideology

Neoliberals not only based their political project on the mobilization of a transnational network infrastructure and the seizure of opportunities opened by capitalist crises; they also cast the collectivistic tendencies of state-led capitalism as a dangerous path to socialism, in what amounted to an ambitious *frame alignment process* (Snow et al. 1986). Since its inception, neoliberalism cast Keynesianism as “an essentially socialist impulse that would, one way or another, pave the way to totalitarianism” (Mudge 2008:711). This claim justified, as Foucault (2008) recounted apropos of the *ordoliberals*, a new state reason according to which government’s chief role is to actively design and promote markets. Crucially, in a time when the practice of centralized industrial planning was spreading not only east of the Iron Curtain but also across the triumphant capitalist democracies, neoliberals offered an alternative governmental rationality; they flipped Keynesianism on its head and advocated for the strict market supervision of the state as a legitimization formula for exercising political sovereignty as well as effective insurance against any potential relapse into totalitarianism.

The “state phobia” that fueled the early neoliberals’ crusades would not remain confined to Europe and North America. In Latin America, neoliberals also observed totalitarian tendencies, as the developmentalist state extended its *dirigiste* functions and moved decisively towards Import Substitution Industrialization. The Latin American vernacular version of state-led capitalism found scientific validation in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, or CEPAL in Spanish): a community of heterodox economists that factored the persistent asymmetric structures of economic exchange between industrialized nations and agrarian periphery countries into the causes of underdevelopment (see e.g., Prebisch 1950). Yet *Cepalinos*’ work promptly evolved into dependency theory, a radical explanation of underdevelopment based

not on strict economic analysis but on global patterns of neo-colonial domination (see, e.g., Cardoso and Faletto 1979). Eventually, the diffusion of this narrative among myriad leftist and decolonization movements in the 1960s fed neoliberals' suspicion of developmentalism's totalitarian leanings (Plehwe 2009b).

The fact that neoliberals framed what others termed as “embedded” liberalism (Ruggie 2008) or a “state-centered matrix” of capitalist development (Cavarozzi 1991) not as a strategy to moderate and institutionalize class conflict, and thus avoid revolution, but as a path to totalitarianism, epitomizes the ideological radicalism that this *framing process* entailed. Neoliberals were ideologically prolific. Their praxis certainly concerned political economy, but also covered a wide range of social, cultural, and political issues. By selectively discrediting, emphasizing, and rearticulating certain political programs, economic ideas, and philosophical paradigms, neoliberal intellectuals rendered some interpretations of reality natural and legitimate, and others counterintuitive and, ergo, instrumentally irrational. The result: a new political common sense.

2.3.3.1 The co-optation of the New Social Movements' emancipatory utopias: the case of second wave feminism

Several examples illustrate neoliberals' ability to scavenge ideas from others' political programs. For Harvey (2005), neoliberals advanced their project of economic restructuring by rearticulating the new social movements' emancipatory utopias of the late 1960s and 1970s into a libertarian ideology of human flourishing based on individual entrepreneurship and material accumulation. Similarly, Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) analysis of management textbooks shows how the formation of a new “spirit of capitalism” among the cadres of large business organizations relied

heavily on the “artistic critique” of mass consumption and cultural disenchantment elaborated by radical critics of bourgeois society. In short, neoliberals opportunistically redeployed the new cultural ethos grounded in liberty, identity recognition, and individual autonomy to rebrand a market-based populist culture on behalf of a glorified civil society, freed from the homogenizing effects of bureaucratized public management (Streeck 2012a).

Nowhere was this ideological appropriation more evident than in the case of the feminist movement. As Fraser (2012) argues, neoliberalism’s resignification of feminist critiques of postwar capitalist society was fourfold. First, neoliberals transformed feminism’s anti-economism into a culturalist variant of identity politics, eclipsing feminists’ critical engagement with political economy. Neoliberals also took advantage of feminism’s critiques of androcentrism to invest flexible capitalism with a new moral spirit, revalorizing productive labor and entrepreneurship in the name of female advancement and gender justice. Thirdly, neoliberalism utilized feminism’s anti-*étatisme* to rally against the paternalistic logic of universal entitlements and push for the privatization of welfare provision. Finally, feminist contra- and pro-Westphalianism ratified the split between civil/political versus social/economic rights, giving birth to a transnational rights-oriented paradigm that privileges recognition over redistribution and favors “the NGO-ification of feminist politics” (Fraser 2012:113).

Neoliberals’ mobilization of feminist rhetoric rendered demands for women’s autonomy politically and discursively compatible with the interests of globalizing elites, facilitating –besides redomesticization (Brush 1987) – widespread commodification of women’s labor (Eisenstein 2005). This was especially evident in neoliberalism’s ability to make use of feminist struggles against the partnership between capital and patriarchy enacted through the family wage (e.g., Hartmann 1979). Neoliberal appropriation of feminists’ calls for women to have equal access to

higher education, professional jobs, and promotions turned waged employment “from despised industrial servitude (‘dependent labor’) into a desired social privilege” (Streeck 2012b:19). More crucially, this resignification entailed rearticulating the ideology of romantic love and happiness of the heteropatriarchal family into a management discourse that generalized “feminine” attributes such as emotional work, self-care, and intimacy as constitutive features of the post-Fordist economy (Weeks 2017). In turn, the premise that women’s liberation meant women’s access to (low) paid jobs or microdebt rapidly gained the status of a normative consensus that legitimized the transition from welfare to workfare (Eisenstein 2005), reinforcing the trend towards residual models of social protection based on means-tested benefits, individual responsibility, and market-based risk management (Lavinias 2013). Neoliberals even perverted feminist strategies to counter women’s economic dependence to reduce violence against women, treating women’s waged work as a silver bullet against both woman battering and poverty (Brush 2011).

2.3.3.2 Equating markets with capitalism: erasing socialist neoclassical economics

Neoliberals also productively positioned capitalist relations as a necessary condition for the efficient functioning of a market economy. Bockman’s (2011; Bockman 2012) account of the erasure of the socialist contribution to the development of neoclassical economics confirms the importance of neoliberals’ militancy and academic advocacy. Contrary to conventional wisdom, neoliberalism is not identical to neoclassical economics. The fact that we consider markets as synonymous with capitalist relations of production is a historical construct, not a logical necessity. Indeed, neoclassical economists’ theorization of the micro-foundations of the market economy (e.g., marginalism, subjective-value theory, comparative advantage, Pareto optimality), which twentieth-century economics then canonized, was overtly inspired by a broader debate over the

possibility of organizing efficient markets within regimes of socialized property. In the decades that followed the Bolshevik revolution, socialist economists working in Eastern European countries, deeming Marxism valid as a critique of capitalism but not as a blueprint for socialism, found the neoclassical theory of markets useful for envisioning “varieties of socialisms” (Bockman 2011:17-49). Although the Soviet model of central planning dominated conventional interpretations of socialism, theorists of the otherwise oxymoronic “market socialism” thought that mechanisms of market coordination could be combined with worker-self-managed enterprises and other forms of collective, decentralized property as an alternative to inefficient central planning.

Yet neoliberal activists (with Hayek at the forefront) consciously sought to veil the socialist origins of market theorizing, distorting and de-historicizing neoclassical debates on socialism so as to equate it with central planning and state ownership (Bockman 2012:19). They also overlooked the fact that, for many socialist economists, the state-vs.-market debate (on the appropriate functional mechanism of resource allocation) was not as important as the discussion of labor exploitation and private property (exemplified by the socialist platform of popular control over the means of production). This intellectual maneuver had a dual goal: first, to convince both influential economists and the general public that socialism was opposed to the market; second, to naturalize a *particular* way of organizing capitalist markets as the only possible, and therefore *universal*, institutional form of market. By reducing the debate over the relative economic merits of socialism and capitalism to a zero-sum choice between markets and central planning, neoliberals obscured “the nature of economics and elite power”, even as “some neoclassical economists advocated markets and rejected state planning in the name of economic democracy and communism” (Bockman 2011:5). Moreover, by casting large privately-owned organizations as naturally harmless to market competition, neoliberals managed to retrofit market theorizing to suit

the interests of globalizing economic elites, even as corporate concentration flagrantly contradicted neoclassical normative assumptions.

2.3.3.3 Procedural democracy and the depoliticization of the state: the concealment of class conflict

Democratic theory was another object of neoliberals' intellectual depredations. For neoliberals, efficient capitalist markets presuppose a highly restricted, procedural notion of democratic politics. Against the popular movements' historical claims on the democratization of economic relations, neoliberals' attack on substantive notions of democracy was informed by a peculiar political philosophy that challenged conventional understandings of freedom. Neoliberals conceived of freedom in purely negative terms, as a situation of limited coercion that enables the egoistic, self-reliant, and morally unrestrained individual to emerge and act as the privileged subject of a socioeconomic order organized around market principles such as legitimate greed and institutionalized cynicism (Streeck 2011). Yet the conditions for limited coercion do not derive from inclusive processes of democratic participation but from the institution of a particular conception of law, understood as general, abstract, transparent rules that, once deciphered by rational beings, turns state coercion into an "instrument assisting the individuals in the pursuit of their own ends and not a means to be used for the ends of others" (Hayek 1960:21). Ultimately, it is the free concurrence of atomized individuals driven by self-interests that liberates the prolific forces of civil society (now conceived as an immense and competitive marketplace) and thus makes human progress possible (Amable 2011). By contrast, neoliberal political theory suspected positive freedom – the use of human reason for the administration of the commons – of leading to a dangerous collective enlightenment, that is, the use of knowledge *for* instead of *in* society, which

Hayek characterized as the road to collective serfdom (Mirowski 2009).

This rejection of the teleological notion of freedom as a condition for human progress allowed neoliberals draw a key distinction between dictatorship and totalitarianism. While the latter was thought of as the real opponent to liberalism, the former was relegated to a state of exception, on occasion necessary for the preservation of individual (negative) freedom. Under this perspective, a self-restrained, technocratically oriented dictatorial government may be less threatening to individual liberty than an extremely politicized parliamentary democracy vulnerable to pervasive distributive conflict and the temptation of social engineering. Indeed, it was this awareness of the paradoxical contradiction between liberalism and democracy that led the Pinochet's legal advisors to redesign the Chilean constitution with the explicit goal of limiting the ability of future democratic governments to roll back mechanisms of market coordination and reinstall the state's redistributive/*dirigiste* capacities (Fisher 2009). Over time, this depoliticized, restrictive notion of democratic politics became the dominant paradigm through which mainstream academic scholarship interpreted the political economy of democracy and development in Latin America (Luna and Filgueira 2009).

The corollary of neoliberals' ideological erosion of any substantive notion of democracy was the emergence of a new conception of bureaucratic autonomy that favored the complete depoliticization of policymaking. The sanctification of scientific truth and technical rationality at the service of market efficiency was necessary for neoliberals to conceal the class-based tensions inherent to every capitalist formation, eroding the very meaning of politics as expressions of social antagonisms. It is no coincidence that the neoliberal social movement manifested earlier and more aggressively where the failures of state-dirigisme were most evident and its effects pervasive in terms of generalized distributive conflict (translated into high inflation rates), namely Chile and

Great Britain (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002). The state-centered modes of economic regulation that had resulted from the Great Depression in the West and the breakdown of oligarchic rule in Latin America had not only signaled the decline of classic liberalism; they had been erected upon the explicit recognition of the existence of class conflict (see e.g., Collier and Collier 2002). Because class struggle represented a serious threat to the long-term stability of the business cycle, it had to be channeled through institutional arrangements enforced by active state intervention (e.g., Piven and Cloward 1966). Certainly, technocratic expertise was crucial in state-led socioeconomic management, but its major *political* task was precisely to incorporate class compromise as a central dimension of policymaking.

By contrast, the rise of neoliberal technocrats redirected the use of expert knowledge from welfare state building, industrial planning, actuarial forecasting, and collective bargaining to the creation and diffusion of regulatory templates for the sake of market principles, thereby embodying Davies' (2016:6) definition of neoliberalism as "the pursuit of the disenchantment of politics by economics." Now the assumption was that reliance on neutral, universal science helps immunize economic authorities from populist temptations and thus facilitates their political autonomy. Grounded in autonomous central banks, supranational institutions, privatized policy networks, and increasingly internationalized professions, a new form of technocratic governance –dominated by (but not exclusively composed of) economists– grew progressively more insulated from the tangled mess of democratic politics. Positive feedbacks reinforced this path: the professional careers of "politically emancipated" technocrats germinated out of market-oriented governance, as they actively worked on forging market-oriented institutions (Mudge 2015).

2.3.4 Social movement outcomes: Left-wing politics under neoliberal common sense

No doubt the neoliberals' transnational mobilization significantly contributed to the making of contemporary capitalism. Yet probably the most relevant outcome directly attributable to the neoliberal movement and the far-reaching ideological contention it entailed was the formation of a new political "common sense". Neoliberals radically reshaped the *political field*, setting new boundaries for legible discourses and legitimate practices. In short, this comprised "an acceptance of the constraints of economic globalization, a rejection of "old" binaries (right versus left; state versus market; capital versus labor), a decidedly positive orientation towards business and finance and a new articulation of collective interests in individualistic terms" (Mudge 2008:721).

In the long run, the neoliberalization of politics marked a world historical convergence around a very precise and limited set of premises concerning how, for whom, and to what end the state—or whatever other entity embodies legitimate political authority—should govern. The scope of this overarching political transformation must not be underestimated. Diverse forms of renewed leftism mushroomed in Europe and the Americas in utterly predictable response to neoliberalism, adopting and eventually contributing to the spread of this new political common sense.

