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Special Issue: Why Political Inequality Endures: Elites, Contestation and Participation in Modern Democracies

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Politics and Inequality in Comparative Perspective: A Research Agenda

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Abstract

Democracy's normative foundation is political equality. Yet the dominance of the elite over the masses, and the systematic exclusion of particular social and economic groups from the influence on, and outcomes of, important decisions, manifests in political inequality. If this situation is normatively intolerable, why does political inequality endure? We build on the theoretical and empirical literature of politics and inequality and the collection of articles in this special issue to argue that the reproduction of political inequality within and across nations and time results from two key interrelated mechanisms: elite coordination and mass discoordination. We discuss how these mechanisms shape patterns of contestation and participation that reproduce inequalities in both old and new democracies.

Keywords

democracy, elites, Latin America, Europe, participation, inequality, political inequality

Introduction

Stakeholders of democracy are anxious about democracy's current health and future prospects. Some academics, politicians, and civil society activists see the rise in economic inequality, dissatisfaction with democracy's outputs and threats to civil liberties, along with the growing popularity of far-right populism, as red flags on what might be the road to democratic recession (e.g., Diamond, 2015; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). This anxiety encourages social scientists to question their knowledge of the heretofore unshakable foundations of democracy.

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One foundation is the ideal of political equality, in which opportunities and outcomes of political decisions are in law and practice equal across the general public. The citizenry and their advocates in civil society push for a normative definition of democracy as a contested political landscape where policy decisions should closely resemble citizen preferences. The puzzle of political inequality arises precisely because, in reality, democracies are de jure but not de facto regimes of equality.

Another way of conceptualizing democracy is through a procedural definition (see Coppedge et al., 2011; Dahl, 1973). From a strict procedural perspective, there is a core difference between a democratic and a nondemocratic regime: In a democratic regime, the general public can vote and stand for office in free elections on equal formal grounds, and those who are elected get to rule. Decisions on who rules in a democracy are based in norms and laws of formal political equality. Yet rule in democracies is also based on preexisting conditions of social inequalities with regard to power and influence and the ruler is not formally required to pursue equality or follow the will of the majority.

We refer to rulers as "elites," that is, a minority of individuals who, due to the concentration of material and symbolic resources of power, and due to their privileged structural and political position, have the capacity to make important community and societal decisions or to influence those decisions (Higley & Burton, 2006; Mills, 1956; Reis & Moore, 2005). We also refer to the "masses," that is, people who individually have lower resources for political influence, but that collectively have the potential to reconstruct the institutions that keep the elite in power.

One important feature of political inequality within democracy is that it can never be directly institutionalized in the traditional form of caste or segregation, because even in the most minimal procedural definition of democracy, such restrictions to political voice are the very definition of nondemocratic governance. In democracies, de facto political inequality thus takes place within de jure political equality.

Structured inequalities within instances of decision making, along with myriad informal decision-making procedures that elites conduct behind the scenes, contribute heavily to why democracy's political outcomes—across nations, time, and decision-making bodies—are unequal (Gilens, 2012; Lefkofridi & Giger, 2020; Maks-Solomon & Rigby, 2019; Wright & Rigby, 2020). This situation is sharper in some contexts and less so in others (Hooghe et al., 2019). Thus, we see political inequality as, conceptually, on a continuum. As Dahl (2006) and other political theorists have argued, where there is democracy, there is also inequality of voice. These inequalities can be severe. It is not enough to say that democracy entails political inequality. Social scientists should also postulate and estimate how much inequality there is and posit the mechanisms that increase the distance between the normative idealized version of democracy and the actual ways in which regimes operate.

Political inequality can be defined as structured differences in influence over political decisions and in outcomes (Dubrow, 2015). Democracy is defined by principles of political equality within the core idea of political citizenship (Marshall, 1950). But the causal relationship between democracy and equality was reversed in social science, as dominant models of democracy predict that democratic regimes force

economic redistribution and thus cause equality. In classical models, over time, the right to vote incentivizes reelection oriented policy makers to channel social goods toward voters in the median of the income distribution, thus moving society closer to equality (Downs, 1957; Meltzer & Richard, 1981; Norris, 2012). This prediction became known as the "median voter theorem." The "median voter" conceptual and theoretical understanding of the relationship between democracy and equality generated an optimistic view regarding the potential social benefits of democratization.

However, for both established and new competitive regimes, the triumph of democracy into the 1980s and 1990s translated into more, not less, inequality. As a result, researchers questioned the validity of the "median voter" understanding of democracy (see Kenworthy & McCall, 2007; Ross, 2006). From empirical research—rather than from abstract theorizing or mathematical formalizations—they find that democracies do not redistribute more than autocracies. Nonetheless, formal theories of democracy continue to rely on the assumption that democracies entail redistribution (e.g., Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003).

The Global Rise of Inequality

The rise of inequality within nations has united the Global North with the Global South. From the 1980s until the early 2000s, research on the newcomers of democracy from post-Communist Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa framed economic and political inequality in the form of abject poverty, misrepresentation, and violation of civil rights. Those were largely seen as problems of the developing world (e.g., O'Donnell, 1993). In the new democracies of Latin America, for instance, many saw the influence of previous patterns of authoritarianism and populism that were—at the time—considered to be alien to Western democracies.

Eventually, social scientists and others noticed that the level of income concentration in the Global North gradually became similar to that observed in the Global South. This recognition of reality has been slow to manifest in social science research. For instance, the increase in inequality in the United States in the early 2000s was viewed as yet another example of American exceptionalism. At the time, the American Political Science Association created a task force to address the effects of increasing inequality in American Democracy. The authors portrayed the United States as an anomaly in the West (American Political Science Association, 2004). Increasing concern with inequality in the United States gave way to other Western nations joining the "anomaly," and now rare are the cases where inequality is not at an historic high. Income concentration is increasing in role model social democracies such as Sweden, in elder democracies such as the United Kingdom, and in former socialist republics such as Poland.

The deleterious consequences of political inequality on democracy redound: the elite play an outsized role in shaping social policies (Khan, 2012); the legislatures are male-dominated (Paxton et al., 2020) and resemble the top of the socioeconomic ladder (Hacker & Pierson, 2010); the legislators promote policies that benefit the privileged (Gilens & Page, 2014); and education and occupation continue to strongly

influence political participation (Marien et al., 2010). Research shows that economic inequality depresses political engagement for everyone but the wealthy (Cole, 2018; Dubrow, 2008; Kern et al., 2015; Solt, 2008, 2015). The dominance of the elite over the masses makes equitable economic redistribution less likely (Higley, this issue; Kelly, 2020). Those and other perils of democracy transformed the expectation of a global conversion toward Western liberalism (Fukuyama, 1989) into anxieties that even Western liberal democracies could be on the road toward new forms of oligarchy (Winters, 2011).

As governments fail to solve the problem of economic inequality, and as democracy's competitors promote political inequality and thrive, social scientists conduct cross-national comparative studies of politics and inequality (e.g., Page & Gilens, 2017; Piketty & Saez, 2006). Everything is questioned: Why do established Western democracies seem to have deviated from their trajectory of hopeful equality toward a stubbornly persistent inequality? Why has democracy in developing societies not triggered the processes of redistribution and power sharing that characterized previous waves of democratization (Mainwaring & Bizzarro, 2019; Roberts, 2016)? That all of us live in the consequences of these problems has encouraged social scientists to build on the classics of democratic theory and political action to revise how they conceptualize and measure the underlying mechanisms that produce and reproduce inequality under democracy.

Mechanisms of Political Inequality

This special issue addresses how and why political inequality remains a weak point in the foundation of democracy. The authors cover key mechanisms and processes that account for political inequality in developing and established democracies. Building on their contributions, we focus on two crucial mechanisms of political inequality. One mechanism is how elites reproduce inequalities, or "elite coordination." A second mechanism is how social inequalities structure participation and contestation. We call this second mechanism, "mass discoordination."

The two key mechanisms of elite coordination and mass discoordination feed off of each other. The uneven distribution of power resources encourages the elite—who head the democratic institutions and set the rules—to pursue greater concentration; meanwhile, the elite-led institutions that allow such disparities to occur promote roadblocks that either prevent groups from participating, such as in the case of disenfranchised citizens, or discourages collective coordination around shared interests. The masses remain aggrieved yet disorganized.

Elite Coordination

The elite, due to their position in powerful groups and organizations, are capable of systematic influence over political life (Higley & Burton, 2006). The very existence of a political elite is an expression of political inequality (see also Sorokin, 1959). Elite theorists argue that elite rule perpetuates because elite turnover simply generates a new set of elites

(see Hoffmann-Lange, 2007, 2018; López, 2013a). To understand why political inequality endures, we must go beyond the point that the elite are the living embodiment of political inequality. Instead, we must analyze elite action and attitudes as a reproductive mechanism and as fuel for change.

The first analytical step is to acknowledge that these same social actors can promote equality as well as inequality. The elites may find that promoting democracy suits their interest because democracies zealously protect property rights (Albertus & Gay, 2017; Ansell & Samuels, 2014; North & Weingast, 1989). Elites can also promote democratic regimes in order to signal redistribution to the poor and prevent revolutionary movements (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003). Beyond enfranchisement, elites can promote welfare policies and partial social equality as a means to mitigate the impact of modernization's nefarious externalities, such as criminal violence (López, 2013b; Reis & Moore, 2005) and viral epidemics (de Swaan, 1988), an externality that now, in the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic since March 2020, is aggressively reinforcing structural inequalities.

A popular sentiment is that elites are to blame for the current trends in income and resource concentration that triggered movements such as Occupy and the current surge in populism. The elite have used their influence to promote greater income concentration (Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 2012; Hacker & Pierson, 2010; Kelly, 2020) and the association with aspiring autocrats places large sections of the elite in anti-democratic coalitions, regardless of their alleged democratic credentials (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

The incentive of "containing the poor" that drove elites to sponsor both democracy and redistribution in the 20th century appear to be less relevant today. During the Cold War, social revolution was perceived by elites as an eminent possibility, even though, for minority revolutionary groups, this task would be prohibitively hard (Weyland, 2019). Today, elites in socially explosive countries currently disregard the capacity of the poor to revolt despite apparent incentives to do so (Hossain, 2005; Moraes Silva & López, 2015; López et al. 2020; Reis & Moore, 2005). When the elite do not fear the consequences of inequality, they might as well sponsor, or simply not do anything seriously about, great economic concentration. Simply put, political inequality endures, in part, due to elite actions that maintain what they consider as an acceptable level of inequality (see also Arndt & Lukas, 2020).