2.3.4.1 The new common sense and the European Third Way

The sustained mobilization of neoliberals augmented their overall political ascendancy and ultimately translated into expansive "definitional power", that is, "the ability to define, consecrate, and destabilize basic political meanings—due to their domination of important sectors of the political field" (Mudge 2011:345). Thanks to this dominance, neoliberals hegemonically framed "questions of political meaning, governmental practices, and conceivable policy alternatives—as

well as political vocabularies themselves” (p. 344). As a result, a new ideological center slowly emerged starting in the 1970s, reorganizing contests over political authority around a set of economic principles in line with the neoliberal creed. Briefly, the reconstituted political common sense shifted the binding *responsibilities* attributed to the state, which now was expected to promote individual human capital investment, control social spending, and pursue law enforcement and social order, while undermining social protection and decommodification (Esping-Andersen 1990). The new common sense also stipulates changes in the *means* by which the state may fulfill such responsibilities, prioritizing decentralization, administrative efficiency, privatization, labor productivity, and orthodox fiscal policy over economic planning, protectionism, universal welfare provision, and market regulation. Finally, the neoliberal common sense displaces the *constituencies* whom the state should serve, forsaking trade unions and blue-collar labor for business, finance, and professionals, in what amounts to a general recasting of citizens as consumers and entrepreneurs (Mudge 2011).³⁵

The new common sense that stemmed from the neoliberalization of politics affected the entire ideological spectrum, altering the traditional parameters of “leftness” and “rightness”. Mudge’s longitudinal study of the long-term changes in party programs in Western Europe and North America empirically demonstrates that neoliberalism, albeit anathema to socialism and social democracy, filtered into the discursive frames of left-wing parties. It was precisely in countries with stronger welfare states and social-democratic traditions that the programmatic realignment was more pronounced, in contrast to liberal-market economies (Hall and Soskice

³⁵ This is a compressed and incomplete summary of the dimensions comprising Mudge’s index of party program neoliberalization. For more details, see Mudge (2011).

2001) with liberal welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990), where the shift towards a neoliberalized political common sense was smoother.

One can see the variegated third ways that proliferated in Europe and North America after the decline of Keynesianism as cases of “neoliberalism without neoliberals” (Mudge 2011:365). The third ways emerged as a reaction to the rebirth of the liberal creed, but they did not constitute a rejection but a “reconciliation with neoliberalism as political common sense” (p. 340). Whether intended or not, the third ways came to instantiate the neoliberal worldview about politics. That some basic maxims of the neoliberal creed found expression among actors who would hardly conceive of themselves as neoliberals speaks to it as key driver of what Gramsci (1971) called *transformismo* – the organic incorporation of intellectuals from rival political camps into the ruling project, a process that derails the formation of a counterhegemonic bloc. Ultimately, the revisionist leftists’ *transformismo* demonstrated neoliberalism’s relative autonomy from right-wing partisanship and confirmed its diffuse status as intellectual edifice, the subtle impacts of which are to be found in the substrate of politics: the (primordial) loam where basic political meanings such as “left” or “right” germinate and develop.

2.3.4.2 ECLAC neo-structuralism and the transformismo of the Latin American Left

The production and mobilization of neoliberal common sense also reconfigured the political field in Latin America. And the diverse leftist and national-popular parties that took office in most of the region at the turn of the century proved vulnerable to reconfiguration. Paradoxically, although the New Latin American Left significantly contributed to the politicization of the Washington Consensus and played a crucial role in bringing about its demise, some maxims originating in the neoliberal creed infiltrated its programmatic orientation. Indeed, the continental diffusion of the

paradigm of political economy known as “neo-structuralism” –also referred to as “neo-developmentalism”– in the last two decades suggests that the Latin American “pink tide” that obliterated the neoliberal orthodoxy was just another case of “neoliberalism without neoliberals”, as were the North American and European third ways.³⁶

Neo-structuralism grew out of the ECLAC office in Chile in direct response to the hegemony of the Chicago Boys under Pinochet. Initially marginalized from governmental institutions, the neo-*cepalinos*’ political leverage burgeoned, especially in the countries of the Southern Cone after re-democratization (the *Concertación* that succeeded Pinochet in Chile, the *Alianza* that ousted Menem’s neoliberal Peronism in Argentina, President Cardoso’s *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*, and Sanguinetti’s *Foro Battlista* in Uruguay). Yet their intellectual influence became dominant among private consulting institutes, think tanks, and academic centers that assisted the left-wing parties that took office in the 2000s. By then, neo-structuralists occupied relevant positions in governmental agencies in charge of economic and social policymaking, supplying the technical knowledge necessary for the elaboration of a well-grounded post-Washington consensus discourse.

Insofar as it proclaimed the return of active state intervention in the elaboration of a successful development strategy (as the classic structuralist school had done in the 1950s), the neo-structuralist paradigm stood as a realistic and attractive competitor to neoliberalism. However, the ascent of neo-*cepalinos* technocrats signaled not a significant break with the market-oriented, export-led *regime of accumulation* erected in the heyday of the structural adjustment policies, but rather its ultimate consolidation (Leiva 2008). Confirming the modernization strategy based on trade liberalization and economic openness to foreign direct investment, neo-structuralists’

³⁶ The rest of this section is based on Leiva (2008)

innovations concerning the role of the state remained confined to instituting a brand-new *mode of regulation*.³⁷ Now the state fully assumed the task of actively promoting political consensus, investing in technological development and human capital, implementing export-oriented sectorial policies, and underpinning an overarching program of social reform to bridge the gap between *cultural* and *economic* modernization.

This concern about competitiveness, social cohesion, and political legitimacy resonates with the third way's acquiescence to neoliberal *doxa*. Yet neo-structuralism's address of the post-neoliberal "social question" also speaks to the formation of a new (Latin American) "state reason", a rationalizing gaze (Scott 1998) on the social that sought to redress the disintegrating effects triggered by the widespread diffusion of market institutions and patterns of social incorporation via consumption. It was precisely in building state capacities for socio-emotional reparation where neo-structuralism exhibited its greatest operative efficacy (Leiva 2008:164-88). Therefore, as an intellectual project, neo-structuralism took on a deeply ideological form, providing a new narrative of post-neoliberal modernization. Like the third ways that emerged in core countries in response to neoliberalism, neo-structuralism can be understood as the vernacular Latin American version of the Left's ideological *transformismo* in the era of globalization. And like the third ways, neo-structuralism operated an accommodative reaction to (yet not necessarily a rejection of) the neoliberal mobilization of political common sense.

³⁷ Leiva relies on the categories of the French School of Regulation to see both neoliberalism and neo-structuralism as distinct 'modes of regulation' supporting the same 'regime of accumulation' (export-led development).

2.4 CONCLUSIONS

This paper built on the growing consensus on neoliberalism's stretching and ubiquity as a social science concept. More and more critics dismiss the possibility of envisioning a definition that corrects the concept's imbalance and restores its academic rigor. Such a project, they argue, would simply feed into the serial typologization that pervades neoliberalology. The main reason why neoliberalism should be discarded as useful analytical category lies in the term's utilization by non-economists as an rhetorical device to apprehend and, at the same time, disparage the otherwise intractable work of mainstream economics (Venugopal 2015). Extreme politicization renders the concept irreversibly vacuous.

Reasonable as these critiques may be, I took the politicization they denounce as an opportunity to treat neoliberalism not (only) as a concept, but also as a signifier that, insofar as it denotes a powerful political adversary (e.g., neoliberal politics and its consequences), demarcates real-world subject positions. Misrecognizing the actuality of the antagonistic politics underlying the debate on neoliberalism tacitly constructs it as pure academic ideation, the only agents of which are the critiquing subjects opposing their critiqued object. This amounts to a paradoxical rhetorical loop that both obliterates neoliberal intellectuals (and their political/ideological work) as agents of neoliberalism and then construes their foes as the only neoliberals in a world without neoliberalism. Intended or not, the pursuit of conceptual clarity risks obscuring both neoliberalism's real historical subjects and, more importantly, the organized character of their praxis.

To deal with this paradox, I laid out a perspective on neoliberal intellectuals as a movement of transnational reach, the contentious actions of which have played a paramount role in organizing the actual hegemony of global capitalist elites. I did this not because recovering neoliberals as

agents of social change will eventually restore the concept's academic rigor, but because their intellectual praxis constitutes, in its own right, a relevant sociological phenomenon on which my perspective sheds light.

Four important conclusions follow. First of all, if one is to take seriously the ongoing second-order analyses of neoliberalism as concept as plausible evidence of its terminal state, this cannot come at the cost of underestimating the efforts across and beyond the social sciences at rendering neoliberalism and its historical agents a visible antagonistic force. It may be time to abandon neoliberalism as concept altogether, or at least to invoke it as something of only historical interest. Nonetheless, just because its validity for social scientific purposes faded away does not mean neoliberalism *was* merely a failed social science category that simply died out plagued by insurmountable academic controversy over unacceptable conceptual stretching and polysemy. If neoliberalism signaled an historical turn in macro-political economy (the only use of the term critics such as Vanugopal dare to accept), it is because there have been concrete historical agents who made that turn happen. If neoliberalism as concept works primarily as a critique of the dominant economic canon (Vanugopal's strongest observation), it is because mainstream economics as a science, but especially as an organized profession of global and highly consequential reach, has played a paramount role in bringing about the alleged neoliberal macro political economic transformations. And even if the concept's exclusive invocation by its intellectual foes lacks scientific rigor and abounds in moralistic rhetoric (a fact contemporary neoliberalology has only reasserted), it is because academic disciplines constitute key, albeit not exclusive, battlefields for the expression and articulation of real-world social antagonisms. Hence coming to terms with neoliberalism's double status an essentially contested social science concept *and* an actor-centered political signifier requires focusing less on scholarly debates and more on

contests and contestants (Markoff 2017), paying particular attention to social movement dynamics, including those that drive terminological politicization.

Second, the analysis of neoliberal intellectuals as collective historical subjects conducted here counters the argument that renders neoliberalism inherent to capitalist evolution, constituting nothing but a phase of capitalist development – “a broad indicator of the historical turn in macro-political economy”, in Venugopal’s words (2015:182). This epochal approach is, in light of the social movement perspective I have outlined, not only empirically flawed; to the extent that it overlooks the political process involved in the historical trajectory of the neoliberal movement, a naturalist, teleological approach conveniently eclipses neoliberals’ practical work, contributing to its hegemonic efficacy. Although the neoliberal movement originally manifested as a transdisciplinary intellectual project opposed to collectivistic, state-led approaches to political economy, by the mid-1990s its principles and practices institutionalized into a powerful transnational regulatory framework through which neoliberals exerted normative (and coercive) influence at different local, national, and regional sites and institutional landscapes (Peck, Theodore and Brenner 2010). Neoliberal politics, as reviewed above, came to constitute a new common sense. Thus neoliberalism became, in Jessop’s (2010) words, “ecologically dominant”, growing to fit the contemporary phase of capitalism (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009; Dale 2012). Yet to say that neoliberalism *is* dominant means that it *became* dominant through a process that, as argued here, involved a great deal of political struggle, and therefore comprised the action of specific actors. If capitalism underwent a neoliberal phase, it did so because of the work of a neoliberal movement, that is, a set of agents operating in multiple sites and times that managed to make of their “thought collective” (Mirowski 2009) a historic success.

Third, the importance of collective action notwithstanding, one should be cautious when asserting that the neoliberal movement was, simply, a class project (see e.g., Duménil and Lévy 2011; Harvey 2007). At most, neoliberalism may be considered a class project *by its results*, but this does not mean it was, necessarily, a class-based project. The fact that neoliberals' emphasis on strong property rights and individualistic values fit well with the dominant capitalist ethos speaks only to how neoliberals' ideological work contributed to reconstituting capitalist class power, unleashing capitalism "true essence" and letting it become "more like itself" (Streeck 2011:164). Yet one should not confuse the class in dominance with the political/ideological work that makes class hegemony possible. The neoliberal movement supplied a set of relatively coherent doctrinarian premises, moral motives, scientific discourses, and institutional practices to the ongoing project of capitalist globalization. In turn, globalizing capitalist elites provided funding and infrastructure to the national and transnational intelligentsias that made market discipline top priority (Gindin and Panitch 2012; Miller 2010). Thus the change in the global balance of class power initiated in the 1970s coevolved with the spread of the neoliberal creed, its translation into parameterized practices of regulatory restructuring, and its ideological permeation of the political field. These processes required coordinating action through a network infrastructure, seizing opportunities, and framing as inevitable certain ways of understanding the politics of markets, states, and societies. But only from the standpoint of an oversimplified conspiracy theory can one assert that neoliberals purposely envisioned and worked for securing the uncontested supremacy of finance and transnational corporations.

The fourth and final conclusion is programmatic. It speaks to scholars' theorizing of what social movements are in light of neoliberal intellectuals' reluctance to collectively assert a common "identity". Ill-suited to canonical ways of describing social movements, the neoliberal movement,

as a case, reasserts Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) invitation to go "beyond identity" to rethink the sociology of social movements through less reifying categories such as "identification" or "self-understanding". Construed as an actor-centered "category of practice" entrenched in everyday political struggles, neoliberalism has historically worked more for social movements' (self- and external) "identification" than as an "identity" category. Moreover, evidence of neoliberals' "self-understanding" of their own commonality and relational connectedness, instantiated by their praxis of transnational organizing and advocacy, suggests that movementness does not depend on movements' explicit discursive articulation of a self-attributed identifier. The lesson is clear: A sociology capable of realistic knowledge claims upon the existence of social movements (e.g., neoliberalism) requires scholars' acts of analytical recognition of movementness to avoid being axiomatically linked to activists' acts of self-adscription to often elusive identity categories.

3.0 POLITICAL ARTICULATION, LEFT PARTIES, AND DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMATION: EXPLAINING THE CHILE/URUGUAY ANOMALY

Political sociologists have rediscovered political parties as central objects of inquiry (de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2009; de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2015; Desai 2002; Mudge and Chen 2014). In particular, scholars contend that the presence or absence of strongly organized, tightly coupled, externally mobilized political parties³⁸ critically determines how both capitalist democracies and civil societies develop (Desai 2012; Eidlin 2016; Riley and Desai 2007; Tuğal 2015). Analysts have yet to specify exactly what, when, where, why, and how particular party formations contribute to specific historical configurations of societies and democratic regimes. I engage the apparently anomalous comparison of Chile and Uruguay in order to incorporate political parties more systematically into political sociological accounts of post-neoliberal democracies in Latin America and beyond.

Those who seek to explain the strength and stability of democracy as a political regime look at the formation and character of mass parties as crucial determinants of democratization. Some argue that strong and stable democracies sometimes come from elites' buying into democracy because conservative parties develop into strong, autonomous, mass-based

³⁸ According to Ziblatt (2017), this type of party organization combines “professionalism at the top, local mobilizing structures at the bottom, and control by the center” (p. 43), insofar as it develops a) a leadership structure that comprises not only parliamentary leaders but also salaried “professionals” of party building and electoral mobilization, b) a dense and nationally decentralized network of permanent local sections that connect with and mobilize the party base during but also between elections, and c) a set of institutionalized rules and procedures that secure the leadership’s ability to discipline interest groups and local activists. Additionally, tightly coupled, highly-institutionalized mass parties are generally forbidden practices of resource extraction, patronage, and election manipulation; they rely instead on mobilizing societal resources and networks to maximize their performance (see also Shefter 1977). Such characteristics endow mass parties with the organizational skills to “manage the introduction of new lines of conflict into battles over political power” (Ziblatt 2017:43).

organizations that prove competitive enough to cope with the expansion of mass suffrage. Under such conditions, elites gain confidence that their interests will be protected against the challenge of mass parties representing popular interests. This boosts elite support for democracy, which survives and thrives by following a settled, incremental path (Ziblatt 2017). Others, instead, contend that strong and stable democracies come from powerful labor or social democratic parties that institutionalize corporatist or welfarist regimes that legitimate capitalist democracy (Esping-Andersen 2017). Either way, elite buy-in or legitimation, parties of either the right or left are decisive factors in the development of democracy.

Other analysts (see e.g., Riley and Fernández 2014) view mass parties as crucial not for democracy in general but for a subtype of relations between civil society and the state. In this approach, the relative autonomy and organizational strength of the state and civil society are orthogonal. Civil societies that grow organically from below – without mass party mobilization – enjoy higher degrees of autonomy vis-à-vis political institutions but are organizationally weak. In contrast, where parties organize and integrate interests of civil society actors into the state, external mobilization results in stronger organization but relatively less autonomy. The presence or absence of mass parties strategically oriented to the organization and mobilization of the citizenry is thus a key factor in the constitution of these two ideal-types of civil society, both considered, at any rate, equally democratic.

The similarities between these two strands of scholarship are striking. Theoretically, both claim that the ways mass parties develop and relate to society are critical for democracy. Methodologically, both use historical comparisons to ground ideal-typical accounts of the party-society nexus. At a deeper level, however, the argument over the strength and stability of democracy and the argument about the zero-sum character of autonomy and organizational

strength of the state-civil society relationship suggest contradictory hypotheses. If the focus is on political regimes, we would expect strong mass parties to be a *necessary* condition for democracy to consolidate and thrive. If the attention is on democratic civil societies, the expectation is that mass parties are just a *sufficient* condition of one possible outcome: a specific subtype of democracy. Are mass parties – of either the right or the left or both – a condition for all democracies, or a condition for some but not all democracies?

In this paper, I argue the answer to this question depends on the *dimension* of democracy analysts consider. I build on Mair's (2013:29) distinction between "constitutional" and "popular" democracy to examine the relations between mass parties and democratic *legitimacy*. Mair warns that democracy is more than constitutional checks and balances and the protection of civil liberties. Mass democracy requires mass involvement in political affairs. And this "popular component" of democracy hinges on the flourishing of mass parties: organizations that integrate and mobilize the citizenry, articulating and aggregating demands into programs before translating them into public policy. Mass parties also recruit political leaders from civil society, deliberate in parliament, and staff state institutions, enabling government *by* (and not only *for*) the people. For Mair, when parties relinquish their ties to civil society and retreat into state bureaucracies, when they become specialized, state-regulated agencies for teams of professional politicians of an undifferentiated ruling class to seek office and influence governance, we are left "with something that might still be called democracy, but which has been redefined so as to downgrade or even exclude the popular component" (p. 32).

I view the constitutional and popular dimensions of democracy as orthogonal. My focus is on the second dimension, one that concerns mass parties as vehicles for the exercise of popular sovereignty and, hence, the legitimation of democracy as a political regime. I suggest that

democracies, and especially contemporary *capitalist* democracies, may thrive and survive with or without mass party organizations when only the constitutional component matters. It is especially pertaining to thriving democratic legitimacy –the popular component– where mass parties play a critical role, externally mobilizing and strengthening civil society.

I subject this proposition to empirical scrutiny with a two-case comparison –Chile and Uruguay– in the context of the so-called Latin American “pink tide”: a critical period in which growing opposition to the market-oriented Washington Consensus in the context of democratization led to severe legitimation crises, giving way to left-oriented, post-neoliberal regimes (Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Luna and Filgueira 2009; Silva 2009).³⁹ The consensus among comparative Latin Americanists is that this turn to the Left should be seen as a set of heterogeneous post-neoliberal projects. To organize and start to explain observed diversity in Left turns in Latin America, scholars have elaborated several regime typologies. Whatever the classification criteria, all the typologies classify Chile and Uruguay as the same subtype of political regime. These two upper-middle-income economies lead international rankings of democracy in the world periphery (see e.g., Polity and Freedom House); they also have had the longest and deepest development of liberal-democratic institutions during the convoluted Latin American 20th century (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2014). Both countries were early adopters of neoliberal policies in the 1970s (Kurtz and Brooks 2008; Yaffé 2009). And both stand out as exemplary cases wherein highly institutionalized, electorally competitive, programmatically moderate Left parties

³⁹ I broadly define post-neoliberalism as the project of governance that seeks “to retain elements of the previous export-led growth model whilst introducing new mechanisms for social inclusion and welfare” (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012:1) (see also Brand and Sekler 2009; Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010a; Kaltwasser 2011; MacDonald and Ruckert 2009; Panizza 2009; 2010; Yates and Bakker 2013). Post-neoliberal transitions originate in Polanyian double-movements to protect society from excessive marketization (Dale 2012; Luna and Filgueira 2009; Polanyi 1944). That is, post-neoliberal projects seek to re-adjust the state-market-society nexus to recognize and politically incorporate populist demands and secure the provision of basic social rights (Reygadas and Filgueira 2010; Rossi 2014; Silva and Rossi 2018), while preserving fiscal stability and export-led economic growth.

–the “right Left”, according to Castañeda (2006)– led the opposition to neoliberal orthodoxy, forestalling major social upheaval (Arce 2010), and reinforcing their settled democratic pathways (Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Roberts 2015).

A closer look at the political economy of neoliberal reform and counter-reform in these two countries reveals that Chile’s and Uruguay’s capitalist democracies began to diverge after their respective negotiated transitions from authoritarian rule in the late 1980s. During the governments of the Left-of-center *La Concertación* (1990-2010, 2014-2018), democratic Chile maintained much of the market-oriented policy regime instituted by the Pinochet’s dictatorship, expanded labor protections only selectively, and fostered quasi-market schemes of social service provision. In contrast, post-dictatorship Uruguay preserved some of the core institutions of its traditionally more universalist welfare state during more than a decade of rightwing government, and then significantly expanded those institutions when the Left gained access to power (2005-2020) (Castiglioni 2003; Pribble and Huber 2011). This divergence, as some authors have recently argued, is at the root of the generalized malaise with democracy in Chile, as opposed to Uruguay, an “antonym of malaise” (Joignant, Morales and Fuentes 2016).

Sharp differences in the inclusiveness and legitimacy of two apparently similar capitalist democracies constitute an anomaly the vast literature on varieties of Latin American Left turns still struggles to accommodate. To make sense of this anomaly, I marshal evidence attributing divergence in levels of welfare state building and democratic legitimation to Left parties’ differential ability to operate as mass organizations linking civil society and the state. That is, the difference between Chile and Uruguay developed as a consequence of the presence or absence of tightly-coupled party organizations able to mobilize the citizenry, aggregate demands, and translate cleavages into electoral struggles over political power and the definition of public policy.

I contribute to the literature on varieties of Left turns in Latin America. But I go further, adding to sociological approaches that highlight the centrality of mass parties as autonomous agents jointly constituting and integrating politics and society, and therefore shaping both civil societies and political regimes – the so-called “political articulation school” (de Leon 2014; de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2009; de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2015; Eidlin 2016). The analysis that follows shows, in short, that differences in how Uruguayan and Chilean Left parties developed as mass organizations and mobilized against neoliberalism are at the root of divergence in the popular component of their democratic regimes. Following Eidlin (2018), I make the case that a more strongly organized and mass-oriented Left in Uruguay enabled a deeper recognition of class politics in policies and institutional practices. Fostering the power and national integration of organized labor also provided a stronger organizational infrastructure for the promotion of social citizenship. In this respect, I view the strategic orientation and activities of Left parties as a *causal mechanism*, the activation (or inhibition) of which sets in motion analytically distinct patterns of politicization of neoliberalism, popular interest aggregation, and legitimation of post-neoliberal regimes.

Furthermore, I embed this mechanistic account within a broader historical-institutional approach, treating mass party formation and articulation of social cleavages as path-dependent on institutional structures that make it, as a causal mechanism, more or less *plausible*. The fact that both Uruguay and Chile experienced dictatorship and then transitioned to democracy at almost the same time constitutes a suitable natural experiment to examine these scope conditions. The analysis of authoritarian regimes’ institutional legacies reveals that the conditions for Left parties to effectively exercise their integrative activities and coordinate the formation of a post-neoliberal “historic bloc” diverged according to the type and timing of the transition pacts that preceded re-

democratization. In Chile, the institutions inherited from dictatorship severely restricted Left parties' opportunities to extend programmatic linkages with mass constituencies and mobilize electorally. In contrast, institutional conditions in Uruguay proved more favorable for the Left to adopt a mobilization and articulation strategy. Hence post-dictatorship civil societies became differently organized and linked to democratic regimes.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I critically engage with the vast literature on varieties of left-turns in Latin America to expose the Uruguay/Chile divergence as an anomaly for which this literature cannot account. Then, I review the political articulation perspective and suggest it could offer a plausible solution to this anomaly. I also advocate for addressing this anomaly through an historical-institutionalist approach, which, I contend, complements and enriches the articulation-based explanation. Next, I use secondary data and literature to provide a summary description of what Chilean and Uruguayan Left parties have done (and not done) to organize political struggles and effectively represent popular interests, giving credit to the political articulation hypothesis. Using process tracing analysis, my goal is to unpack the two sequenced building-blocks of my cross-case comparison: the divergent paths to post-neoliberalism, and the democratic transition that preceded them. I close with a final discussion to reassess the main theoretical issues posed so far.

3.1 VARIETIES OF POST-NEOLIBERALISM IN LATIN AMERICA: EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

As the 21st Century began, market-oriented, export-led development lost credibility throughout Latin America. Economic collapse, social unrest, and exclusion of popular sectors caused by far-reaching neoliberal reforms precipitated legitimation crises in newly democratic regimes (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005; Markoff 1997b). In a few countries, powerful coalitions of anti-neoliberal social movements severely undermined the stability of the political system (Silva 2009). In many, leftwing/neo-populist parties won access to power with the mandate of shifting the course of top-down conservative modernization to reincorporate popular sectors in the political arena (Filgueira 2013; Luna and Filgueira 2009; Roberts 2002; Roberts 2007; Roberts 2008). The so-called “pink tide” signaled the beginning of the post-Washington consensus era, or post-neoliberalism.

Beyond commonalities in this large-scale macro-historical process, comparative Latin Americanists agree that this wave of Left turns was heterogeneous in intensity and character. Inevitable, this diversity of Left governments was “rooted in distinct historical experiences and pathways to political power” (Levitsky and Roberts 2011:4). Thus, some well-established regime typologies (see Appendix A for illustrations) distinguish neo-populist (Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, to some extent Argentina) from more moderate experiments led by institutionalized, social-democratic Left parties (Brazil, Uruguay, and especially Chile), based on the degree to which governments actively pursued a regression to economic protectionism, re-nationalizations, and state-led industrialization (Castañeda 2006). Others look at variation based on whether Left governments relied on established party organizations or newly created political movements, and on whether or not authority was concentrated in charismatic leaders. This framework distinguishes

among an institutionalized partisan Left (the Uruguayan Broad Front, the Brazilian Workers Party, the Chilean Socialist Party), a populist machine (Peronism under Kirchner in Argentina, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas), a movement-Left (the Movement Towards Socialism in Bolivia), or the personalized populist Left (Chávez in Venezuela, Correa in Ecuador) (Levitsky and Roberts 2011).

Observed diversity in left turns has also led scholars to focus on how specifically excluded popular sectors gained institutional recognition and became re-incorporated into the political arena (Rossi 2014; Silva and Rossi 2018). The common framework of this scholarship builds on Polanyi's (1944) classic conceptualization of "double movements." Roughly, this account posits that the growing commodification of land, labor, and money driven by the expansion of capitalist markets erodes the bases for social reproduction, provoking a societal reaction against unfettered capitalism. Based on this general narrative, the "political reincorporation" scholarship contends that the pathways for the political expression and enactment of the double movement varied across country-specific institutional landscapes and economic histories. Depending on which popular actors made successful incorporation claims, which political insiders accomplished the incorporation, and what strategies they deployed (e.g., clientelism, corporatism, state managerialism, or informal-contestatory schemes of social protection), diverse forms of "segmented popular interest intermediation regimes" emerged (Silva 2018:312).

A key differentiating factor stressed by this emerging literature is whether political parties, as aggregate expressions of societal interest, serve as main vehicles for reincorporation. As one of the many possible manifestations of double movement, party-led incorporation is thought to have important implications for the overall legitimacy and stability of the political system. Roberts' (2015) multi-case study of post-neoliberal regime change in Latin America systematically probes this argument. Roberts seeks to explain why and how some Latin American democracies

successfully coped with the social tensions caused by neoliberal restructuring (Chile, Brazil, Uruguay), while others underwent severe crises that led to the collapse of their party systems (Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina). His core thesis is that variation in key regime outcomes such as party-system stability (collapse or institutionalization) and the reactive sequences (more or less virulent populist backlash) that ensued from the neoliberal critical juncture depended on two crucial factors. Factor one is whether or not market reforms were led by conservative coalitions. Factor two is whether or not party-systems had well-established Left parties opposing structural adjustment policies. Where both things happened (reforms implemented by the Right and opposed by a competitive Left/national-popular bloc), party-systems successfully channeled societal dissent into the political arena. Programmatically moderate anti-neoliberal coalitions achieved electoral victories, and enacted new social policies aimed at reincorporating popular sectors in the post-adjustment aftermath (see Appendix A).

Roberts' proposition resonates with sociological accounts that highlight the centrality of political parties in the historical configuration of state-society relations: Programmatic realignment along the state/market divide occurred when institutionalized Left parties successfully "politicized" market-driven social inequalities, generating an electorally competitive scenario of "contested liberalism" (see Roberts 2015: 231-240). In the long run, the argument continues, the politicization of neoliberalism by strong and competitive political parties fostered a smooth transition to post-neoliberalism, forestalling legitimization crises.