While elites reproduce the inequalities that erode the quality of democracies, we need to better understand the incentives and distribution of power within that stratum. Recent studies have pointed to the gap in political influence regarding wealthier and poorer voters in the United States (Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 2012) and perhaps in other countries (e.g., Lupu & Warner, 2019). The ability to bias policies is itself a major incentive for elites to coordinate and maximize the inequalities that allow them to thrive. If democracy's responsiveness to the wealthy may explain why elites embrace democratic regimes in unequal settings (Albertus & Gay, 2017; Ziblatt, 2017), internal fractures among elites, cleverly exploited by nationalist populists, may also explain the cases in which democracy does not survive (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018)

The first set of papers in this special issue addresses this question from different angles. John Higley has long conceptualized the elite as a multidimensional group that have built interlocking fortresses within the realms of social, economic, and political life to exert an outsized role on the shape of policy and politics (e.g., Higley & Burton, 2006; Higley & Gunther, 1992). Higley (this issue) builds on his classic elite theory framework and on the experience of different Western nations to explain how low levels of trust within the elite shapes the kind of elite dissent that characterizes populist politics. Elite coordination changed in advanced democracies. In the past, elite settlements and processes of elite convergence generated stable competitive regimes where elites enjoyed high levels of mutual security. Non-elites also benefited from more inclusive regimes. The new scenario of increasing inequality is the background for new political strategies among elite groups who coordinate among themselves to benefit from public dissatisfaction and promote populist and radical alternatives that, paradoxically, further exacerbate inequalities. Meanwhile, the masses who clamor for redistribution remain disorganized.

In the study by Jorge Atria and colleagues, the Chilean economic elite justify the deep and persistent economic and political inequalities that keep them in power through an imagined meritocracy. According to the elite, merit is based on talent, and upward mobility in the private sector is a function of merit. The Chilean elite argue that private philanthropy should replace the public sector that the elite decry as inefficient and nonmeritocratic. Higley concurs that the elite shy away from redistribution of economic and political resources. Both authors also suggest that structural configurations of political inequality, recent changes in elite composition, and cultural processes of justification can all help or hurt elite coordination. An elite that is cohesive in composition and values find it easier to coordinate around strategies that reproduce and justify inequalities. Meanwhile, divisions within the elite generate within-group conflict that, in turn, opens the way for a new elite composed of aspiring autocrats and populists. Taken together, these studies imply that shifts in elite coordination can affect inequality, perhaps with great speed.

Implicit in these articles is the idea that elite coordinated actions can repress mass behavior. In unequal democracies, the masses assess the gravity of the situation but often decide to support the inequalities of the status quo. However, the masses are not a monolithic group; within the masses, ordinary citizens and social movement actors learn to adapt and change their protest tactics. The next two articles, set in Latin America and in post-Soviet Ukraine, illustrate these possibilities and limits of elite coordination and mass discoordination.

Matias López notes that the unequal democracies of Latin America are for the most part kept in place by both the elite and the masses. Elites benefit from an unequal democracy because they thrive under the protection of repressive states. Meanwhile, the masses monitor the power of repression, calculate their odds of radical redistribution through protest, and cope with the status quo. At the heart of this relationship are citizen rights. The ability to cash in on citizen rights is, in large part, a province of the elite.

Through mass demonstrations, some of the relatively uncoordinated masses do, on occasion, challenge the elite. To challenge the elite is to risk repression. Encounter after encounter, in a long stream of these public contentious episodes, elites and masses learn from each other. Most of what we know about this "mobilization-repression nexus" comes from studies of the West. Olga Zelinska's article on major protests in Ukraine over the past two decades points out what we know, and what we do not know, about this learning process in the post-Soviet context. Whereas the West fears a normalization of increasingly violent clashes between protestors and the state, the post-Soviet countries have long experienced this normalization. Zelinska finds that Ukraine protesters learn from transnational activists on how to coordinate with other protestors and to contend with the resurgence of Soviet-style authoritarian tactics. In each successive interaction, the state employed revamped and increasingly authoritarian tactics. While protestor tactics have been largely peaceful, the neoauthoritarian state had also been largely restrained. This restraint ended during the Euromaidan protests in Kyiv. While the masses coordinate, the state learns from that coordination and prepare for the next protest and crackdown.

Mass Discoordination

For everyday citizens, structured gender, economic, and age inequalities prevent representative politics and political action from producing equality. Voters use democracy to voice their interests in redistribution, but the tools that are preferred or available for politicians to answer to such demands often result in the reproduction of inequality (Holland, 2017; Luna, 2014). Representation and participation should empower those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, but they often do not (Gilens, 2012). Indeed, the workers at the lower rungs of the occupational ladder are essential to economic development, but their contributions are overlooked (Edwards, 2018).

Although fairer and thus more equitable redistribution would benefit the majority of the masses, in North America, Europe, and Latin America, researchers consistently find that an individual's position in the social structure interacts with the economic and political environment to repress the mass actions that could, potentially, push the elites toward fair economic redistribution. People who possess greater resources and live in more economically equitable and more open political environments are more likely to sign petitions, attend demonstrations, and contact politicians, among other forms of noninstitutionalized political participation (Dalton et al., 2010; Gallego, 2007; Solt, 2015; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011).

But there is more to the processes of participation and contestation. Nicolás Somma and colleagues (this issue) argue that, to better understand why political inequality in participation endures, we should know the issues that drive different social groups to protest. Whereas people from across the social structure tend to participate when their lives and livelihoods are directly and immediately threatened, individuals from higher up the socioeconomic ladder are more likely to protest on "furtherance issues," that is, social problems that do not threaten immediate survival, but would need policy intervention,

such as educational reform and calling for greater political transparency. The authors examine survey data from Latin America and find this strong socioeconomic bias.

We know that micro and macro conditions of the social structure stratifies voter turnout, but we do not have many studies of how meso-characteristics, such as party actions, also play a role in stratified turnout. Matthew Polacko (this issue) examines Canada from the 1980s to the 2010s and finds that, as it happens in other nations, high-economic inequality depresses voter turnout. Interestingly, Polacko also finds that when political parties offer economic redistribution policies, the depressive impact of inequality is reduced. Theoretically, then, redistributive policies can entice people from across the social structure, and not just those at the top, to show up at the voting booth. Political parties can mobilize a broad spectrum of voters and thus turn mass discoordination into purposeful mass action.

Even if masses across the social structure may participate at more equitable levels, society would likely remain economically and politically unequal in outcomes. Markus Holdo (this issue) builds on the experiences of participatory budgeting in Brazil and Argentina to debate the circumstances in which participation actually represents inclusion and those in which it serves as a smokescreen to justify existing and durable inequalities. Participatory budgeting is an arena of power, Holdo writes. As in all places where power relationships are in view, participants are engaged in a contest. Viewing this contest in its dynamic or static dimensions opens up new ways of understanding the equity potential of participatory budgeting arenas.

Joonghyun Kwak and colleagues circle the issue back to its impetus: Whether our anxieties of democratic backsliding, caused in part by the weakening of core political institutions that are the foundations on which democracy rests, is warranted. Building on Foa and Mounk (2016) and their many critics, the authors analyze institutional and harmonized survey data from across nations and time to test the democratic backsliding thesis. Their findings suggest that trust in institutions by the youth, in comparison with the old, affects democracy. They cautiously suggest that our anxieties of democratic backsliding have merit, i.e. across nations and time, low trust in democratic institutions reduces the level of democracy. They conclude more strongly that continuing investigations into backsliding is worthwhile.

These articles highlight different mechanisms through which the elite and the masses think, act, and relate to one another, and how social structures are important forces that impact, to paraphrase Lenski (1966), "who gets what and why" in the political system. The tools of democracy can become tools of inequality, but that is not necessarily the fate of democracy. Just like elites feel the need to coordinate in order to shield themselves from too-radical redistributive demands, the masses in society also need to be able and willing to coordinate collective use of participatory tools in order to foster policies that suit the interests of society.

Conclusion

In the darkness of our anxieties, our need to make sense of political inequality takes on a bright new urgency. This urgency manifests in the rising interest among scholars for more multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies of what drives political inequality.

In our reading of the recent politics and inequality literature, it appears that the level of dialogue between Northern and Southern researchers remains unfortunately low. As researchers in the Global North discover political inequality anew, this special issue meets the growing demand for comparative and interdisciplinary research. Research focused exclusively on Western nations often overlooks the experience of developing countries that have, for decades, dealt with populism, inequality, and dysfunctional democracies. This guest edited issue is designed to inspire a broader dialogue in the field of politics and inequality, and specifically about how elite interests and structured representation and participation allow political inequality to endure.

In this introduction, we provided a brief state of the art on the politics of inequality in comparative perspective that highlights important research puzzles that remain unsolved. We emphasized why research on participation, representation, and contestation from both powerful and powerless individuals should be the priorities in the field of politics and inequality. Specifically, (a) how the elite reproduce and enable political inequality and (b) why representative democracy and political action have not adequately remedied political inequality. Instead of treating the elite and the obstacles to mass participation as separate issues, we propose to understand them as complementary mechanisms, i.e. elite coordination and mass discoordination, that combine to explain why political inequality endures. To generate new insights into the relationship between politics and inequality, we ask scholars across the social and behavioral sciences to leap over geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

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Article

Elite Trust and the Populist Threat to Stable Democracy

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Abstract

One aspect of elite theory holds that democratic stability depends heavily on elites trusting each other to keep distributive issues from reaching acute degrees impelling power seizures. This presumes that agreement about the distribution of valued things is seldom deep or wide in large publics. When distributive issues rise to clear public consciousness, the tendency is toward civil strife. Populists assail and undermine elite trust and the management of politics by elites. They thereby weaken an important basis of democratic stability. I argue that the rise of populist leaders to power leads to an erosion of elite trust, which makes distributive issues more acute and threatens the stability of democratic institutions.

Keywords

elite theory, trust, populists, democratic stability

Contrary to what most Americans and other Westerners have believed, politics is almost entirely a *relativistic universe* in the sense that there is no universal standard to which political actions can be made to conform. The only product of politics that can usually be recognized as of some value by most people is a minimal amount of organized peace—some outer limit on the pursuit of conflict in a society. Where politics have long been organized and practiced along representative lines, and where economic and social conditions are essentially benign, there *may* be a somewhat more substantial general interest. Most persons might agree that the objective merit of representative politics is that they make acquiescing in policies of which one disapproves easier because there is some chance of changing them by peaceful electoral means (Przeworski, 1999). Yet, even representative institutions are to some degree imposed on most citizens.