3.2 THE CHILE-URUGUAY ANOMALY: DIVERGENCE, NOT CONVERGENCE

The problem with Roberts' and other multi-case typologies of post-neoliberal regimes is that they generally lump Chile and Uruguay together. In doing so, they fail to account for important differences within the subtype of party-led reincorporation and post-neoliberal transition to which these two countries are said to belong. Tacitly assumed is that because in both countries electorally competitive, highly institutionalized Left parties were available, they proved equally successful at articulating popular sectors' reincorporation struggles, effectively serving as institutional mediators and, hence, preventing major legitimization crises.

Existing evidence does not support this claim. If one compares the institutional logics of articulation, organization, and inclusion of working class interests –allegedly, the historical role of social democracy– the contrast between Chile and Uruguay is remarkable. Although both countries completed their transitions to export-led regimes of economic development in the last four decades exhibiting similar levels of long-term economic performance, structural reforms in Uruguay have been relatively less aggressive. Uruguayan markets are still relatively more protected from the global economy. More crucially, Chile remarkably outperforms Uruguay in the de-regulation and flexibility of their labor markets (see Appendix B).

I focus on the organization and institutionalization of labor-capital relations because the (partial) de-commodification of labor is a constitutive feature of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990). How specifically the state protects workers' collective rights to organize into unions and grants these unions access to collective bargaining institutions conditions the organizational and structural power of the working class and, more generally, the dynamics of industrial conflict. As Figure 3-1 shows, at the peak of state-led development –the so-called Import Substitution Industrialization period– Chilean workers were able to unionize at a much higher rate

than their Uruguayan counterparts. The military regimes that began in 1973 virtually destroyed the organizational power of labor in both countries. In the post-authoritarian 1990s and early 2000s, union density remained low. However, a spike in unionization began to occur in Uruguay in the mid-2000s. The series ends in 2013, but unofficial documents prepared for the National Convention of Workers assert that more than 35% of workers are currently unionized. Moreover, ILO data show that 95% of Uruguayan workers are covered by collective bargain agreements. The situation of Chilean labor is quite different. Take, for instance, union density in construction, a sector that generally employs large numbers of workers with relatively low skill levels. In Chile, less than 7% of construction workers belong to a union; in Uruguay, 32% of construction workers are unionized. More generally, only 15% of Chilean workers belong to a union, and the last available data from ILO shows that collective bargaining agreements covered only 18% of the total working population.

This divergence in patterns of labor incorporation speaks to very different labor policy regimes. While the incorporation of Chilean labor fits the individualistic, pluralist model of “interest group” mediation, Uruguayan institutions have more broadly recognized the collective rights of labor as a “class representative” (Eidlin 2018:14-18). This different articulation of what Eidlin terms “the class idea” finds concrete expression in, for instance, union certification. Union formation at the firm level in Uruguay only requires the informal recognition of an industry-level trade union federation, which lowers the cost of unionization and discourages fragmentation. In contrast, Chile follows a firm-level certification model that boosts the incentives for employers to resist unionization. In turn, collective bargaining laws restrict contract negotiations to the firm level without state mediation, while in Uruguay a centralized, hierarchical, tripartite structure dictates contract terms at the industry level, arbitrated by the state in case of disagreement.

Likewise, right-to-work provisions in the Chilean labor code hold down union membership and undermine union security. Strikes are also tightly regulated in Chile, as well as severely restricted by employers' legally recognized right to hire replacement workers. Uruguayan lawmakers, in contrast, have been traditionally reluctant to regulate the right to strike, which labor law generally understands as an extension of freedom of speech and assembly.

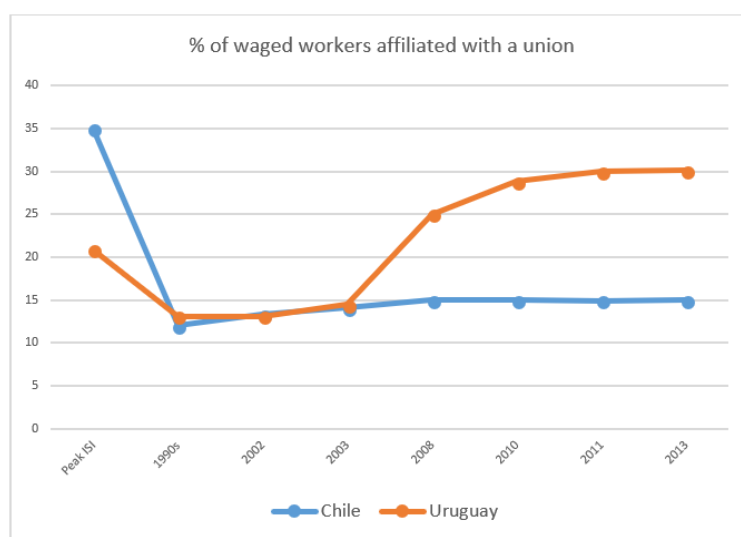


Figure 3-1: Union Density in Chile and Uruguay. Note: Author's calculations from ILO Stats, Roberts (2015), Fundacion Sol (2015) "Sindicatos y Negociacion Colectiva", and RedLat (2016) "Trabajo Decente en America Latina".

More generally, the internal characteristics and orientation of the labor movement in each country follow these contrasting patterns of working class incorporation. A weak, fragmented, economistic unionism that mostly seeks to provide individual benefits to their members has prevailed in Chile. In sharp contrast, the Uruguayan labor movement follows the social unionism model. More collectively oriented to broader social changes, labor has developed stronger ties with a broader social movement Left, advancing the interests of workers as a class beyond the "special

interest” of individual union members, and endorsing universalist claims for redistribution and social rights provision.⁴⁰ Not incidentally, relative to Uruguay, the Chilean state spends around 5% less of GDP in social security and welfare, and around 3% less in healthcare. Although public spending on education is similar in the two countries, the Chilean model is well-known worldwide for the extreme privatization of education provision. Given these gaps in labor protection and the universal provision of social rights, it is not surprising that income inequality is significantly lower in Uruguay (see Appendix B).

Different labor policy regimes and unionism also translate into divergent patterns of collective action. Although comparable longitudinal data on protest events are currently unavailable, some preliminary data confirms that also the collective action regimes diverge widely⁴¹. Thus, in 2009 –the only year for which comparative data are available– 71% of all protests events in Uruguay were led by unions, compared to only 27% in Chile. On the other hand, movements’ demands in Chile seem more heterogeneous: only 25% refer to labor issues (workplace conditions, wages, and layoffs), compared to 58% in Uruguay. Meanwhile, demands related to education represent 15% of total claims-making in Chile, but only 4% in Uruguay. The use of peaceful tactics (marches, demonstrations, and rallies) is roughly similar in Uruguay (27% of protests) and Chile (25% of protests), while nonviolent but disruptive tactics such as strikes, occupations, and road blockages are used in 49% of protest events in Uruguay, but only 30% of protest events in Chile. Protesters’ use of violent methods, such as destruction of private property, fights with the police, lootings, or bombings, also differ; violent tactics occur during 21% of the protests in Chile, but protesters only use violent tactics in 1% of protests in Uruguay.

⁴⁰ See Eidlin (2018:54-57) for a detailed definition of each of these dimensions.

⁴¹ I am particularly thankful to Nicolás Somma and Sebastián Aguiar for facilitating my access to the data for Chile and Uruguay, respectively. For a detailed description of the methods, see Medel and Somma (2016).

These data suggest that social protests in Uruguay are much more institutionalized: they take place in a peaceful way, and overwhelmingly involve organized labor. The latter point in particular should not be interpreted as a signal that Uruguayan workers are relatively more discontented than their Chilean counterparts. On the contrary, the centrality of industrial conflict in Uruguay speaks to the presence of institutions that regulate the exercise of workers' collective rights in a way that favors union activity rather than to the level of grievances. Likewise, the marginal presence of labor, the higher centrality of the student movement, and the prevalence of violent tactics in Chile, result from less institutionalized and correspondingly more autonomous forms of collective action.

The thesis that Uruguay's and Chile's political development followed similar pathways to post-neoliberalism does not hold in light of these sharp contrasts in state-society relations. Neither can this thesis accommodate the fact that levels of popular support for political institutions also diverge remarkably. Although these two countries stand in Latin America for their early and relatively complete development of liberal-democratic institutions, a comparison of the popular legitimacy of their regimes tells a different story. Electoral turnout rates show a widening gap between Chile and Uruguay. Figure 3-2 shows that mass participation in national elections in Chile has always been lower than in Uruguay. Turnout rates systematically grew in the two countries from the mid-20th century until the military coups of 1973. Both countries achieved record levels of participation (more than 85% in Chile, more than 94% in Uruguay) in the immediate aftermath of redemocratization (in 1989). From then on, however, the trajectories diverged. While voter turnout consistently fell in Chile, it remained very high in Uruguay, with even slight increases at the end of the period.

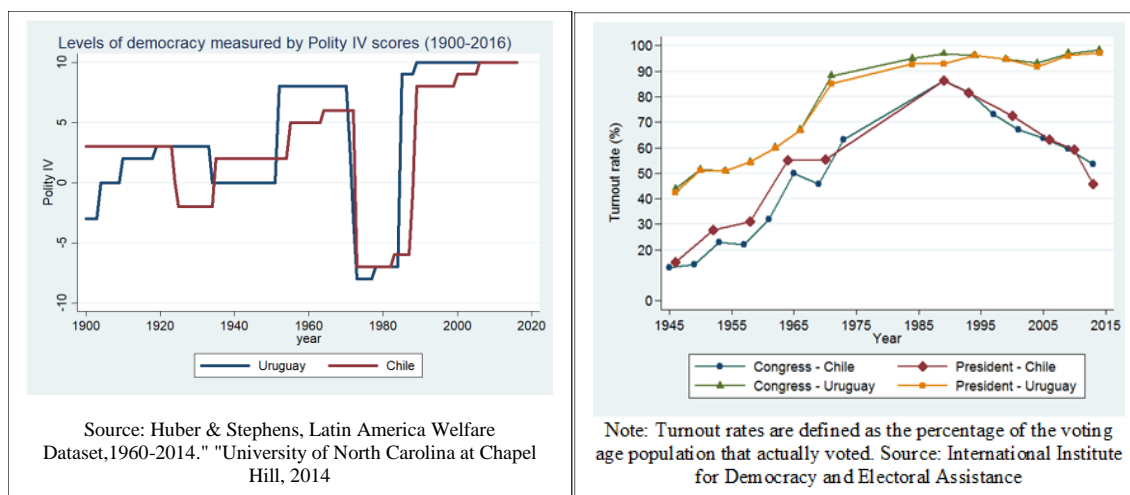


Figure 3-2: Democracy scores and voter turnout in Chile and Uruguay

National differences in mass involvement in elections correspond with citizens' evaluation of representative government. Summarizing data from public opinion surveys, Joignant, Morales and Fuentes (2016) find a difference of 39 percentage points in citizens' identification with political parties between Chile and Uruguay. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who report trust in Congress is 10 percentage points higher in Uruguay than in Chile, while the percentage that considers voting to be a real option to select candidates and parties is 15 points higher. Ultimately, citizens' attitudes toward democratic institutions speak to what this study depicts as "malaise with democracy", which affects Chile, but not Uruguay. Combining questions about trust in government, perception of being represented, and presidential approval, Joignant, Morales and Fuentes (2016) show that, in 2014, 44% of Chileans were angry, and 29% were outright defiant toward democracy. This contrasts with the 45% of Uruguayan who feel content with democracy, and another 29% who are just annoyed (see Figure 3-3).

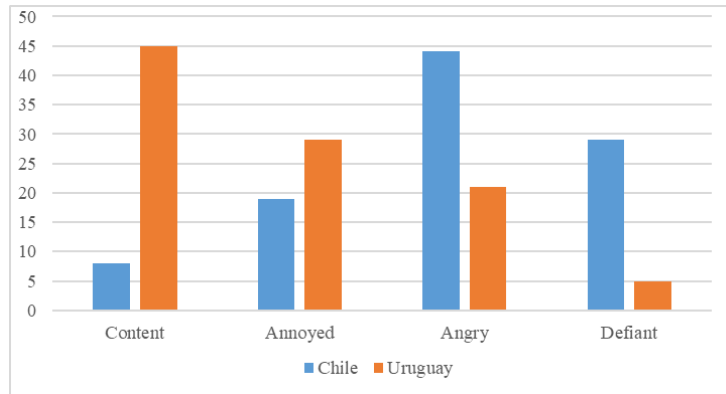


Figure 3-3: Attitudes towards democracy in Chile and Uruguay. Note: categories are built summing responses on distrust government, doesn't feel represented, disapproves of the president in 2014. Source: Joignant et al. 2016.

3.3 THE POLITICAL ARTICULATION HYPOTHESIS

In light of consistent evidence of the Uruguay/Chile divergence, some scholars have turned their attention to cross-case variation in party linkages with civil society (Handlin and Collier 2011; Luna 2014; Luna and Filgueira 2009; Pribble and Huber 2011). Silva (2018), Somma (2017), and Von Bülow and Bidegain (2015) specifically associate recurrent outbreaks of highly contentious mass protest movements, increasingly autonomous and opposed to political parties, with the resilience of neoliberal institutions in Chile. The consensus is that persisting market insecurities caused by widespread commodification of social rights in the context of a socially uprooted political system fuel popular disaffection with political institutions, including established Left parties (Luna and Altman 2011; Somma and Medel 2017). Meanwhile, Uruguay is normally depicted as a success story of welfare state resilience and expansion. Accounts of the progressiveness and inclusiveness of Uruguayan democratic institutions typically stress the central role the Broad Front –a mass center-Left party reminiscent of European social democracy– has

come to play as dominant party within the political system (Bidegain and Tricot 2017; Lanzaro 2011; Lissidini 2016; Padrón and Wachendorfer 2017).