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How does one find a place to stand in a relativistic universe such as politics? Normally, a person's circumstances give him or her a general orientation toward political matters. One's social position leads to preferring some values instead of others. For example, middle-class persons who wish to make, or have to make, reliable plans for future actions usually condemn strikes that disrupt provisions of goods and services and interfere with their plans. By the same token, factory workers engaged in repetitive, personally unplanned work often conclude that their interests can best be advanced through strikes, and they are likely to condone them. So, is politics merely a matter of self-interest and are all bases of moral choice illusions?

Not completely, because the political orientation of each person is not equally important and relevant in politics. Usually, those whose orientations are most closely based on self-interest or the narrow prejudices of a specific social stratum, ethno-religious, regional, or other category do not have much influence if there are considerable numbers of more broadly oriented leaders around. By manipulating the political agenda, limiting mass mobilizations, or forestalling conflicts through clever planning, such leaders may prevent the nihilistic potential of politics from becoming manifest. It is only when there are no such leaders, or when they are for some reason incapable of managing politics in these ways, that the situation is very nearly hopeless.

This conception of politics denies the basic premise on which the prevailing Western conception rests, which is that the great differentiation of statuses and interests in a complex society like the United States is nevertheless compatible with adherence to a single set of ideals and goals—that what is good for one is still somehow good for all. It assumes, instead, that self-interest motivates most political action, that political outcomes are affected by the judgments of self-interested persons and groups as to what claims and actions are and are not expedient, and that, in the final analysis, it is only the efforts of somewhat more broadly oriented leaders—principally, elites—to manage and limit conflicts that prevent a war of all against all.

Elites

Although there is no single theory of elites and politics, most theories focus on what tiny groups of powerful and influential persons do or do not do in the political world. They do not rest on the premise underlying aristocracies and monarchies that certain persons and groups *ought* to rule and *ought* to have control of what others do. They deal, instead, with a practical matter, which is the degree to which what happens politically is determined by elites, defined as persons and small, relatively cohesive and stable groups commanding political party, government administrative, business, trade union, media, military, and other hierarchically structured organizations and movements and able to affect political outcomes on a continuing basis (Best & Higley, 2018; Putnam, 1976). These elite persons and groups may not be better than anyone else, but most theories presume it is their behavior, rather than the behavior of people in general, that in many respects shapes what does or does not happen politically. This presumption is of course debated. Like Vilfredo Pareto (1916/1935) in his million-word treatise on balances and imbalances between elites and nonelite populations

(Femia, 2006), some theories assign elites and nonelites equal importance in the determination of political outcomes (e.g., Milner, 2015).

Are elites an inevitable aspect of human organization? Strictly speaking, they are not. Small communities are capable of operating in egalitarian ways. Although historical evidence shows they have rarely done so, under special circumstances and with luck when they form, small communities can function without elites. Consider, for example, small and isolated settlements, like Inuit villages before contacts with Europeans or some mountain valley Swiss cantons during medieval times. But in countries of a size normal in the modern world, elites are inescapable and, one might add, essential. They are not merely a consequence of population size; they stem from urbanization and at least incipient industrialization. With these qualifications, one can say that modern societies of any size and complexity *always* have a small number of people in them much more able than others to shape political outcomes.

This does not mean that elites have the power to do whatever they please—to restore, for example, a medieval religious belief or restrict the incomes of all or most people to subsistence levels. Neither, on the other hand, are they at liberty to make everyone truly equal, because attempting to do so would antagonize persons and groups better positioned to block equality than those who push for it. Elites need support from segments of populations and are not capable of determining the attitude patterns on the basis of which those segments give or withhold support (Field & Higley, 1980/2013). Elites who imagine some perfect society and try to bring it about do not remain elites for very long; they lose nonelite support and others take over.

Mostly, elites try to sustain their individual power and influence so long as they can. In contemporary conditions, persons are usually well along in life before attaining key positions in hierarchically structured organizations and movements. Typically, they do not attain them before 50 or so years of age and are unlikely to hold their positions for more than a decade or two. In countries where elites deliberately mitigate power struggles, the typical elite person usually comes out pretty well after vacating his or her position. This is not the case where elites are too insecure to observe rules that keep power struggles limited. Where elites fight viciously for power and losers are victimized for defeats, holders of elite positions cannot just retire and expect to be called on from time to time to influence what happens politically, or at least be consulted about it. Where, however, elite power struggles are not winner-take-all, this is what the typical elite person can safely anticipate.

Elite Trust

Stable democratic institutions are rarely the result of all or even most social actors cooperating voluntarily, peacefully, and with adequate information; nearly always, they depend on elites trusting each other to manage politics in ways that prevent distributive issues from reaching acute degrees impelling power seizures. This is because agreement about the distribution of valued things is seldom deep or wide in large publics. When distributive issues rise to clear public consciousness, the tendency is toward civil strife. Democratic institutions are stable only when the bulk of elite

persons and groups agree about them without adhering to some single political viewpoint, as happens in rigidly autocratic or totalitarian regimes.

This has been the basis of the stable political institutions that people in Anglo-American and several European countries have long been familiar with, and it is an absolute requirement for stable democratic government. One can look through the past 200 or 300 years of world history and notice that in any country where there was a reasonable and sustained degree of representative government based on competing parties, and in which persons elected to political office routinely served out their terms peacefully, it is possible to find a circumstance in that country's history that created mutual trust among its elites (Burton & Higley, 1987). Thereafter, elites managed to contain distributive conflicts over long periods of time. Groups with grievances were either bought off or put in positions from which further contestation was useless. By performing one or the other operation or some combination of them on major distributive issues, and by adapting their public expressions and policy positions to prevailing public political orientations, elites ensured their persistence in Anglo-American and Scandinavian countries as well as the Netherlands and Switzerland.

This made possible, although it did not guarantee, that a "right" to influence government office-holding could be spread by incremental suffrage expansions to ever larger population segments, usually in the context of elite competitions for government executive and legislative offices. The suffrage expansions happened gradually and eventually made it possible to speak of "democracy" without wondering if the term's users were deluding themselves. That elites in a handful of Western countries acted historically in these ways and kept representative institutions stable showed elites can do this once there is sufficient trust among them.

Political restraint is the practical manifestation of elite trust. Depending on local conventions of what is right and not right to say and do, elites can be polite to each other or exceedingly impolite in ways that sound threatening. The question is whether they carry out threats they sometimes make; in countries where there is substantial trust, they normally do not. They pursue bargains and compromises, emphasize technical and procedural feasibilities instead of ultimate rights and wrongs, agree to disagree when decisions cannot or should not be reached, regularly endorse their society's core values, and affirm fidelity to existing institutions rather than particular personalities (Di Palma, 1973; Prewitt & Stone, 1973). They adhere to norms of mutual tolerance and forbearance, accept one another as legitimate rivals, and exert institutional prerogatives with moderation (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Over time, this enables elite persons and factions to achieve diverging aims and inclines them to view the totality of political outcomes as positive-sum and uphold institutions that process their bargains and compromises. Trust and restraint give elite members reasonable assurance that even after missteps, scandals, or defeats they will retain their lives, reputations, and a decent social status.

However, elites in most countries in today's world, as in all of premodern world history, are not mutually trusting and restrained. Consequently, efforts to spread stable democracy around the globe are frustrated by the fact that the essential elite prerequisite is usually not present. Where elites are accustomed to bitter conflict along lines of

"Grab what you can—never mind the other person," introducing democratic suffrage, competing political parties, and free and fair elections soon leads to serious disturbances. Various elites and their supporters fear what these aspects of democracy portend. They assume that political enemies will use them to take advantage of innocent voters to gain the upper hand. When crises arise, therefore, seizures of executive power by the military or entrenched civilian groups controlling the military become likely, because there is no serious degree of elite trust and restraint.

In stable democratic settings, elite trust and restraint are not readily apparent. Competing persons and groups regularly and publicly portray each other as scoundrels who breach established political norms and practices. Except when elites collectively pull their punches to put the lid on a deep crisis (Dogan & Higley, 1998), trust is mostly tacit, and restraint is often not clearly avowed. The question to ask is whether elites act over time to keep doctrinal and policy disagreements from exploding into winner-take-all confrontations—whether, that is, the *pattern of elite behavior* suggests a common, though seldom explicitly articulated, desire to collaborate in keeping politics tame. Identifying this pattern and linking its presence or absence causally to different types of political regimes is a central task of elite theory and research (e.g., Higley & Burton, 2006).

Is the pacification of politics by elites sustainable in contemporary democracies? The question arises because many of today's populist leaders exploit distributive issues in ways elites may not be able to contain and manage. They act as pied pipers offering delusive enticements, making irresponsible promises, and exhibiting disdain for rule of law. The rise of populists to power erodes elite trust, makes distributive issues more acute, and threatens the stability of democratic institutions.

Elites and the Populist Threat

Elites and other participants in politics have an interest in managing and limiting conflicts only if they enjoy considerable safety and security in their political and social statuses. As Robert Dahl (1971) observed, a "well developed system of mutual security" and a "system of mutual guarantees" are bedrock features of elites that keep institutions stable (p. 36, p. 38). If unsafe and insecure, elites and other political actors must devote their thought and energies to suppressing or annihilating enemies. An important caveat about politics is that elites can manage and contain conflicts only if major reversals of status do not impend.

The absence of status reversals and comparatively effective political management during the modern histories of Anglo-American, Scandinavian, Dutch, and Swiss countries illustrated this caveat. Several trends in these and most other Western countries during the past three or four decades have reinforced its relevance. The general conclusion that doctrinaire welfare state programs lead eventually to severe inflation and government debt removed much of the enthusiasm among left liberals and social democrats for sharply modifying the life chances of many people through such programs (Samuelson, 2008). A fairly widespread revulsion for the large bureaucracies required to administer the redistributive and regulatory policies of welfare states also

eroded that enthusiasm. On the other side of the ledger, the 2008-2009 financial crisis and its lengthy aftermath ended whatever consensus there was for wholesale economic and financial deregulation (e.g., Blinder, 2013; Wolf, 2014). At present, huge state expenditures and interventions to avoid an economic depression caused by the rapid and deadly spread of the Coronavirus may serve as final nails in deregulation's coffin.