The question, then, is why the Uruguayan Left has gone much further than its Chilean counterpart when it comes to incorporating popular interests into a more universalist, social-democratic project. This is a question concerning the general orientation (and success) of Left party strategies and, therefore, organization. To understand the divergence between Chile and Uruguay, I argue, we need to look more closely at what their Left parties do. How do they organize and relate to the state and civil society? How do they mediate effectively among political elites, the mass public, and specific constituencies? How have they evolved over time, adapting their organizational structures and transforming their programmatic commitments? I thus situate my work within the new sociology of political parties, a framework that sees variation in what parties are and do from a deeply historical and international perspective, and takes seriously the methodological premise that “parties are not stable or developmentally unidirectional” (Mudge and Chen 2014:323).

Specifically, I claim that a comparative-historical, political articulation-based approach is necessary to specify correctly the mechanisms driving the Chile/Uruguay divergence. Articulation-based explanations argue that political parties’ autonomous practices play a key role in the “political constitution of the social”, that is, the “suturing” of politics, culture, and society through intensive integrative work across myriad social fields. (de Leon 2014; de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2009; de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2015; Eidlin 2016). Articulation, then, has a twofold meaning. In the pragmatic sense, it refers to political discourse and narratives mobilized to constitute specific actors into political subjects by putting particular ideas into language (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Utterances comprising party ideologies, programs, platforms, and policies are

the raw material for this articulation work. Articulation also denotes, in the sociological-physiological sense, the work of connecting and integrating diverse social groups and constituencies as to organize their inclusion and representation in battles over political authority. That parties constitute autonomous agents jointly constituting and integrating politics and society is the central theoretical claim of the political articulation perspective, one that makes it distinct from reflection models that conceive of politics as mere expression of preexisting social cleavages and identities (see also de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2015).

Party articulation-based explanations of miscellaneous political regime-level outcomes are burgeoning within the field of comparative-historical sociology. Whether it comes to forging a bourgeois coalition during the American civil war (de Leon 2008), setting divergent passive revolutionary paths to capitalist modernization in Italy and India (Riley and Desai 2007), facilitating transitions to Islamic neoliberalism in Turkey and Egypt (Tuğal 2009; Tuğal 2015), or producing different welfare regimes in the US and Canada (Eidlin 2018), the political articulation scholarship shows that the integrative activities and mobilization characteristics of mass parties play a critical role, directing the formation of cleavages and channeling the political expression of popular interests. I build on these ongoing research efforts, extending articulation-based explanations to a family of political regime-level outcomes thus far largely overlooked by this scholarship: varieties of Left turns and popular interest incorporation in post-neoliberal Latin America. Moreover, my analysis of the Chile/Uruguay anomaly –a case of divergence in sociopolitical development in two highly institutionalized, upper middle-income capitalist democracies– intends not only to widen the *explanandum* (the range of sociopolitical outcomes to which a theory reasonably applies). I also strengthen the *explanans* of political articulation.

First, I improve the treatment of negative cases of political disarticulation. Although crucial to the overall strength of articulation-based explanations, cases of party disarticulation –“a deterioration in the ideological linkages between parties and their social base and a consequent collapse in existing political blocs” (de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2015:3)– have received little consideration in the literature. Some exceptions stand out. Slater’s (2015) account of Indonesian political parties’ growing inability to produce and articulate social cleavages, followed by burgeoning dissatisfaction with political institutions, proves disarticulation to be a theoretically relevant phenomenon in its own right. Yet this is just a single case study. Explications of chronic disarticulation cases such as Indonesia –or even of India’s weak articulation (Desai 2015) – would certainly gain in generalizability if compared to plausibly similar but successful cases. Tuğal (2015) executes such an analysis when accounting for success and failure of mass-based Islamic parties in Turkey and Egypt, respectively. But these are failed and successful cases of party-articulation of conservative projects of “Islamic neoliberalism”, not those dedicated to (would-be) socially progressive, post-neoliberal ends.

The comparative methodology employed in this paper systematically contrasts a failed case of Left party articulation –Chile’s evolution into a deracinated party system plagued by generalized popular disillusionment– with a relatively successful one –the consolidation of a legitimate post-neoliberal democracy in Uruguay. My analysis contributes to specifying the scope conditions for failure or success in political articulation.

The second contribution refers to the ill-specified relation between political articulation and the legitimization of democratic regimes. The question of legitimacy is especially relevant for democracy, a type of political regime constituted upon the foundational myth of popular sovereignty as ultimate justification of political authority (Markoff 1996). Whatever the character

of a particular democratic formation, citizens' general belief in the legitimacy of political rule greatly depends on political parties' performance as vehicles of the sovereign (Mair 2013). As implied in both Slater's (2015) and Desai's (2015) case studies, popular disaffection with (and defection from) democratic institutions is expected to be a byproduct of parties' inability (or desire) to reach out to civil society, organize popular interests, and integrate social cleavages into coherent political projects.

My comparative study attempts to characterize more clearly the articulation/legitimation nexus. I show that Left parties' autonomous practices of articulation and programmatic mobilization of mass constituencies paid off not only in terms of building more durable and robust post-neoliberal "historic blocs" in Latin America. They also contributed to safeguarding democratic institutions against the legitimation crises that arose in situations of far-reaching market restructuring (Luna and Filgueira 2009; Roberts 2008). This study complements Ziblatt's (2017) argument that the fate of democracy as a political regime hinges on the existence of strong conservative parties able to protect the interests of a powerful elite threatened by the advent of mass politics. Instead of attributing democratic *stability* to the organizational strength of elite conservatives, I look at the other end of the political spectrum, attributing democratic *legitimacy* to Left parties' organizational development. At the highest level of abstraction, then, my question is not why certain democracies survive and thrive as they become real vehicles for the expression and representation of the upper classes. It is, instead, why certain capitalist democracies, as they secure the interests of those who otherwise might terminate it, still manage to incorporate the interests of popular classes and thus preserve reasonable degrees of legitimacy.

3.4 METHODS

My methodological strategy is inspired by Riley and Fernández's (2014:443-44) adaptation of Lakatosian epistemology to make sense of theoretically relevant historical anomalies. In short, this method seeks to move knowledge forward by empirically identifying and incorporating anomalies that existing explanations fail to accommodate. In Riley and Fernández's case, the observed anomaly is the divergent post-authoritarian development of democracy in Spain and Italy, which neither top-down nor bottom-up theories of civil society successfully predict. In closely investigating historical anomalies, analysts can elaborate, expand, and empirically verify theories (p. 443). Thus, I use the Chile vs. Uruguay comparison as a probe of an expanded political articulation account, "both in the sense that it incorporates an anomaly" –one established typologies of Latin American Left turns fail to accommodate– "and [in the sense that it] predicts new facts" (p. 444) – variations of Left-led articulation of popular interests in Latin American capitalist democracies.

The main methodological challenge is to make the case for variation in Left-party articulation – the independent variable, as it were – as a plausible explanation of post-neoliberal regime divergence between Chile and Uruguay. Formally, this requires conceptualizing articulation processes as causal mechanisms contingent on political opportunities and constraints. As defined by de Leon, Desai and Tuğal (2015), "articulation is both a process and a mechanism of bringing together the constituents of the social through specific tools" (p. 2). These tools are, according to the authors, the "means of articulation" (p. 3). Organizing and mobilizing means of articulation have causal efficacy researchers establish in counterfactual terms. That is, these political activities produce outcomes that would have not been observed had these activities not been undertaken. That parties' practices are endowed with sociologically consequential historical

agency is, ultimately, the central claim of political articulation theory: “events generated by parties at *particular* historical moments can redefine the rules of the game and thus *transform* rather than merely translate the class struggle generated by underlying social structural variables” (Desai 2002:625). This is why, for instance, Tuğal (2015:98) asserts that the AKP’s sustained mobilization of a diverse array of means of articulation worked as a key “driving mechanism” of Islamic neoliberalization in Turkey. Absent the mechanism, as was the case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (the plausible counterfactual scenario), the hypothesized process never unfolded.

On the other hand, it is important not to overstate parties’ agency relative to the conditions imposed by pre-existing structural cleavages and the persisting influence of institutional constraints. Parties’ actions only “bridge the gap between possible and actual outcomes” (Eidlin 2016:495). Embedding articulation-based explanations in a broader historical analyses of structural constraints and opportunities seems necessary to prevent potential “performative biases” (Eidlin 2016; Riley 2015) – that parties are endowed with almost unlimited capacity to shape cleavages and identities. This requires carefully examining the conditions that enable the possible. But how do we analytically distinguish the conditions that create a possible outcome from the actions that turn a possible outcome into an actual outcome? How do we adjudicate competing attributions of causal efficacy?

The puzzle can be efficiently solved if we borrow from the principles of conjunctural causation and formally treat political articulation as a *causal mechanism*, that is, as *an insufficient but necessary part of an unnecessary but sufficient condition* (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Schneider and Wagemann 2012). Political parties’ articulation practices are an *insufficient but necessary part* because, by their sole action, they do not suffice to explain, say, a transition to a legitimate post-

neoliberal democracy. Only in combination with specific institutional settings can they exert causal efficacy –in this case, as I will show, the relatively favorable institutional framework –set up by the pre-dictatorship constitution– that allowed the Uruguayan Left to forge a strong alliance with organized labor and other social movements and achieve impressive levels of electoral mobilization. In short, where favorable conditions exist, the “activation” of the mechanism of political articulation is necessary to observe an *actual* outcome, which would otherwise remain only *possible*.

At the same time, if one assumes, in a nondeterministic fashion, that other causal sequences might lead to the same outcome, then it follows that this specific combination of structural factors and the mechanism under consideration is just *an unnecessary but sufficient condition*. Put differently, although the concurrence of institutional factors and Left-party articulation (that is, of structure and agency) suffices to produce the outcome in one or some particular cases (e.g., Uruguay, as opposed to Chile), it should not be assumed as the *only* path to it. For, in theory, there are other plausible roads to post-neoliberalism that might prove equally efficacious in avoiding legitimization crises.

Consequently, to develop fully a political-articulation account of the Chile/Uruguay anomaly, the comparison of these countries’ recent histories of political development needs to accomplish two tasks at once. First, following Mill’s method of difference (Moore 1993; Skocpol 1973; Skocpol and Somers 1980), it is necessary to test the work of the mechanism of Left-party articulation as part of a causal sequence conducive to an outcome, against another plausibly similar sequence in which neither the mechanism nor the outcome is present. I examine data on two crucial dimensions: party platforms, and their linkages with civil society. This analysis shows that, indeed, the Uruguayan Left has been relatively more successful in articulating anti-neoliberal programs

and forging close alliances with labor and social movements. Yet this only lends positive support in favor of the hypothesis of political articulation –a positive “hoop test” in Mahoney’s sense (2012). To prove the actual workings of the mechanism one needs to examine diagnostic pieces of evidence organized as temporal sequences of events: within-case “causal-process observations” that show party practices as “intervening steps between an initial cause and a final outcome” (p. 579). I use secondary literature to develop a process tracing analysis of key historical instances of political articulation –the sort of “smoking gun” test that, for Mahoney (2012), confirms the existence of the hypothesized mechanism.

The second task consists of a close examination of the structures of opportunities and constraints that mediate the mechanism’s causal efficacy, including an account of *how* divergent sets of opportunities and constraints happened to crystalize. Indeed, the case selection done for this research provides a unique opportunity to establish these mediation effects, completing the articulation-based explanation. That both Chile and Uruguay transitioned to democracy in pretty much similar ways and at roughly the same time configures a unique “natural” experiment. The two countries looked very much alike in the aftermath of military dictatorship. In both cases, democracy could only be achieved via complicated (and contested) pacts between a strong military regime and a mobilized opposition led by political parties. In exchange for the military’s gradual withdrawal from the center of the political arena, party elites promoted mass demobilization. Neoliberal democracy grew fearful and conservative, soon alienating the citizenry and generating widespread disenchantment. Yet, eventually, the capacity of subaltern sectors and Left parties to take advantage of the opportunities provided by democratic institutions, neutralize their constraints, and programmatically mobilize against market restructuring differed significantly

across these two countries. Left parties strategically oriented their actions according to these opportunities and constraints, and thus political articulation took significantly different forms.

Accounting for divergence in Left-party articulation in Chile and Uruguay therefore requires extending the analyses of the relevant sequences of events even further back in time in order to account for variation in dictatorships' institutional legacies. In parallel with Riley and Fernández's (2014:444) comparison of Italy and Spain, I show that differences in the institutional development of the Chilean and Uruguayan dictatorships –the scope conditions for party articulation– “can only be grasped sequentially”, inasmuch as “the timing of democratization with respect to the history of dictatorship differed in the two cases”. Again, this *ex post* reconstruction of the timing and historical significance of key political events requires revisiting secondary literature on transitions from authoritarian rule.

3.5 PARTY LINKAGES AND PROGRAMMATIC STRUCTURATION: A STORY OF DIVERGENCE.

For more than five decades, both Uruguay and Chile have had electorally competitive Left parties embracing programs and policies that broadly represent popular interests. Yet a closer look at what these parties have done and how they have developed reveals they are in fact very different kinds of organizations. I start by presenting quantitative data on the evolution of party programs. Then I move to a qualitative, historical account of how these parties have evolved strategically and organizationally as they adapted to changing political environments.

3.5.1 Flirting with neoliberalism

An important question to consider is whether Chile and Uruguay have diverged in the degree to which their Left parties advance programs that repudiate neoliberalism and commit to recognizing and incorporating popular sectors. Party programs' differentiation strengthens democratic accountability inasmuch as it provides voters with alternatives that fit their ideological preferences (Singer 2016). Along these lines, Joignant, Morales and Fuentes (2016) find that levels of congruence between voters' and party elites' policy positions are relatively high in both countries. However, they also suggest that the autonomous actions of bureaucrats, experts, advocacy groups, and intra-elite negotiations generate significantly more noise in political representation in Chile than in Uruguay. At any rate, data from expert surveys (Kitschelt 2013) rank Uruguay's dominant center-Left party –the Broad Front (*Frente Amplio*)– significantly higher than the parties of its Chilean counterpart –the Concertation (*La Concertación*)– in the index of programmatic structuration of economic issues, that is, the extent to which parties advocate income redistribution, active state intervention in the economy, and extensive public provision of pensions, healthcare, and education.

Another way of probing whether Uruguayan and Chilean Left parties have systematically diverged when it comes to making universalist appeals to economic redistribution and welfare is to look directly at the contents of their programmatic commitments. I analyze data from the Manifesto Project (Lehmann et al. 2016b) to compare political party adoption of neoliberal ideas over time. These data quantify policy positions by systematically coding and counting text from official manifestos and programs presented by political parties during national elections across the world. I calculate the index for Left parties in Chile and Uruguay based on Mudge's (2011) analysis of programmatic convergence across western parties since World War II. The index

reclassifies and scores sixteen variables of the Manifesto dataset in three dimensions: what the state should do, through what means, and for whom. For Mudge, neoliberal programs assume that the state's responsibility is to promote human capital investment, control social spending, and pursue law enforcement and social order, to the detriment of social protection and decommodification. Neoliberal party programs also prefer decentralization, administrative efficiency, privatization, labor productivity, and orthodox fiscal policy over economic planning, protectionism, universal welfare provision, and market regulation. Finally, neoliberal appeals generally forsake trade unions and blue-collar labor for business, finance, and professionals.⁴²

Figure 3-4 shows the scores of Chilean and Uruguayan Left party programs on the political neoliberalism index. Three caveats are necessary. First, because the Manifesto Dataset only surveys parties with seats in congress, the series for the Chilean Communist Party begins in 2005. Second, data on pre-dictatorship Chile are not available, so I imputed an index score to the Popular Unit –the alliance of Communist, Socialist, and other leftist organizations that brought Salvador Allende to power in 1970– that is roughly similar to the Uruguayan Broad Front in 1971. This imputation makes sense because the Broad Front explicitly took inspiration from the Popular Unity government's program.⁴³ The third caveat refers to the imputation of the score corresponding to the last program of the Broad Front. I here assume continuity in the steady neoliberalization trend observed by many specialists who have analyzed the programmatic evolution of the Uruguayan Left (Lorenzoni and Pérez 2013; Yaffé 2005).

⁴² A full description of the index methodology can be found in Mudge (2007)

⁴³ Indeed, both the Popular Unity and the Broad Front conceived their programs as facilitating transition to economic independence, mass democracy, and socialization of strategic sectors of the economy. The coincidence in the economic measures between the two programs is striking: both advocated state planning, sought to nationalize foreign trade and banks, and promoted agrarian reform by confiscating and partitioning large estates.

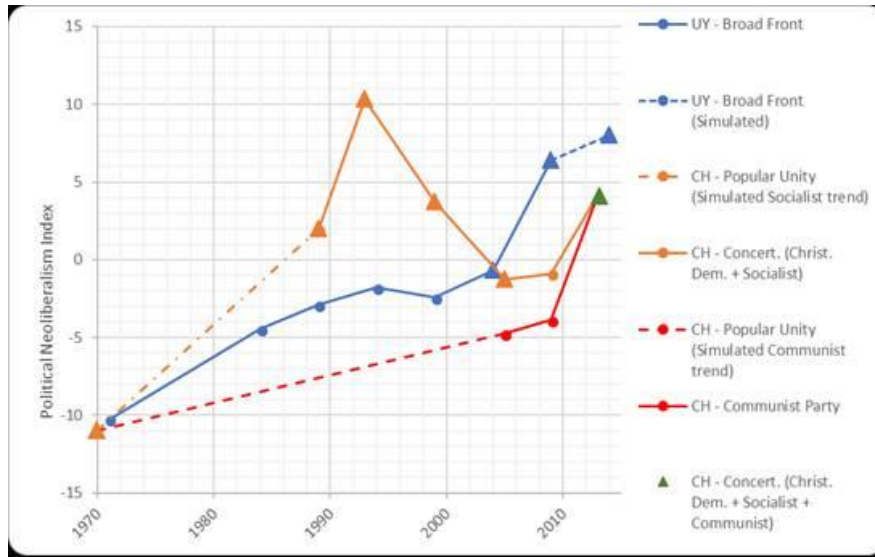


Figure 3-4: Index of political party programmatic neoliberalism in Chile and Uruguay. Source: Author calculations based on Mudge (2011) with data from Party Manifesto Project. Note: Data from Uruguay were obtained and recoded from Lorenzoni and Pérez (2013). Circles mark right-wing electoral wins and triangles mark Left and Center-Left coalition electoral wins in both countries.

Overall, the trend in both countries is consistent with the general neoliberal shift in Western democracies with traditionally strong Left parties. Similarly, the index scores for both Chile and Uruguay indicate that even when Center-Left coalitions and Socialist parties were in power, these governments' platforms included significant neoliberal elements. Political analysts have observed both these phenomena. What Figure 3-4 shows is some important differences across the two cases. The Left's neoliberalization was more incremental in Uruguay. In addition, the Chilean *Concertación* parties began flirting with neoliberal ideas much earlier. Furthermore, although the scores at the end of the time series suggest that the Broad Front has shifted further to the right than the Chilean center-Left parties, what matters most is not the actual score but the *timing* and *pace* of neoliberalization. The Uruguayan Left adapted slowly to the increasingly neoliberal political field. Neoliberalism index scores were negative when the Broad Front was in the opposition during

the heyday of the Washington Consensus (the 1990s). The right turn came only when the Uruguayan Left finally won national elections. Meanwhile, the Chilean Socialist and other left-of-center parties were deeply involved in the Third Way consensus of the ruling Concertation Coalition in the 1990s. They shifted left in the late 2000s. This turn, not surprisingly, coincided with the outbreak of anti-neoliberal protest movements. Politically marginalized, the Chilean Communist Party initially resisted programmatic moderation, until it was finally incorporated into the governing coalition.

3.5.2 Party linkages and strategies

Kitschelt's (2013) study of parties and political accountability also suggests that the delayed, incremental road to neoliberalism of the Uruguayan Broad Front helped the party preserve its universalist, programmatic appeal to its traditional constituencies. Indeed, experts rank the Front the highest when it comes to establishing strong linkages with unions. In contrast, experts rank the Concertation higher in the use of patronage to allocate particularistic benefits such as consumer goods, public benefits, employment opportunities, government contracts, and regulatory proceedings. Moreover, experts suggest that during the 2000s the overall recourse to patronage receded in Uruguay, while it increased in Chile – both facts extensively corroborated by the literature (Álvarez-Rivadulla 2012; Luna 2014). How did this happen?

3.5.2.1 Chile: a de-mobilizing/dis-articulating Left

As mentioned above, the 1990 shift to the Left in Chile came when the *Concertación* united the Socialist Party and the Christian Democrats with smaller Left groups into a ruling coalition. At that point, the Socialists abandoned their traditional alliance with the Communist Party. The

Socialist Party also underwent deep ideological revisionism (Ostiguy 2005). Moreover, both the Socialists and the Christian Democrats exploited their traditionally strong links with popular sectors to promote demobilization (Oxhorn 1994; Posner 2008). Overtly committed to securing consensus with the civilian elite that had given support to the dictatorial regime, the government coalition subordinated effective representation to the achievement of political and economic stability (Motta 2008)— the so-called “democracy of agreements” (Joignant 1999; Luna and Mardones 2010). This strategy meant that *Concertación* parties rapidly evolved into professional-electoral organizations, relinquishing their ties to their social bases. The Communists, on the other hand, were completely marginalized from this coalition and lost their historically high number of seats in Congress, to which they would not return for more than a decade.

Certainly, left-of-center Chilean governments promised to reverse the most regressive aspects of neoliberal reforms inherited from the dictatorship. Issues of social justice and popular participation were continually at the top of the political agenda, particularly after the Socialists took over the presidency in 2000. Nevertheless, institutional blockages, the prevalence of a technocratic, consensual style of policymaking, and widespread de-mobilization permitted only timid, incremental reforms. Market regulation, more than decommodification and redistribution, has been the order of the day. These institutional and political realities limited attempts to reincorporate popular sectors into governance, and prolonged market-oriented forms of regulation and provision.

In this context, the Chilean state remained reluctant to institutionalize and promote class compromise. Unions’ demands for state protection and collective bargaining rights produced only tepid responses from political elites. Although *Concertación* governments attempted time and again to rewrite the labor code instituted during the dictatorship, reformers ultimately prioritized

consensus with the strongly organized business community and the powerful rightwing parties in Congress. Reduced to an interest group in advisory committees mainly staffed with consensus-seeking state technocrats, an increasingly weak and fragmented labor movement abandon any hope of elite concessions and shifted to more confrontational tactics (Traverso, Moreno and Drouillas 2012).

In sum, Chile rapidly evolved into a low-intensity, highly institutionalized, elite based market-democracy – a competitive oligarchy, according to Luna and Altman (2011). The traditional programmatic structuration of party competition continued only as a façade. Increasingly relying on personalist/clientelistic strategies of vote-seeking to the detriment of programmatic appeals, political parties in general, and Left parties in particular, relinquished their linkages with their grassroots. Chilean civil society, in turn, grew increasingly fragmented and autonomous from political parties. Confronting the political class as whole, mass protest movements broke into the political arena as ordinary people's last resort for voicing the multiple grievances created by widespread market insecurities (Somma 2017; Somma and Medel 2017; Von Bülow and Bidegain 2015).

3.5.2.2 Uruguay: a mobilizing/articulating Left

Unlike in Chile, Uruguay's dominant Left party –the Broad Front (Frente Amplio)– still serves as the political expression of its founding constituency: organized labor, student and cooperative movements, the cultural intelligentsia, and, more generally, salaried middle sectors. The Front was founded in the aftermath of the cycle of protests of 1968 (Markarian 2016) to contest the hegemony of elite-based, catch-all, patronage-oriented parties that virtually monopolized access to political office. The Front originated as a hybrid organization combining a movement base of social activists with a political coalition of socialists, communists, Christian Democrats, national

liberation groups, and progressive fractions that defected from traditional parties. After re-democratization, the Front evolved into a highly organized, externally mobilized, mass party with strong linkages with the labor, student, feminist, human rights, and cooperative movements. The party became increasingly professionalized, complementing a dense network of local sections that foster participation and mobilization of local activists with a complex and highly-institutionalized bureaucratic structure (Yaffé 2005).

In the wake of democratization, the Front remained basically united. Indeed, the communists' and radicals' dominance over the party convention provoked defections from the Right, not from the Left. Thus, unlike much of the Chilean Left, the Uruguayan Front reincorporated into democracy (1980-1985) as a challenging, independent third party, refusing electoral compromise with centrist and progressive fractions of traditional parties, which in turn remained fully in control of Congress and the presidency through the mid-2000s. Left alone in the opposition, the Broad Front concentrated its activities on a strategy of electoral mobilization and political articulation that allowed the party to maximize what Luna (2014) called a "strategic harmonization of party-linkage segmentation" (p. 92-94, see also ch. 5). The Front worked to build a broad and diversified social base through a combination of programmatic mobilization, strong political leadership, and party identity. Indeed, the political articulation and mobilization of a heterogeneous social majority to resist the final dismantling of welfare schemes and provide social assistance for the poor and the unemployed reinforced programmatic alignment of the party system along the state/market cleavage. This in turn allowed the Front to expand its territorial base and extend its popular constituencies. The Front reached out to those who, in the context of pervasive fiscal crisis and state retrenchment, were increasingly isolated from the clientelistic networks that

tied traditional parties to popular sectors (Handlin and Collier 2011; Luna 2014; Luna and Filgueira 2009; Yaffé 2005).

A crucial component of the Broad Front's mobilization/political articulation strategy was the systematic use of binding mechanisms of direct democracy activated by popular initiative (Altman 2010; Bidegain and Tricot 2017; Moreira 2004). Citizens' use of mechanisms of direct democracy was the order of the day especially in the 1990s and the early 2000s, when the Left was in the opposition and traditional parties attempted to advance their neoliberal agendas. During that period, opposition forces resisted neoliberalism through campaigns to block reforms via national referenda and constitutional plebiscites. Trade unions, social movements, and leftist activists all converged, time and again, on civic campaigns aimed at collecting petition signatures to demand referenda and plebiscites. The sustained mobilization required for these national campaigns dominated the repertoires of collective action throughout the period. Between 1989 and 2015, electoral authorities convoked more than fourteen legally binding, mandatory popular consultations, and many other failed attempts nevertheless entailed significant campaigning and stimulated debate. These actions contributed to a culture of unity and common identity within the Left camp. A new grammar to designate the party/movement alliance emerged among activists: the so-called "social bloc for change" represented intangible political capital that all leftist groups and social organizations felt a duty to preserve (Bidegain and Tricot 2017).

Through mechanisms of direct democracy, therefore, an active civil society, allied to an opposition Left party, translated collective protests against neoliberalism into electoral mobilization. An important milestone in this struggle was the popular repeal, in a referendum called in 1994, of a law allowing the government to privatize state-owned companies. In the years that followed, several referenda against de-monopolization, privatization, and deregulation of

state-controlled industries took place. Although the government coalition managed to demonopolize insurance markets, privatize the national airline, outsource the administration of port services, and introduce private retirement accounts into social security, the opposition bloc led by the Front successfully blocked many other neoliberal reforms. In 2003, amid a severe economic recession, the government coalition was clearly defeated in a national referendum against a law allowing the state-owned oil company to operate in the stock market. That year, to avoid more embarrassing defeats, the government retracted a similar effort to privatize equity in the state-owned telecommunications company. The threat of direct democracy eventually convinced traditional parties to abandon their privatization plans.

This decade of protest victories through direct democracy closed with the turn to the left in the 2004 national elections, when the electorate further approved a constitutional amendment that ensured state monopoly on drinkable water production and distribution. By that time, the electoral mobilization of the Broad Front peaked. About 400,000 supporters, more than 40% of the franchised population of the capital, attended the rally that closed the electoral campaign. Police reported similarly astronomical turnout at rallies leading up to the national election of 2009, where the Broad Front renewed its presidential mandate, again, with congressional majorities. The Front's deep roots in civil society were reconfirmed during nonmandatory elections of party authorities: 20% of party supporters showed up to elect their party leaders in 2006, and 15% in 2012.

Already in power, and putting its congressional majorities to good use, the Broad Front instituted generous schemes of social protection, created a mandatory single-payer health insurance system, reformed pension law to ease access to social security, reinstated the progressive income tax, and significantly increased spending in public education and healthcare. More

crucially, the Left honored its historical alliance with the labor movement, passing more than fifty labor laws that, among other things, protected union rights, and extended centralized, corporatist forms of collective bargaining at the industry level in all sectors of the economy.