These trends and developments leave populist leaders as the only prominent advocates of drastic social and political change in Western societies. They regard themselves as located outside the bureaucratic structures of their societies, as bitter foes of those structures, and as performing a vital teaching or correcting function in matters of public sentiment and belief. Populist leaders are inclined toward a generalized notion of political equality as the normative standard against which political actions and outcomes should be judged. They profess to believe that a society characterized by at least a rough equality in political life is ultimately possible, and that most or all persons will ultimately agree about its worth. In these respects, populist leaders are residual bearers of the utopian possibilities that figured so strongly in Western political thought during modern history (Higley, 2016).

Not only are the beliefs of populist leaders plainly utopian, they stand in the way of a more realistic conception of politics, namely, there is no universal standard to which politics could conform to be anything other than unjustified impositions of power that people either accept or resist according to judgments of what is expedient. Persons prepared to embrace this conception of politics should oppose populist leaders, not because the ultimate condition of political equality they claim to seek is undesirable in a moral sense, but because it is impossible in a political sense. It is not the *aims* of populist leaders that adherents of a more realistic conception of politics should oppose; it is the *unintended consequences* that seeking the impossible will bring about.

Prospects

Elites create and sustain stable democratic institutions by first settling basic disputes between themselves and then trusting each other to muffle or curb explosive distributive issues that gain clear public attention. But because the muffling or curbing of explosive issues by elites appears undemocratic, highlighting it is regarded with distaste. The difficulty is democracy's normative meaning, which is an arrangement in which all or most citizens are expected to have equal political influence. Yet if one looks at the matter closely, it will be clear that the persistent muffling or curbing of explosive issues by elites is, in fact, the main basis of stable democracy.

It is important to take account of on what democratic stability actually rests and think about it in realistic ways. Elite theory embodies this realism, focusing not only on electoral contests, but on how arrangements such as restricted elite recruitment and behind-the-scenes networks of influence and friendship enable elites to perform functions essential for democratic stability, if they are going to be performed at all (Higley et al., 1991; Putnam, 1976). Such arrangements are compatible with something most relatively well-off and secure people tend to regard as a satisfactory form of

representative government, although seriously disadvantaged people tend to view representative government as a form of oppression.

Does this amount to saying that well-off and secure people in Western democracies, such as the United States, already live in the best possible world? Of course not. Reforms of extant political institutions and practices will always be required. As a consequence of technological and social change, institutional and other arrangements that worked under previous conditions must constantly be adjusted to work under new ones. But in Western democracies of today and tomorrow, no amount of populist reform can abolish discontent, envy, and conflict, because these democracies inescapably involve *unequal chances* for individuals to do the things to which all, or at any rate most, aspire.

Two scenarios can be sketched. In a benign scenario, the populist threat to democratic stability motivates elites to reduce distributive inequalities: less biased financial systems, fairer taxation, higher average wages, improved infrastructures. In a malign scenario, populist leaders ramp up assaults on elites and institutions they accuse of trampling on "the people's will": government bureaucracies, investigative media, independent judiciaries. If elite trust and restrained partisanship are reinvigorated by collaborating in measures aimed at marginalizing populist leaders, the benign scenario may take hold. If, on the other hand, populist leaders are unchecked, democratic institutions may crumble.

In conclusion, populist leaders and movements force elites to think hard about where Western democracies are headed and consider abandoning or truncating mechanisms, such as referendums and unrestricted party primary elections, that advantage populists. Similarly, because populists thrive on social media messages that are often deliberately false and malicious, they motivate elites to limit what is allowed on media platforms. By exploiting work insecurities for political gain, populists induce elites to create large numbers of decent jobs to accomplish things that are at present not accomplished or are accomplished inadequately. This includes jobs in the area of environmental and ecological safeguards to slow the effects of climate change and conserve scarce resources as well as human service jobs to better care for the elderly, the physically impaired, and others who are handicapped. Most important, the populist threat amounts to a clarion call for elites to preserve and strengthen their mutual trust and restraint, which is a prerequisite for stable democracy.

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Article

Economic Elites' Attitudes Toward Meritocracy in Chile: A Moral Economy Perspective

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Abstract

We analyze economic elites' perceptions and beliefs about meritocracy from a moral economy perspective. A moral economy perspective considers how norms and beliefs structure socioeconomic practices through the constitution and expression of what is considered acceptable, proper, and legitimate. Our study explores how economic elites make sense of the roles of talent and effort in the distribution of resources and how they reconcile the idea of meritocracy within a rigid social order. The site of our study is Chile, a country with fluid mobility between low and middle classes, but with high and persistent disparities and strong barriers to elite positions. We conducted 44 semistructured interviews with shareholders, board members, and high-level executives of large or high-turnover companies in three major Chilean cities. We find that the economic elite strongly support meritocracy but explain access to top positions based on talent rather than effort. The economic elite define talent in terms of business and leadership skills. They attribute upward mobility in the private sector to meritocratic practice. At the same time, they view the public sector as the epitome of nonmeritocratic practices, incompetence, and inefficiency. They profess empathy with the poor, but they reject redistributive policies. The economic elite believe in the primacy of competition in economic life and the necessity of continual economic growth, and thus, they understand meritocracy as both the means to survive in a market economy and a responsible approach to lead national development.

Keywords

elites, moral economy, meritocracy, Chile

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There is growing evidence that large economic inequalities may also lead to political inequalities, thus affecting the potential of democracy to equitably represent the voices of the citizenry (American Political Science Association, 2004; Putnam, 2015; Verba et al., 1987). Merit has become a much-prevailing criterion for assigning goods and rewards in contemporary society (Hadjar, 2008). Meritocracy was a concept sarcastically coined by Michael Young to describe a social system in which rewards are allocated primarily based on merit, that is, talent and effort (Young, 1962). Meritocracy is often presented as an ideal in which the outcomes achieved are independent of the point of departure (Mijs, 2016). Whereas, theoretically, meritocracy should favor upward mobility of the middle and lower classes and thus reduce the concentration of economic and political power, it has also been considered a myth that reproduces and legitimizes inequality (Goldthorpe, 2003). Indeed, in societies with large inequalities, the link between upward mobility and talent and effort is weak.

In this article, we ask "How does the economic elite perceive meritocracy in economic and civic institutions?" "How do its members reconcile merit alongside large and durable inequalities?" We argue that to address these questions, and thus to understand how economic elites account for their legitimacy as dominant agents despite persistent inequalities and severely restricted social mobility into the elite, a moral economy approach is useful. A moral economy perspective considers how norms and beliefs structure socioeconomic practices by constituting and expressing what is considered acceptable, proper, and legitimate. The perceptions and beliefs of meritocracy held by those who occupy privileged positions is of value because they are the group that embodies the tensions between achievement and ascription (Khan & Jerolmack, 2013) and are the beneficiaries of meritocracy.

With this moral economy approach, we explore economic elite perceptions on the role of talent and effort in the distribution of resources. We focus on how elite members value and apply these concepts and how such attitudes link to their evaluation of social groups and their redistributive preferences. In addition, we explore how elites account for significant and persistent achievement gaps between different social groups. Following Higley and Burton (2006), we understand elites as individuals, based on their position in powerful groups and institutions, who substantially and regularly affect political and economic outcomes. Thus, in this study, we conducted 44 semistructured interviews with shareholders, board members, and high-level executives of large or high-turnover companies. The sites of our study are three large cities in Chile.

We chose Chile as the locus of our study because it is a paradoxical country: It has a strong record of democratic rule, and in the 1990s, it has experienced high economic growth, but there has been very high and persistent inequality. Chile's welfare policies have significantly reduced poverty and led to social mobility. Yet strong hierarchical barriers in elite groups persist (Torche, 2005b). This has to do with the huge economic redistribution to the top that took place during the Pinochet dictatorship (Sánchez-Ancochea, 2017), which also favored concentration of power. In an older study, the Chilean economic elite have been characterized by its high levels of ideological homogeneity and cohesion, and the country's regime has been relatively stable with few

coups (Higley & Burton, 1989). The social preferences of the elite were different than those of the general population, and high levels of influence allowed the elite to impose them while blocking redistributive reforms.

Our results show that Chilean economic elites anchor merit to talent, in contrast to the middle and lower classes that equate merit with effort (Araujo & Martuccelli, 2012). Our interviewees have a positive assessment of their own merit, and they claim that talent is distributed evenly throughout society. They define talent as a set of personal attributes (see also Yamokoski & Dubrow, 2008) based on skills for entrepreneurship, that is, business skills, and group leadership. Such an idea of talent allows elites to reconcile inequality and meritocracy: They associate achievement expectations with individual responsibility, and neglect the role redistribution plays in generating opportunities, placing the private sector at the center of their idea of success and development. The elites acknowledge that a fair distribution (i.e., one based on merit) is worth pursuing. Yet their idea of meritocracy is based on talent as a business trait expressed in the private sector, and thus, they are hostile to radical redistributive policies through the public sector. The public sector, according to the elite, is nonmeritocratic, incompetent, and inefficient. Eschewing the public sector, the economic elite instead opts for private philanthropic initiatives that, unfortunately, have limited impact on economic and power disparities. Moreover, when combined with other social practices such as labor recruitment or taxation, their meritocratic values aid the intergenerational reproduction of privilege.

The remainder of this article is as follows: The next section discusses the moral economy perspective, the notion of meritocracy, and its relationship with theories on the formation and reproduction of elites, and it also informs on the Chilean case. This is followed by a section that introduces the methodology, data collection, and our analytic strategy. The penultimate section presents the findings, and the final section discusses them and concludes.

Elites and the Moral Economy of Merit and Meritocracy

Moral Economy

The notion of a "moral economy" refers to social exchanges grounded on a horizon of shared norms and values (Mau, 2003). A moral economy–based perspective considers norms and beliefs that structure economic practices (Thompson, 1971) by constituting and expressing what is considered acceptable, proper, and legitimate with respect to moral principles such as justice, solidarity, decency, or reciprocity (Wiegratz, 2016).

Several studies of moral economies focused on the relationship between markets and society to criticize cost-benefits analyses that do not recognize the historical and cultural elements of social transactions (Polanyi, 1973). Based on this critique, it is argued that normative frameworks are an important motivational reference for individual actions, while institutions mediate and facilitate individual moral preferences (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2018). Under this perspective, a moral economy approach refers to the shared moral beliefs and norms about justice (Sachweh, 2012).

In this article, we follow Lind's (2010) proposal on moral economy as a discipline of inquiry. According to his argument, if economies always are embedded in specific social relations and institutions, moral norms and cultural practices are part of the social contract and thus put into practice by political processes and legal structures. Therefore, "any particular moral economy might be considered immoral" (Lind, 2010, p. 153), linking economic debates with those on justice.

Based on this approach, moral economy is neither an ideal state of affairs nor a repertoire mobilized in moments of social conflict: "The economy is always embedded in society and therefore the moral character of these economic relationships is always available for scrutiny." (Lind, 2010). As a discipline of inquiry, thus, it allows to analyze patterns of attitudes and their relationship to values in different societies (Taylor-Gooby et al., 2018).

Meritocracy

The concept of meritocracy is widely used in social sciences, especially when it comes to criticizing the reproduction of inequality and the lack of social mobility (Goldthorpe, 2003). Although the distribution of goods and rewards according to personal merit initially comes to replace previous inequality regimes based on heredity and nobility titles, from Young's book onward it is clear that the implications of a meritocratic society are far from being straightforward. On one hand, following Rawls (1999), the distribution of natural talents and the contingencies of social circumstances are unjust, which leads to the Rawlsian view that institutions should not only compensate disadvantages but also regard the distribution of natural talents "as in some respects a common asset and to share in the greater social and economic benefits made possible by complementarities of this distribution." (Rawls, 1999, p. 87). This view emphasizes the arbitrariness of fortune and the inapplicability of the notion of desert in these issues, so that institutional arrangements should not promote social efficiency or a fair competition for jobs but have a specific design to meet a criterion of mutual benefit and bring the harmony of interests closer (Rawls, 1999, pp. 88-90).

On the other hand, despite the supposed reduction of ascriptive inequalities, increasing economic disparities and income concentration became some of the main problems of modern societies (Piketty, 2014), seriously affecting the legitimacy of current societal arrangements such as democracy. In this context, the concept of meritocracy has regained importance during the past years. From a critical perspective, meritocracy can be thought of as a form of social engineering that identifies individual talents to be selected for suitable opportunities (Khan, 2011). Furthermore, as merit can be determined by nonmeritocratic factors and what is considered innate is subject to cultural and institutional contexts, meritocracy can represent an unfulfillable promise (Khan, 2011; Mijs, 2016).

Along with the increasing interest in studying meritocracy, several problems of conceptualization and empirical research arise. As Sen (2000) points out, "the idea of meritocracy may have many virtues, but clarity is not one of them" (p. 5). Part of these difficulties relate to different approaches in the study of meritocracy (Castillo et al.,

2019). On one hand, we find studies dealing with mobility, stratification, and education, which are characterized by showing how inequality is reproduced through the cumulation of competitive advantages, threatening the shared ideal of meritocracy (Arrow et al., 2000). On the other hand, social psychology and sociological research have pointed to empirical studies on the perception of meritocracy—whether merit is effective in the country or not—as well as the preference for meritocracy by individuals and societies, both from quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Castillo et al., 2019). For instance, using data from the International Social Survey Programme, Duru-Bellat and Tenret (2012) observe that perceptions of meritocracy increase with GDP, whereas Mijs (2019) shows that perceptions of meritocracy (which he calls beliefs) are stronger in more unequal societies. The same kind of paradox is found by Sachweh (2012) who, based on qualitative interviews, finds that "while people agree with abstract inegalitarian principles—in particular the idea of merit—for functional and normative reasons, they are at the same time critical of specific instances of inequality, especially poverty and wealth" (p. 421)

Merit and Elites

Although the sociology of elites is foundational to social science and can be traced back to the works of Pareto, Mosca, Michels, and Weber (López, 2013), the study of elites has faced some moments of oblivion and others of greater intellectual controversy (Savage & Williams, 2008). According to Kreckel (2006), by the mid-century, the tradition of functionalism characterized modern societies by structural processes of differentiation, leading to the existence of subsystems with different hierarchies, a perspective that handed little importance to elites. However, more recent approaches emphasizing conflict and power downplay the functionalist analysis while suggesting that different hierarchies are intertwined, overrepresenting the upper class in elite groups and challenging the premise that only the best reach prestigious positions.

Skepticism regarding the prevalence of merit in the access to elite positions also points out the possibilities and strategies of reproduction of the ruling class. According to Bourdieu's theory of capital, this is related to the often-unconscious acquisition of cultural capital. Such capital combines inherited and acquired elements, provides skills that enhance social differentiation, and has great symbolic efficacy, providing legitimacy and favoring the appropriation of profits and the reproduction of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Meanwhile, in its institutionalized state, the objectified cultural capital takes the form of academic qualifications, and it operates as "certificate of cultural competence," which provides and legitimizes cultural value (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Hence, the educational system—both formal and informal—is the means by which social order and the intergenerational transmission of privileges are legitimized. It also accounts for the lack of merits or gifts of the poorest, and it allows them to be resigned to their situation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Together with education, indicators such as occupation, geographical distribution, or ethnic or social origin reflect diverse modes of production of a cultivated *habitus*, creating different conditions of

reproduction and recognition in terms of prestige, competences acquired, and the manner of using them (Bourdieu, 1984).

In more open and democratic societies, where talent and effort are the basis to justify inequalities, the reproduction of elites faces new challenges (Hadjar, 2008). Those +who acquired privileged positions for reasons other than merit suffer increasing pressure to demonstrate the talents that are expected from such positions (Khan, 2011). For some researchers, this has positive consequences, and thus, meritocracy is a positive model we should move toward, whereas for others, it is seen as a rhetoric to justify the continuance of privileges (Atria et al., 2019; Frank, 2016). This latter perspective considers meritocracy as a myth that validates elite individuals as the best and the brightest through the rhetoric of talent and merit. But paradoxically, this happens in societies that are more unequal and have less social mobility (Khan, 2012), evidencing that the interplay between cultural capital and educational achievements to explain disparities and social closure still prevails (Savage, 2015). At the same time, it also relates to Young's dystopian vision of meritocracy, because it represents a society where "the principles of heredity and merit are coming together" (Young, 1962, p. 166).

This article focuses on the economic elite from a moral economy approach following three premises. First, if large economic disparities may also lead to political inequalities, affecting the potential that democracies have of representing the voices of all citizens, it becomes important to understand how elites justify the lack of social mobility toward advantageous positions while defending democracy. It is well-established that elites tend to be less supportive of state-led welfare programs and more inclined to support market-based initiatives (McCall, 2013), a result that is often interpreted in light of elites' selfish economic interests (Bartels, 2018; Gilens, 2012; Page et al., 2013). Nonetheless, those studies overlook the moral economy that allows elites to justify policy preferences and consequently the cultural mechanisms through which inequalities are created and reproduced. Second, the wealthiest groups often blame the victims to justify poverty and to defend the merit of their own achievements (Lerner, 1980), overlooking the fact that there is a broader social context influencing both results. Third, the evidence of elite schools or institutions recruiting members from more diverse backgrounds (Courtois, 2015) and the growing importance of individuals over classes show the need to understand which are the most salient individual narratives in order to demonstrate the relevance of merit in their own biographies.

Elites need to justify both their affluence and the poverty of others, and the literature shows a wide array of possible justifications. Whereas, for instance, Brazilian elites see themselves as different from the poor in terms of rationality, which gives a picture of a rigid social hierarchy (Silva & López, 2015), Bangladeshi elites distinguish between the poor who have the potential to be economically productive and those who lack it, which helps determine redistribution by prioritizing the former for public assistance and leaving the latter to private charity (Hossain, 2005). Moreover, while Yamokoski and Dubrow (2008) show that personality and respect are crucial bases of power among U.S. elites, displaying personal attributes and developing social identities to manipulate interpersonal relationships, Russian elites may refer to spiritual refinement of genetic superiority to justify more advantageous positions (Schimpfössl, 2018).

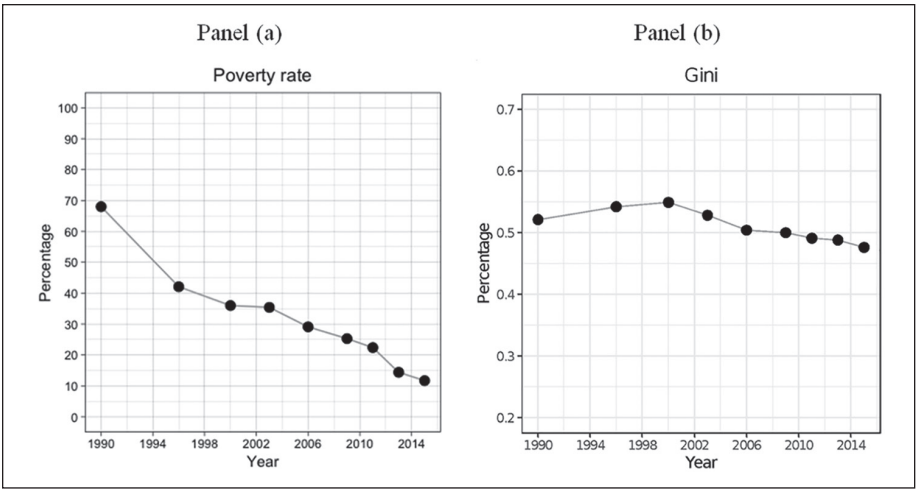

Figure 1. Poverty and income inequality in Chile for the 1990-2015 period.

Why Chile?

Chile was the first country where ideas and policies associated with a free market economy were introduced (D. Harvey, 2007). Though the Chilean model of development has been represented as a good example for several countries due to some macroeconomic indicators, it has also been characterized by high inequality and vulnerability levels as well as profound education, health, and housing segmentation (Solimano, 2012).

Chile experienced a significant decrease in poverty over the past few decades. Panel (a) in Figure 1 illustrates that the share of people living below the national absolute poverty line decreased from 68.0% in 1990 to 11.7% in 2015 (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2017).