3.6 THE INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS OF POLITICAL ARTICULATION

What explains this divergence in the strategic orientation, organizational evolution, and party-society relations between the Uruguayan and Chilean Lefts? The answer to this question, I argue, lies in political institutions. Political institutions regulate political conflict and allocate incentives and veto powers across different kinds of political actors (Mahoney 2010). In particular, political institutions provide (or limit) the opportunities necessary for non-elite actors and peripheral polity members to organize collectively and intervene effectively in the democratic process.

The analysis developed so far suggests that the trajectory of Left parties in post-dictatorship Chile was seriously constrained by an institutional environment that restricted the effective representation of dissent and inhibited the formation of defiant political actors. Indeed, several authoritarian enclaves survived the democratic transition, and the Right's over-representation in political institutions was an important incentive for intra-elite consensus-building (Garretón and Garretón 2010; Siavelis 2009; Valenzuela 1992). Left parties' strategies and organizational development were thus path-dependent on institutional arrangements that locked in the neoliberal policy regime set out by the military dictatorship.

My analysis also suggests that the Uruguayan Left's opposition to neoliberal policies took place in a much more favorable institutional environment. Although important authoritarian legacies survived the democratic transition in Uruguay, the political game appeared more open to

contestation. In particular, as explained above, parties and citizens triggered binding mechanisms of direct democracy through popular initiative. These extra-parliamentary mechanisms constituted a major incentive for the Broad Front to challenge governing parties by reaching out to civil society.

A satisfactory account of Left-party articulation (and disarticulation) therefore requires looking further back to the history of political institutions, paying particular attention to the conditions and character of the transition pacts that preceded democratization.

3.6.1 Constitutional legacies and transition pacts

A crucial difference between Uruguay's and Chile's democratic transition pacts is that they were contingent upon very different constitutional frameworks. In 1980, Pinochet destroyed the electoral register and organized a fraudulent plebiscite that imposed a new constitution. Inspired by the Chilean dictator, that same year the Uruguayan generals ordered the electoral court to organize a plebiscite to ratify a constitutional bill that, as in Chile, institutionalized military participation in government, created counter-majoritarian institutions, and granted extraordinary powers to the executive. Yet, unexpectedly, the Uruguayan electorate rejected the new constitution. In the years that followed, both countries transitioned to democracy after complicated process of negotiations between opposition political parties and the military. Yet the institutional blueprints that served the context for elite bargaining differed substantially. Whereas transition pacts in Chile ratified the constitutional transformation enacted by the military, the Uruguayan pacts restored the constitutional provisions in force before the military coup (Caetano and Rilla 1987; Daniel 2004; Demasi 2009a; Garretón and Garretón 2010; González 1991; Valenzuela 1992).

Timing, again, made all the difference. Because in Chile the military constitutionalized the regime *before* formal negotiations for democratic opening began, the resulting pacts that enabled re-democratization were very restrictive. These pacts a) severely reduced the range of inclusiveness of the bargaining cartel, b) significantly increased the severity and scope of institutional constraints set on the subsequent democratic game, and c) prolonged the duration of those constraints.⁴⁴

First, the constitutionalization of military rule in Chile forced opposition actors to decide whether to comply with the new rules of the game in exchange for fair elections, or to opt out of the bargain cartel in rejection of such constitutional provisions. This increased the likelihood of exclusion (*de jure* or *de facto*) of political actors who refused to trade a seat at the table for discrediting compromises on the constitution, splitting moderates from radicals and creating incentives for defection from opposition solidarity. The rapid moderation of the Chilean Socialist Party, and the total exclusion of the Chilean Communist Party (along with their affiliated social constituencies) from the *Concertación* coalition, are a case in point. In Uruguay, in contrast, the fact that the Broad Front was able to re-enter the democratic game under relatively similar institutional conditions as those preceding the coup discouraged programmatic moderation and defection, keeping the Left united.

Second, the constitutionalization of military rule in Chile also set procedural restrictions on policy change. Provisions such as super majorities in Congress, a Senate with nonelected seats, a majoritarian electoral system that virtually excludes third parties, and a politicized constitutional tribunal with preemptive powers over the legislative process granted regime incumbents the institutional leverage to block any shift away from neoliberalism. The Uruguayan Constitution, in

⁴⁴ See Bejarano (2011) for a detailed characterization of the dimensions of transition pacts.

contrast, allocated veto powers to opposition actors and non-polity members such as unions or social movements via the provision of mechanisms of direct democracy. Proportional representation also favored the representation of the Broad Front as an uncompromising third party.

Finally, the constitutionalization of military rule in Chile stipulated highly restrictive procedures for constitutional change, making the institutional arrangements and policy orientations bequeathed to democracy extremely resilient. Constitutional rigidity created an enduring certainty that the balance of forces among major political contenders would not undergo drastic change any time soon. Thus the authoritarian constitution operated as an anchor of predictability that stabilized the polity. But it also slowed subsequent movements towards further democratization, harming the purpose and legitimacy of the democratic game. Again, in Uruguay, the balance of stability and transformative potential was markedly different.

3.6.2 Critical antecedents of democratic transitions

What factors shaped these very different patterns of institution building during military rule? Put it simply: Why did the Chilean military use every tool at hand to impose a new constitution, while the Uruguayan military relied on existing electoral institutions and then accepted the electorate's decision? To address this question, I consider key historical variables that operate as "critical antecedents" of the democratic transitions in Chile and Uruguay. A critical antecedent is a specific subtype within a broader collection of factors that precede a critical juncture and constrain causal mechanisms that the conjuncture sets in motion. An antecedent is "critical" when it yields some sort of cross-case variation without obliterating the causal efficacy of the critical juncture. Therefore, a critical antecedent must be more than a characteristic element of a particular

conjuncture. An antecedent also does not count as “critical” in this sense if it is constant across cases, or if it constitutes an independent differentiating element that eventually leads to alternative explanations for the long-term outcomes. A critical antecedent produces, rather, an “interaction effect”, specifying how and to what extent a critical juncture impacts on subsequent political processes (Slater and Simmons 2010).

For my case comparison, I build on Bejarano’s (2011) argument that analysts can find the critical antecedents influencing the politics of transition pacts in the historical genealogy of political institutions. Long-term patterns of state formation and party system institutionalization in Chile and Uruguay differently shaped the pre-coup scenario. The political and economic conditions that triggered the ascent of the military to the center of political power were different in each country.

Democratization in Chile ensued only gradually long after an early and successful process of state formation in the mid-nineteenth century (Centeno 2002; Valenzuela 1985). From then through the mid-twentieth century, the Chilean party system underwent several realignments to keep up with the emergence and layering of different social cleavages (Scully 1992). Political compromise between ideologically opposed parties was the order of the day, a compromise that was secured by the parties’ capacity to mobilize state resources through clientelistic networks (Valenzuela 1977) and, more fundamentally, the strategic presence of a viable, non-programmatic political center (Valenzuela 1978). Yet the radicalization of the late sixties and early seventies, while not exclusively Chilean, flourished there to an unusual degree. Mass enfranchisement and hyper-mobilization of both rural and urban popular sectors posed a serious threat to the establishment and provoked pervasive US intervention. After the electoral success of the Popular Unity and its decision to transition to socialism without breaking with democracy, the large

majority of the opposition, as well as vast sectors of the middle and upper classes alienated by Allende's policies, supported the interruption of constitutional rule⁴⁵.

Meanwhile, in Uruguay, coalitions of rural *caudillos* and urban notables, organized into partisan militias, dominated the political scene before the Uruguayan state achieved bureaucratic control and coercion over territory and population. When the latter happened in the early twentieth century, a far-reaching process of democratization followed almost immediately. Early democratization and late institutionalization was the defining feature of Uruguayan political development (Panizza 1990). Because nineteenth-century traditional parties were the real state and army makers (López-Alves 2000), they survived through the twentieth century and evolved into catch-all, decentralized, patronage-based organizations with strong partisan identities but weak ideological coherence (Luna 2014; Rama 1989; Real de Azúa 1988). Traditional parties' ability to secure hegemony over political representation delayed the emergence of a competitive alternative from the Left until the late sixties, when economic stagnation exhausted patron-client networks and in turn facilitated relatively autonomous popular mobilization. The breakdown of democratic consensus in the late 1960s, which coincided with the appearance of Cuban-inspired guerrilla insurgency, led traditional parties to turn toward authoritarianism (Demasi 2009b). Under the auspices of Congress (and the American government), the president suspended constitutional liberties and built a repressive state apparatus behind a democratic façade, formally institutionalizing military participation in government—a process Rico (2005) characterizes as the “democratic road to dictatorship”. This meant that, when the Uruguayan military took power, political polarization and class struggle were not as pervasive as in Chile.

⁴⁵ This centrifugal dynamic, characteristic of a highly competitive democratic regime that leads to extreme class polarization, resembles other important historical cases such as the end of the Weimar Republic or the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (Valenzuela 1978).

The processes leading to democratic breakdown shaped the way the military faced the post-coup juncture. Certainly, both the Chilean and the Uruguayan dictatorships conceived of themselves as transitional governments with the tacit mandate to restore social order and reorganize political institutions by enacting new constitutions –two important tasks that Schmitt (2014)⁴⁶ conceptualized as the “commissarial” and “sovereign” roles of modern dictatorship (see also Barros 2005; Caetano and Rilla 1987; González 1991). Yet the historical junctures that led militaries to arrogate to themselves constitutional power (*pouvoir constituant*) differed sharply. The ascent of the Chilean military was abrupt; consequently, the *junta* attempted to institutionalize the regime from the ground up. The *junta*’s assumption of executive power was so thorough that it soon began creating new institutions that separated executive and legislative powers (Barros 2005). In contrast, as provided by the law when Congress declared the “state of internal war”, the Uruguayan military already occupied an institutional place within the government at the time of the coup, formally sharing executive power with the president and his civilian cabinet. Unlike Pinochet’s explicit suspension of the Constitution in a televised speech on the day the military bombed *La Moneda* (the Presidential Palace), the self-declared civilian-military government in Uruguay did not overrule the Constitution. It did not even suspend elections until 1976, when the

⁴⁶ Carl Schmitt (2014) introduced the distinction between commissarial and sovereign dictatorship in his historical account of the evolution of the philosophical and juridical justification of emergency powers in constitutional law. For Schmitt, a commissarial dictatorship was a legislative provision of Roman republican law that granted an appointed dictator extraordinary executive powers with the goal of restoring order and preserving the integrity of republican institutions. However, such a commission was conceived only as an executive mandate: the dictator could administer justice, command military force if necessary, and decide matters of life and death without due process. However, the commission by no means conferred on the dictator any deliberative or legislative power, precluding him from overriding the political organization of the Republic. In contrast, in the nineteenth century, with the diffusion of the modern theory of the constitutional state based on the notion of popular sovereignty, the meaning of the juridical nature of the state of emergency shifted dramatically. Now the authority that assumed extraordinary executive actions to protect the integrity of the sovereign nation could not only suspend the constitution (provided it did not run over certain civil and political liberties); implicitly, it was also conceived as the only state agency with the capacity to exercise (or delegate) power. For this reason, Schmitt sees in the rise of modern democracy the emergence of a new notion of sovereign dictatorship.

military removed the president and charged him with promoting a new (proto-fascist) constitution that expressly outlawed political parties. Only after demolishing the civilian façade of the regime did the Uruguayan military take charge of the business of constitution-making. Even then, the military refrained from interfering with Uruguay's historically reliable electoral institutions. Hence it was the pre-dictatorship electoral court that organized the plebiscite over the new constitution in 1980s (Altman 2010).

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

This paper advanced a political articulation account of Chile's and Uruguay's divergent patterns of democratic development. In both countries, highly-institutionalized, electorally competitive center-Left coalitions have been central for democratic consolidation. In both countries, Left governments navigated an historical period in which market-oriented forms of socioeconomic regulation alienated popular sectors and strained the legitimacy of democratic regimes. These similarities notwithstanding, as I have shown, the Left developed as a tightly-coupled, mass party organization, strategically oriented towards *mobilizing* civil society and *articulating* –in social practices, political programs, and public policy– a post-neoliberal state project in Uruguay but not in Chile. In the end, how Left parties articulated state and civil society proved to be a key causal mechanism driving divergence in welfare state building and democratic legitimation across the two countries.

Strengthening ties with labor and other social movements allowed the Left in Uruguay first to confront neoliberalism and then to embed more deeply the “class idea” (Eidlin 2018:10) in policies, institutions, and practices. Likewise, the Broad Front's programmatic orientation more

extensively articulated and enacted the universal provision of social rights. Hence, the Uruguayan state more widely recognized and institutionalized the power imbalance inherent in class divisions. Meanwhile, governing Left parties in Chile followed a demobilizing, professionalizing strategy with elite consensus as top priority. Restrictive labor laws, coupled with pervasive commodification of social provision, reinforced the delegitimation of class politics, relegating labor to a politically weak, fragmented interest group. Citizens' relations to democratic institutions in the two countries follow patterns predicted by the observed divergence in political development. While in the last decade mass protests against the political establishment have been the order of the day in Chile, the sway of social movements and trade unions over the policymaking process has significantly expanded in Uruguay. At the same time the institutions of political representation in Chile face a severe legitimization deficit, those in Uruguay enjoy record levels of support in the region.

The political articulation account of the Chile/Uruguay divergence contributes to rethinking existing typologies of Left turns in Latin America. The literature typically classifies Uruguay and Chile in the same category of regimes in which moderate Left parties led the shift away from neoliberal orthodoxy. I have presented evidence showing that differences in how these parties developed organizationally and operated in civil society mattered substantially in this transition. My findings and argument issue an invitation to take seriously the role of party organizations in articulating popular interests and shaping state-society relations to reassess the now waning Latin American "pink tide".

In addition to unraveling a hitherto undertheorized mechanism driving variation in contemporary Latin American democracies, my analysis also speaks to broader conceptual issues. I started with a puzzle about how theories of democracy and civil society conceive of the role of

strongly organized mass parties. While some scholars see mass parties as necessary conditions for democracy to survive and thrive as a political regime, others see mass parties as sufficient conditions for some, but not all, democratic societies. My goal was not necessarily to resolve this apparent paradox but to shed light on the question of popular legitimacy and, in particular, the role of Left parties. The Chile/Uruguay divergence clearly speaks to this classic distinction between the constitutional and popular component of democracy –government for vs. government by the people (Mair 2013). Whether Left parties act as mass-based organizations, externally mobilizing civil society and integrating the interests of subaltern sectors into the state, proves highly consequential for democracy in its popular component. Two important conclusions follow.