Compared with the poverty decrease, inequality offers quite a different picture. With a wealth Gini index of 0.77, Chile exhibits a larger concentration of wealth and income compared with other middle-income countries (Credit Suisse, 2018; Flores et al., 2019). On the basis of posttransfers and taxes on household income, the official data of the Chilean government show that income inequality remained high in the 1990-2015 period. Graph (b) in Figure 1 shows that inequality decreased slightly from 0.521 in 1990 to 0.476 in 2015 (UNDP, 2017). Even so, figures of Chilean society are among the highest for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

Chile presents low earnings mobility across generations compared with OECD countries (OECD, 2018). Torche (2005b) shows more specific evidence about this finding, suggesting that it is possible to observe a strong elite closure but very low barriers across the rest of social classes. Following a class perspective, she examines

mobility tables with the data of the 2001 Chilean Mobility Survey. Her findings reveal the predominance of significant barriers between the top elite group—measured by the service class—and the rest of social classes. Furthermore, results indicate a high fluidity associated with weak barriers separating self-employed, agricultural, and manual sectors. Information of schooling illustrate this elite closure in Chile: Whereas only 3.1% of the poorest people completed tertiary education in 2000, 48.2% of the wealthiest youngsters did so (Torche, 2005a). Zimmerman (2019) complements this evidence about educational inequality in Chile. Based on income data from administrative sources, his results indicate that wealthy family background and school education prevail to reach top positions. Being enrolled in highly selective business-focused programs leads only male students from wealthy backgrounds to leadership positions and top incomes, thus widening gaps in top attainment by gender and baseline status (Zimmerman, 2019)

Previous studies on the Chilean economic elite highlight its strikingly high ideological cohesion, significant differences between its political preferences and those of the rest of the population, and its ability to block social reforms (Clark, 2018; Fairfield, 2015; Fourcade & Babb, 2003; Sánchez-Ancochea, 2017). Sharing the same social origin and moral and religious standards enhances permanence in prestigious positions and low downward mobility (Moya and Hernández, 2014; Thumala, 2007). In addition, poverty explanations increasingly highlight individual factors: the attribution of poverty to reasons such as laziness and lack of effort augmented in Chilean society from 18.4% in 1996 to 40% in 2015 (Frei et al., in press).

Data and Method

We conducted 44 semistructured interviews with shareholders, board members, and c-level managers in key positions at large companies. The interviewees were selected following the position method (Hoffmann-Lange, 2007), which is common in interview-based elite studies (e.g., Reis, 2005). In this case, the sample was built by selecting the companies first and then elite positions within them. Two main criteria were used to select the companies: number of employees (over 200 workers) and annual turnover/sales (100,000.01 *Unidades de Fomento* or more).

To gain access to managers, previous contacts were used to identify an initial set of participants. Formal contact was subsequently established by e-mail or telephone with individuals who fit our criteria for the sample.

The sample we generated consists of 35 men and 9 women living and working in three main cities of the country: 33 in the capital and largest city, Santiago de Chile, 6 in the city of Antofagasta (northern area of Chile), and 5 in Concepción (Southern area of Chile). The percentage of women represents female participation in the country's top business positions.[1]

Among our respondents, 23 serve as CEO or president, and the remaining 21 hold c-level positions. To obtain a more diverse sample, individuals working in different economic activities were taken into account: Eight work in the financial services industry, seven in mining and manufacturing sectors, six in nonmetallic manufacturing

Table 1. Frequency of Main Codes.

Code	Frequency
1. Perceptions on meritocracy in Chile	135
2. Education and values	76
3. Tax preferences	76
4. Definition of merit/meritocracy	70
5. Role of the state	73
6. Examples of merit	70
7. Relation between meritocracy and inequality	69
8. Income concentration and inequality	68
9. Merit and entrepreneurship	68
10. Limits of meritocracy	60

sector, five in construction and real estate sectors, four in energy sector, four in transportation and telecommunications systems, four in other business activities, three in commerce and retail sector, two in education services, and one in the NGO sector. All interviews were conducted between September and December of 2017.

The response rate was 47%. The main reason given for nonparticipation was time constraints during the period in which the fieldwork was carried out. The interviews lasted 61 minutes on average. A research company supported the research team in accessing participants, conducting some interviews, and transcribing all of them.

Interviews focused on three subjects: first, definitions of merit and meritocracy, including their conceptualization and the determinants of merit; second, perceptions of meritocracy in Chile, specifically its manifestations and institutional requirements, as well as situations of inequality; and third, preferences for redistribution both at a general level and a specific one based on evaluations of the tax system and tax reforms.

The content analysis involved two stages. In the first stage—in line with Sachweh (2012)—the coders were granted a codebook based on previously defined fundamental aspects. Additionally, the coding work accounted for an inductive stage by including new codes associated with emerging themes. That is, all transcribed interviews were indexed in flexible codes, consistent with both the research questions and previous information, thus replacing the traditional codification for a "Flexible Coding" (Deterding & Waters, 2018, p. 13). Table 1 shows the most frequent codes.

The second stage consisted of interpreting the coded material: Based on systematization, and using previous theoretical and empirical elements, categories or, in the case of the topics addressed, concepts and ideas arising from the interviews were identified (Deterding & Waters, 2018). Categories were built based on common characteristics, evidencing their significance by means of textual quotations, the sense of narrative, and the quantification of opinion trends. In light of this, the coherence, associated ideas, contexts, and aims of the senders were analyzed. Because it enables the generation of cross-sectional narratives, this process becomes a safeguard to overcome contradictions inherent to individual discourses (Sølvberg & Jarness, 2019). Hence,

our design aimed at conducting an analysis that was systematic, flexible to examine information from different perspectives, and exhaustive, identifying the most representative categories of the narratives (Krippendorff, 1990).

Results

Meritocracy and the Potential of Mobility

The economic elite believes merit to be present as an expanded principle in Chile. Individual success is deemed proof of the existence of meritocracy. This view relates to the historical context in which Chilean capitalism has developed over the past decades, prevailing a market approach that emphasizes the virtues of economic growth, entrepreneurship, efficiency, and independence of the private sector (Undurraga, 2013). In addition, development is strongly associated with a key role of business in society and an expanded philosophy of the new management, which extols prestigious academic credentials and is legitimized with positive economic results (Fourcade & Babb, 2003; Salvaj, 2013).

Narratives on the principle of merit clearly underline the importance of talent over effort. Twenty five out of 44 interviewees expressly related merit to concepts such as talent or other similar ones, like "core skills," "abilities," "intellectual abilities," or "gifts." There is no substantial difference across narratives in terms of cities of origin or the gender of our participants. This is quite different from the findings of previous studies carried out in Chile, which stated that in middle and lower classes, effort is more important than talent (Araujo & Martuccelli, 2015; Atria et al., 2019; UNDP, 2017). In the context of historical and durable inequalities, where ascriptive factors often triumph, the middle and lower classes support merit not only in line with the extended neoliberal ideology of individual success but also as an expectation of social justice and democratization of the social bond (Araujo & Martuccelli, 2012).

Although talent is usually associated with intelligence and intellectual coefficient estimates, in this case, its definition concerns aspects related to business activity. It is a set of managerial and entrepreneurial skills such as leadership, the ability to assume risk, communicational skills, and team handling. These skills are far from being mere abstractions; they are also strategies and behaviors that must be materialized in daily life. Three interviewees discussed this definition:

> In this company, those who do not work well with others, lack leadership skills, are intolerant or have unpleasant working environments will never beat the main leaders, this is also part of talent. (Male Business Person 10, Santiago)

> Merit is the skills that are developed professionally, as you advance in studies and all that, it is skills of the person. (Male Business Person 3, Concepción)

> Merit is talent in its different facets (. . .) of course being intelligent helps too, it is one of the ingredients, but most of all, it means being a successful leader, effective leadership,

> inspiring others to follow you, get excited with your ideas and feel that they are part of it. (Male Business Person 15, Santiago)

Although several interviewees suggest that talent is evenly distributed among the population, this set of business activities is unavailable to most people. It rather denotes specific skills attributed to those people immersed in a business environment, or to those who have earned a specific degree in prestigious institutions and thus have credentials attesting to their cultural competencies. Some participants acknowledged that social background and personal networks affect career development. Nonetheless, most participants expressed that talent is available to all, as it is considered to be the sum of skills that could be identified and reproduced by anyone.[2]

Many participants argued that merit consists of not only talent and, secondarily, effort, but also achievement and recognition. Achievement means attaining goals and objectives previously defined—which must also be measurable—whereas recognition is the reward for accomplishment, often related to wage increases, promotion within companies, and new professional challenges. The combination of talent and effort, achievement, and recognition reinforces the idea that success in top positions not only depends on objective results. Individual worth must be validated by achieving social esteem and recognition in intersubjective structures. Thus, relationships in a moral order become a relevant part of business achievement (Luci, 2016).

Therefore, the narratives of our interviewees suggest that almost anyone can experience upward mobility if they deserve it, because merit allegedly is evenly distributed among the population. However, at the same time, a set of specific behaviors an individual must engage in to be seen as talented emerges. Furthermore, narratives also evidence that being part of the economic elite is an active work, related to the attainment of specific goals and the search for recognition that validates success from a moral perspective.

The Role of Institutions

The expansion of a market ideology in the 1970s and 1980s in diverse areas of daily life not only transformed the Chilean capitalist model but also promoted the idea that businesspersons are themselves the drivers of social progress (Clark, 2018, p. 34). These conditions led competition to be assumed as a natural mechanism for social coordination.

Concordantly, most interviewees (35 out of 44) see private companies as organizations that foster meritocracy and government organizations as those that hinder it. Those with negative perceptions of the state criticize some of their functions and the lack of meritocracy in recruitment policies:

> If the country is truly meritocratic, the state must have a role that is as minimal as possible (. . .) It should not give much, perhaps design laws or regulatory contexts, so that there are clearer barriers to control family background. That way it can be, but no more than that. (Male Business Person 2 in Concepción)

Negative views on the state also appear in previous research in terms of distrust in government and political institutions in general (UNDP, 2020). In line with the aforementioned evolution of the Chilean capitalist model, state-society relations in contemporary Chile are embedded into a liberal institutional context that fosters the market as source of welfare provision (Huber & Stephens, 2012). In such a context, antigovernment ideology emerged as a complement of market-based institutions. This ideology is sustained mainly for right-wing political voters and the economic elite (Huneeus, 2016). An antistatist ideology together with strong organization have favored business coordination across sectors and power mobilization to block redistributive reforms with the claim that the state is ineffective and inefficient (Fairfield, 2015).

Conversely, those participants who mentioned companies see meritocracy as an adaptive requirement to compete in a market economy: a condition to face external factors with individuals with the best professional qualifications. In a virtuous circle between competition and merit, meritocracy becomes a necessary condition for progress.

Eighteen interviewees mentioned organization adaptation of companies as the main example of the materialization of meritocracy. Such adaptation means an obligation to "have the best," and therefore, recruitment primarily based on achievement instead of ascription. Hence, the expansion of merit relates to companies' modernization and, at the national level, to promarket reforms and trade openness. There can be no business success without meritocracy, and the participants have witnessed this modernization in the country's leading companies. An interviewee commented on this change:

> You cannot have a stupid person in the company, because competitors will kill you, and there is nothing more democratic, nothing promotes meritocracy like having the best human capital, and, as I mentioned, the best people can be found everywhere. (Male Business Person 15, Santiago)

Self-Perception of Meritocracy

Most interviewees recognize the existence of merit-based achievement in their family or working environment. The most common narrative involves middle-class parents—some of them with a migrant background—with no university degree, whose hard work prompted them to a higher social status. Taking advantage of opportunities—a rather diffuse concept—is usually illustrated by educational attainment. One interviewee illustrated this idea:

> My father in law was an immigrant. He came here with his family and worked hard (. . .) [My husband] went to school, he studied civil engineering at Universidad de Chile, all of his siblings went to college, as did their offspring. It is a story of effort. (Female Business Person 1, Santiago)

Underpinned by personal trajectories of success or those of acquaintances, meritocracy is understood as a *continuum* of achievable expectations to which most of the population has access, illustrated in Figure 2. Only those who had no access to quality

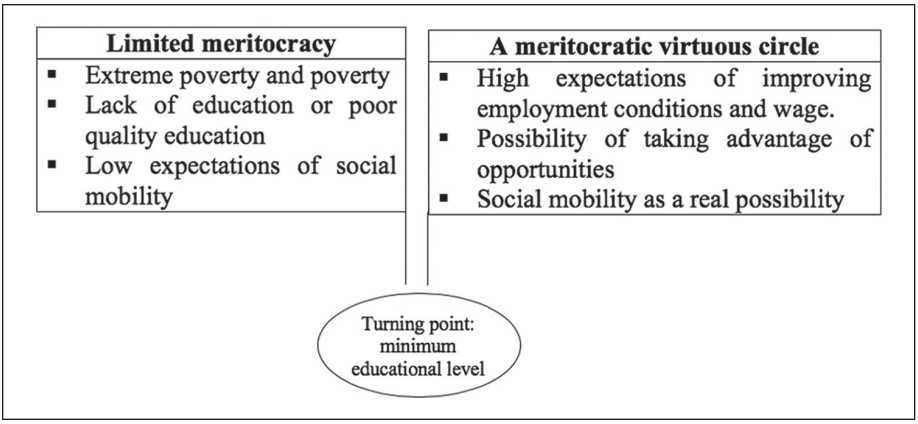

Figure 2. Expectations of meritocracy, held by the economic elite, in Chilean social structure.

education to fully develop themselves, and therefore lived in poverty, would not be able to get involved in this virtuous circle. This group raises the most concerns, and it is seen as the country's biggest challenge.

Though Chile has been much more successful at fighting poverty than inequality, it is striking that elites continue to concentrate on poverty. This focus neglects the distributive problem involving poor and nonpoor groups and has led to targeted public policies in specific groups instead of others like taxation, which have not altered the uneven distribution of income (Espinoza, 2012).

Unlike the French meritocratic model, where the state is seen by elites as a powerful institution to enhance life opportunities, Chilean discourses are similar to those of the United Kingdom, where membership of families, educational institutions, and corporate organizations position individuals in the corporate elite (C. Harvey & Maclean, 2008). Nonetheless, social and family background, as well as private education, are decisive to reach top positions. According to Zimmerman (2019), 1.8% of students of business majors at the two most selective universities make up 45% of the top 0.01% of the income distribution between 2005 and 2013. His analysis shows that peer ties generated among college classmates from similar social origin explain this overrepresentation. This suggests that although companies can, in theory, implement mechanisms for merit-based promotion from middle-level to prestigious positions, the most common pattern involves social origin and certain bachelor degrees—particularly law, business, and civil engineering—from mainly two universities, Universidad de Chile and Universidad Católica de Chile—to reach top business positions. Such pattern illustrates what Bourdieu (1996) describes as the conversion of durable capital into better concealed forms of capital, conditioning a diploma's effectiveness to ascriptive attributes. Two quotations reflect how interviewees differ on Chilean progress in this regard:

> Some companies started as family businesses, where the entire family was involved for years, until they got to a certain level and got acquainted with issues such as governance and structures, and many of them had to dismiss family (. . .) as owner, my investments will have a greater payoff if I have the best professionals—not my cousin—working for me. On the other hand, if my cousin is suitable for such a position, let him have it, but he must prove it [himself] with his own merits. (Male Business Person 22, Santiago)

> I went through all stages, and I got promoted based on merit. At one point, I stopped getting promoted, and I must admit that I experienced the frustration of doing things well done and witnessing that I could no longer grow due to this family thing. In family businesses, families will always prevail over the merit of the executives. (Male Business Person 18, Santiago)

Opposite to the optimistic approach of the first quotation, the second approach makes evident the existence of subtle distinctions within top hierarchical positions in the economic sphere, all of which limit professional careers. In other words, holding a very prestigious position requires more than a better performance and implies belonging to exclusive groups differentiated by specific social resources. This is consistent with the processes of fragmentation of the upper class that recent literature suggests, based on the evidence of income and wealth concentration, which calls for new research to understand the internal demarcation and distinction of the wealthy, as economic differences within these groups are higher than within other classes (Savage, 2014).

However, the narratives of our participants suggest that a meritocratic expansion seems not to be threatened. To be sure, at this level, some elite members acknowledge that merit can be limited by barriers to power, prestige, and influence. However, these barriers do not mean that reaching top positions requires nonmeritocratic factors. Additionally, the existence of barriers is not used as an example of other obstacles—e.g., structural factors such as gender bias or systematic discrimination—that could prevent overcoming poverty or vulnerability.

Inequality, Redistribution, and Institutional Solidarity

When merit-based achievements can be earned and opportunities can be leveraged by a majority, neither inequality nor wealth concentration is necessarily deemed to be a serious hindrance to progress and development. Out of the 44 participants, 30 stated that certain inequalities are to be accepted as they provide a positive incentive for merit. This perspective is in stark contrast with reflections on poverty, which is seen as a very problematic situation clearly placed in Chilean reality. For our participants, poverty reflects the lack of opportunities and quality education and is therefore the antithesis of meritocracy.

Solving poverty entails better education and new opportunities to promote autonomy, entrepreneurship, and employability. Redistributive policies are rarely mentioned as solutions, and at times even seen as a problem, along with any other initiative perceived as limiting the most talented people, because they are mainly economically understood as taking from the rich rather than giving to the poor:

> Ceilings are useless. In fact, if there would have been a ceiling on Bill Gates, he probably would have stopped right there, and he never would have developed all of his potential. (Male Business Person 16, Santiago)

Although it has been argued that in unequal societies there might be higher social distance between elites and nonelites (Blofield, 2011) and "empathy gulfs"—"in which people who are situated in one stratum of society may find it literally impossible to imagine the goods pursued by those in another" (Shapiro, 2002, p. 119)—thus weakening the incentives for redistributive reforms, our findings show a mixed scenario. On the one hand, concerning the large part of the social structure observed within the meritocratic virtuous circle, an empathy gulf is observed concerning the real conditions required to succeed in life. For example, substantially different opportunities existing between regions of an excessively centralized country such as Chile are not taken into account, even considering that 12 out of 44 interviewees do not live in the capital. Wage gaps, gender inequalities, and intergenerational transmission of wealth are not mentioned either. As Dubet (2012) states, this leads to transferring the responsibility for failure to the individuals themselves: It leads to a squandering of opportunities, which is part of exercising individual freedom. Katz (2013) argues that a similar point of view has dominated discussions of poverty in the United States by identifying its roots in personal deficiencies related to moral, cultural, or biological handicaps. Our participants also understood this as lack of dedication to or love for work, neglecting that most of the population cannot choose their jobs, which are mainly carried out to survive.

On the other hand, the economic elite is also sympathetic to the poor. First, poverty is disturbing because it hinders economic growth. Second, it is a source of moral discomfort, which is relevant in the Chilean elite, a group historically considered to be conservative and religious (Thumala, 2007). Even though these views reflect compassion with the poor, they do not imply that the latter are not responsible for their own fate; rather, some basic opportunities have to be provided to enable individual skills to emerge. Moreover, it is unclear whether elite views share a similar and accurate understanding of poverty. In light of this, they express their empathy by strongly committing to charity, either supporting foundations or creating solidarity initiatives in their areas of interest. However, charity spending is low in a comparative perspective, including a low number of philanthropic foundations, low foundation expenditures, and low number of foundation assets as a percentage of GDP in a global country sample (Johnson, 2018). Likewise, although our interviewees scarcely declared to play an active role in the reinforcement of meritocratic recruitment policies within their company, or in the promotion of other initiatives outside their companies, they did show their empathy by supporting people around them, rewarding their effort and boosting their talent. One interviewee illustrated this behavior regarding his gardener:

> I often think to myself "this guy will go far in life," and since he will go far, we must help him. So, my aim is for him to get involved in those areas where he is weaker, such as handling money, because he knows a lot about gardening, and he is responsible, he wakes

> up early and works like a Trojan, and he is super clear about how things must be done. (Male Business Person 22, Santiago)

Thus, expressing empathy implies neither strengthening a redistributive demand nor extending support for an increasing role of the state or higher taxes. Concerns about poverty and the challenge of improving equal opportunity are not only beyond the state: Improvement can even be made at the state's expense. As previous studies on the Chilean elite have shown, unwillingness to pay more taxes is shown through avoidance or even evasion when the tax system or particular taxes are negatively evaluated (e.g., Atria, 2019). This evidence confirms the negative perception of fiscal institutions, contributing to jeopardizing their role in fighting inequality and encouraging the intergenerational transmission of income and wealth, which stands in the way of equal opportunity (Dubet, 2012; Piketty, 2014).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we analyzed how the economic elite perceive merit and meritocracy in a context of high and persistent inequality. Our aim was to understand how its members make sense of the meritocracy and how they account for significant and persistent achievement gaps between social groups.

Results suggest that the elites' moral economy of merit privileges talent over effort. Talent relates closely to the skills that characterize business and leadership skills. This belief contradicts the perception of merit as resulting from effort and implies a relationship between talent and intelligence. Although these views on merit confirm that the individual prevails over the collective, being deemed as a collection of the country's most talented people (Khan, 2012), it also illustrates the severe historical transformations that Chilean capitalism underwent during the dictatorship, which aimed to give private actors a decisive role in driving economic change and social progress. Through entrepreneurship and employment creation, the business elite perceive a calling to lead the country's development. In this sense, corporate modernization is construed as an adaptive challenge—making it imperative to select the "best people" in terms of our participants' understanding of merit— to compete in complex markets and as a responsibility to the country. Several works tend to downplay the modernization process in the Chilean and Latin American business sector by showing the continuity of large family business groups and the emergence of new recruitment strategies that favor the reproduction of social advantages (Schneider & Soskice, 2009; Hernandez, 2018). This connection between merit, talent, and responsibility is the first conclusion of this article.