The first conclusion has to do with specifying Ziblatt's (2017) well-grounded case that the organization of parties on the Right is decisive for the functioning of democracy. For Ziblatt, the organizational dimensions of conservative parties such as centralization of leadership, the role of party professionals, their ties with networks of civic associations, their autonomy in fundraising, and their vulnerability to being captured locally by anti-pragmatic ideologues ultimately determine whether democracy consolidates and thrives. Ziblatt's historical observations clearly establish that only a strongly organized and autonomous conservative party is capable of overcoming collective action problems, successfully articulating the interests of recalcitrant upper classes *within*, and not *against*, the democratic process. Elites' support for democracy is indeed the byproduct of conservative party formation, strengthening, and institutionalization.

My argument is somewhat symmetric with respect to Left parties and democratic legitimacy. Implicit in Ziblatt's conclusions is the premise that democracies –specifically, capitalist democracies– are born inherently conservative, or they do not survive at all. That the fate of democracy as a political regime is inevitably attached to conservative parties' success at

defending the interests of a wealthy and politically powerful minority clashes with the potential of political equality and popular sovereignty on which the myth of democracy rests (Markoff 1996). Democracies exist in an ever-fragile equilibrium between the factual impossibility of their full realization and the always latent threat of complete illegitimacy. Chile's and Uruguay's Left parties faced a similar dilemma during the democratic transition. Reincorporating into the democratic game required complying with the conservative path of economic modernization initiated by the military and rightwing civilian elites. Some mobilization containment and programmatic moderation was in order. Otherwise, regime incumbents would relapse into democratic breakdown. Too much compliance, however, would also blur the Left's *raison d'être* and completely alienate its founding constituencies. In light of this dilemma, two possible strategic organizational responses were at hand. One was to prompt full-fledged ideological revisionism, do without the traditionally strong programmatic linkages with popular sectors, and incorporate into the ruling coalition in order to enact incremental fixes to the neoliberal regime. The other strategy was to compromise less, remain in the opposition, and resist market reforms, still preserving some of the mobilizational, organizational, and programmatic characteristics of a mass-based Left party. My Chile-Uruguay comparison shows that each strategy came about with quite different consequences. The Chile/Uruguay divergence confirmed, again, that a strongly organized mass party of the Left is necessary to overcome collective action problems and articulate popular interests within capitalist democracies, thus serving as a driving force of legitimation. Left parties may not be a necessary condition for a given democracy's evolving in a continuous, incremental way. But they may be a sufficient condition for a particular democracy's popular legitimacy.

The second conclusion concerns the second part of my political-articulation account. I have made the case that divergence in Left parties' strategies did not happen in a vacuum. Each of the

ideal-typical strategies just outlined followed a specific rationality, bounded in concrete historical contexts. Institutional rules accorded during democratization pacts set the scope conditions for political articulation in the post-dictatorship aftermath. This finding is consistent with Riley and Fernández's (2014) thesis that the defining relations between civil society, political parties, and the state are crafted during nondemocratic historical junctures. For these authors, the *type* of authoritarian regime is the critical factor. Totalitarian regimes rely on mass-mobilizing parties that organize and integrate civil society from the top. External mobilization results in a strongly organized but less autonomous civil society in the post-democratization period. Mass parties continue to play a role in democratic politics. Dictatorial regimes, in contrast, do not use mass parties to penetrate and coopt civil society. Thus, democratic civil society develops with greater autonomy from political institutions. Still, without externally-mobilizing mass parties, post-dictatorship civil society is born organizationally weak and depoliticized.

My analysis partially disconfirms this thesis. The remarkable differences observed in the type of civil society that emerged in Chile and Uruguay in the aftermath of re-democratization – relatively more autonomous but weaker in the former, stronger but heteronomous in the latter – cannot be attributed to the type of authoritarian regime. For *both* countries transitioned from non-totalitarian military dictatorships without mass (fascist) parties having penetrated civil society. It was, again, key institutional features established during transition pacts –e.g., the levels of polity inclusiveness and constitutional rigidity, the allocation of veto powers– that jointly patterned the political opportunities and constraints for Left parties to effectively articulate and channel societal interests into the political arena.

These institutional aspects have been extensively analyzed by recent scholarship that highlights the importance of transition pacts on long term patterns of democratic development

(Bejarano 2011; Encarnación 2005; Fishman 2011; Fishman and Lizardo 2013; Fishman 2010). In this vein, Bejarano (2011) and Encarnación (2005) have shown that democracies that ensue through transition pacts do not necessarily lead to successful consolidation in the long run. Neither do they necessarily permanently restrict wider democratization. In this sense, pacts are assumed to have a neutral effect vis-à-vis other modes of transition; what matters is the type of institutional arrangement that pacts bring about. Such arrangements, as historical institutionalists such as Mahoney (2000), Pierson (2004), and Thelen (1999) predicate, generate durable distributive effects that initiate path-dependent trajectories. My analysis of the Chile/Uruguay divergence suggests that rules ratified by transition pacts are also conditioned by prior institutional arrangements. The different, highly consequential constitutional histories of the Chilean and Uruguayan dictatorships are a case in point. The two-case comparison also suggests that much of the distributional effect that pacts generate remains latent in the democratic aftermath and only manifests as a result of a gradual process of (endogenous) institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen 2009). That is, as causes may not take effect until they cross a certain time threshold, the full causal efficacy of transition legacies (e.g., whether they inhibit or promote Left party formation and articulation) might only be observed over a significant period of time.

APPENDIX A

TYPES OF POST-NEOLIBERAL REGIMES IN LATIN AMERICA

Good vs. Bad Left (Castañeda 2006)

MODERATE-SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC	POPULIST-PROTECTIONIST
<i>Uruguay</i> <i>Chile</i> Brazil	Venezuela Ecuador Bolivia Argentina (partially)

Political movements vs. Established parties and Dispersed vs. Concentrated authority (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011)

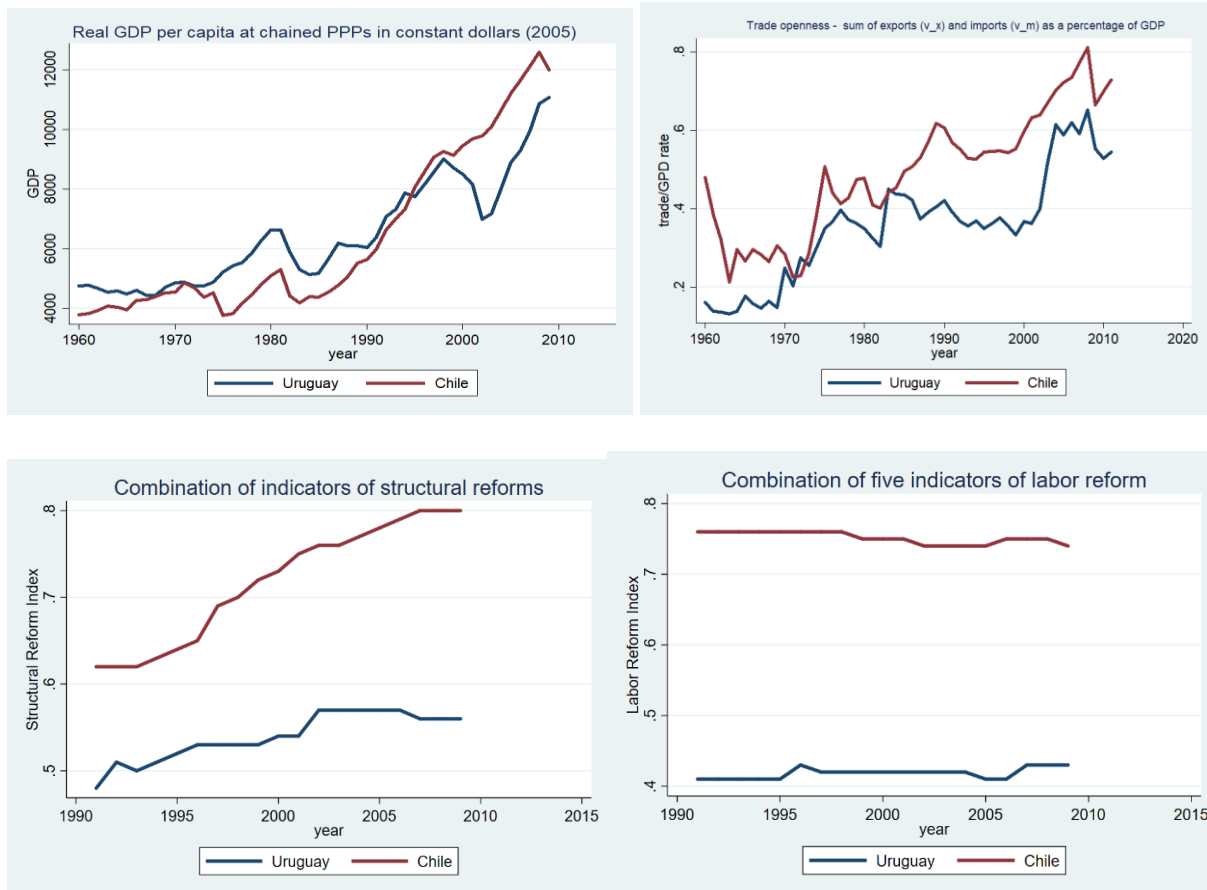
	<i>Dispersed</i>	<i>Concentrated</i>
Political movement	MOVEMENT LEFT: Bolivia	PERSONALIZED POPULIST: Venezuela Ecuador
Established Party	INSTITUTIONALIZED LEFT: <i>Uruguay</i> <i>Chile</i> Brazil	POPULIST MACHINE: Argentina Nicaragua

Contested vs Convergent neoliberalism vis-à-vis aligning vs. de-aligning social cleavages (Roberts 2015)

	Incumbent	Opposition	Post-neoliberal aftermath	Countries
ALIGNING CRITICAL JUNCTURE (contested neoliberalism)	Right and/or centrist and/or military regime	Left and/or center-Left	Low-electoral volatility, party-system institutionalization along state/market cleavage	<i>Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Dom. Rep., El Salv., Mex, Nicaragua</i>
DEALIGNING CRITICAL JUNCTURE (convergent neoliberalism)	Left and/or center- Left	Right and/or centrist	High electoral volatility, Party-system collapse, possible populist backlash and rise of anti-system outsider	Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru
NEUTRAL CRITICAL JUNCTURE (convergent neoliberalism)	Right and/or centrist and/or military regime	None		Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay

APPENDIX B

INDICATORS OF CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE



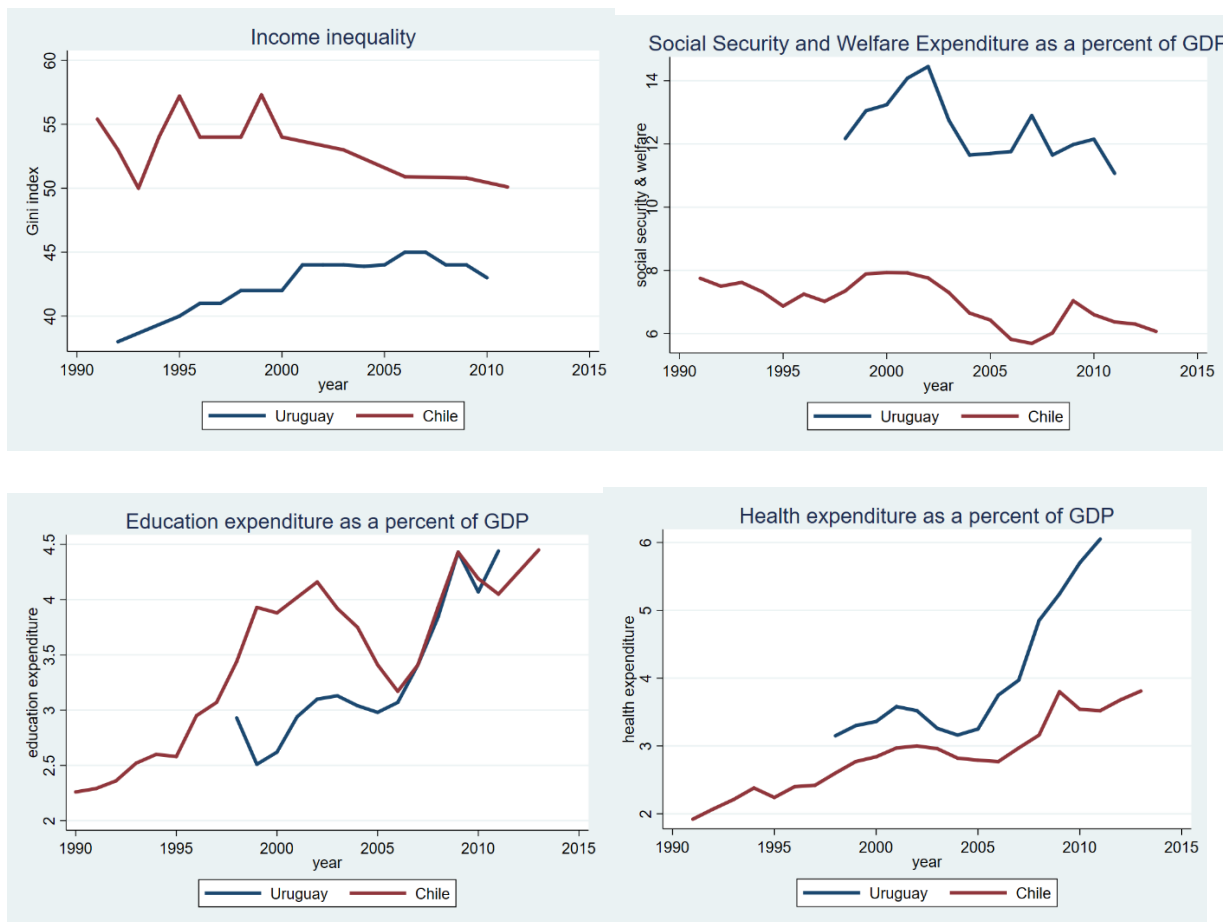


Figure 3-5: Indicators of Convergence and Divergence. Note: Author's calculation from Huber & Stephens, Latin America Welfare Dataset, 1960-2014. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014

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