A second conclusion is that perceptions of merit in individual biographies and in the immediate environment of participants show that conceptions of meritocracy guide executive actions. Beliefs about social mobility are often illustrated by promotions within their companies, but not within other organizations or in the Chilean socioeconomic hierarchy. At the same time, in elites' view, inherited wealth, luck, or systematic origin-based discrimination does not seem to substantially hinder meritocracy. Certain

factors emerge when delving deeper into the limits of meritocracy and the persistence of inequality: Whereas social networks explain the exertion of influence and membership in highly selective groups, which facilitate holding top-tier positions, the state symbolizes the prevalence of traditional logics not yet colonized by meritocracy. This contrast between negative and positive contributions to meritocracy constitutes an extension of the differences between the economic elite and the rest of the population when it comes to policy preferences.

The elites believe that merit is evenly distributed; this belief transfers the responsibility to individuals for their own success, or lack thereof. However, the mechanism of blaming the victims (Lerner, 1980) is left aside when dealing with specific groups, particularly the poor. Thus, our third conclusion is that the elite differentiate between the poor and the rest of the population when it comes to holding people responsible for the lack of merit. Poverty leads to economic and moral discomfort; it is seen as a threat to economic development and justifies empathy regarding the lack of education and opportunities. Although empathy does not mean supporting redistributive demands and they perceive that the government is letting the poor down, the elite once again conveys its responsibility, attempting to renew its legitimacy through charitable support or the creation of foundations.

Regarding some limitations of the present study, it is worth mentioning that although the narratives of the elite are very homogeneous and they seek to legitimize their positions on the basis of talent, effort, and responsibility, their notion of talent is blurry. The presence of talent is noted by looking at results in business management, and therefore, economic elites associated themselves with talent. It is a combination of competencies for efficient administration, effective profit seeking, and "soft skills" for team leadership. Although the irruption of self-management—through books and courses involving techniques to increase individual and family success—suggests that there is an accessible and replicable set of skills, access and permanence in prestigious positions makes it essential to look at the cultural capital of its members, at the inherited wealth, and other ascriptive factors. Because gathering information on these aspects by means of interviews is extremely difficult, future research might reach new findings by gathering ethnographic data as a strategy to achieve substantial innovations through a multidimensional understanding of merit and its social implications (Lamont & Swidler, 2014).

Finally, our findings show that elites support for meritocracy can be given even without the need to justify the persistence of ascriptive factors. If theories of meritocracy are often based on the triumph of *individual* achievement, the importance that the Chilean economic elite place on market mechanisms and a weak role of the state in development—the "explicit preference for private over public control" that defines neoliberalism (Centeno & Cohen, 2012, p. 317)—underscores a rather *individualist* view. Such a perspective suggests that cultivation of individual initiative and taking advantage of opportunities far exceed the differences arising from social origin. As a result, even though severe inequalities make access to top positions highly unlikely, narratives of market competition and the need of competent corporate governance are employed as justification to communicate expectations of upward mobility. Thus, if meritocracy generalizes expectations of more equality of opportunity in countries with

rigid social structures and concentration of privilege as Chile, elite discourses may contribute to attenuate demands for public policies aimed at levelling out structural differences in educational and work trajectories.

Future studies in this field should attempt to analyze the role of intermediaries—such as consultants or headhunters—in order to examine how recruitment policies, manager training, and other organizational development requirements work. This would make it possible to clearly determine the agents of change and the real extension of meritocracy within firms. In addition, this agenda would also benefit from a greater exploration of the role of wealth in elite narratives. Since wealth is more concentrated than income in most of the countries, we need to explore how intergenerational transmission of advantages is explained and how institutional mechanisms like wealth or estate taxes are perceived. This would contribute to a clearer understanding of the limits of meritocracy and the willingness to favor individual achievement in elite discourses.

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Notes

1. According to IMAD 2018, female participation in top executive positions is around 17% (DESUC, 2018). In this study, 20% of the interviewees were women.

2. This belief is coherent with a long-term project conceived by the "Chicago Boys," a group of free market technocrats who helped reorganize the roles of the state and the business sector during the Pinochet dictatorship. That context favored a durable investment in foreign and innovative economic ideas, which became the core of the new capitalist model boosted by dissatisfied economic elites (Fourcade & Babb, 2003).

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Article

State Segmentation and Democratic Survival in Latin America

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Abstract

Popular models portray that high inequality induces elites to sponsor coups and reverse democratization as a means for repressing redistributive demands. Challenging this prediction, Latin America shifted from a historical pattern of systematic democratic breakdowns to one characterized by the resilience of democracy despite extreme levels of inequality. This article argues that the reminiscence of state-led repression under democracy explains why elites more regularly waive coups as solutions to distributive conflict in Latin American democracies. I call this *state segmentation*, a concept that describes the asymmetries between the enforcement of citizenship rights for those in privileged positions and for the poor. Wherever state segmentation is high, the odds of democratic breakdown should be lower. I test the argument using logistic regression models to predict the probability of coups and mandate interruptions considering different levels of state segmentation in Latin America using V-Dem data. Results show that asymmetries in access to citizenship rights indeed prevent democratic breakdowns.

Keywords

citizenship, democracy, elites, inequality, state segmentation

The distributive conflict approach has become a popular explanation for the emergence and fall of democratic regimes based on how income inequality alters the costs of political competition to elites (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2000, 2005; Boix, 2003). This approach reinforces the traditional understanding in social science that inequality prevents democracy (Dahl, 1973; Lipset, 1959; Przeworski et al., 2000; Rueschemeyer

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et al., 1992). Challenging this idea, however, Latin America as well as other third wave cases (Huntington, 1993) present several unequal yet durable democracies. By "unequal" democracy, I mean that income inequality is high but the procedures of democracy are present, and by "durable" I mean that such procedures remain in place without interruption. Assuming[1] that elites are indeed pivotal in determining whether democratic regimes are maintained or replaced, why do they cope with democracy in contexts of extreme inequality? In this article, I argue that elites' attitudes toward political regimes are affected by the state's capacity to shield those at the top from redistributive demands. Democracies, contrary to what previous models portray, can effectively repress the poor, therefore granting such protection.

Some revisions of the distributive conflict approach highlight the effect of other variables beyond inequality in order to explain elites' commitment to democratic rule, such as the abundance of natural resources (Dunning, 2008), the strength of conservative parties (Ziblatt, 2017), and the participation of ousting autocrats in the elaboration of the constitutional rules of the emerging democracies (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018). Authors portray the advantages of democracy for elites in securing assets from, not the poor, but the state (Albertus, 2015; Albertus & Gay, 2017; Ansell & Samuels, 2014), while others assert that distributive conflict has little impact on elites' decision-making process during transitions (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016). All these focus on the role of redistribution, leaving aside that of repression.

Research shows that economic inequality fosters political inequality, suggesting that democracies with high inequality perform worse in protecting the civil rights of the poor (Cole, 2018; Dubrow, 2007, 2014). But could it be that it is this asymmetry what prevents such democracies from collapsing? The argument put forward here is that indeed the effectiveness of citizenship rights is unevenly distributed across the socioeconomic ladder in several democracies, constituting what I conceptualize as *state segmentation*. Because of this asymmetry in the enforcement of citizenship, the state regularly violates the rights of the poor, increasing their cost of mobilization and decreasing the costs of democracy to elites, thus preventing the latter from sponsoring regime reversals. To test the implications of this theory, I use V-Dem data for Latin America, a region that historically experienced democratic breakdowns but one in which coups became scarce after the third wave of democratization. I estimate the association between the asymmetry of citizenship rights and the probability of experiencing democratic breakdown through a coup, as well as the odds of experiencing the interruption of a presidential mandate through legal means such as an impeachment trial. Results portray that cases where citizenship rights are effective to the elite, but less effective to underprivileged groups, are less likely to experience political instability and much less likely to suffer regime breakdown.

The article offers two contributions: (a) the introduction of the concept of state segmentation, which describes how democracies violate citizenship rights and (b) the assessment of how state segmentation affects democratic survival. These challenge a frequent interpretation of Latin American states, that is, that uneven enforcement necessarily reflects state and institutional weaknesses and dysfunctionalities (see Brinks & Botero, 2014; Brinks et al., 2014; Fukuyama, 2004; Luna & Soifer, 2017; Soifer,

2013). Instead, I argue that uneven enforcement of citizenship rights benefits elites and helps them endorse democratic continuity in contexts of high inequality.

The mechanisms by which states skew the effectiveness of citizenship rights in detriment of the poor and marginalized groups are diverse: police brutality against demonstrations, harassment in low-income communities, mass incarceration, uneven access to courts, and inaction against private militias are but a few. These mechanisms increase the costs of participation and contestation for poorer citizens and secure elites' position against redistributive threats. While mechanisms may differ, they are all triggered by state segmentation. The latter supply the demand for repression in substitution of previous formal authoritarian institutions. In a nutshell, state segmentation prevents democratic breakdowns because it equips democracies with efficient repressive mechanisms.

The article is divided into five sections. First, I discuss the unexpected resilience of unequal democracies in light of the distributive conflict model. Second, I unpack the concept of state segmentation and present my argument regarding its role in the resilience of democratic regimes in contexts of high inequality. Third, I present the data and methods. Last, I present the results, closing the article with a Discussion and Conclusion section.

High Inequality and Democracy

Democracies can be defined in procedural terms as those regimes in which civilian rule is elected through free and fair elections and where different branches of government keep one another accountable (see Przeworski et al., 2000; Schumpeter, 1934/2013). Societies with very different patterns of income distribution can thus be considered democracies, depending on how political power is organized. Distinguishing democracy from the social goods that many expect it to deliver is key for understanding how different social features help or hurt the probabilities that countries have of becoming and remaining democratic (Altman & Pérez-Liñán, 2002). These goods account for the "quality" of democracy (see also Morlino, 2004), while procedures account for the basic distinction between democracies and nondemocracies.

Current theories of democratization[2] and democratic survival rely heavily on the opportunities and constraints that elites, notably economic elites, face. Economic elites can be understood as individuals capable of influencing politics due to their economic resources and their position in business organizations and the corporate world (see López, 2013a). The argument first developed by Acemoglu and Robinson (2000, 2005) and Boix (2003)[3] sustains that democracy and democratic reversals result from the economic elites reacting to distributive demands of the poor. When facing distributive conflict, the argument goes, elites can respond by either repressing the poor through an authoritarian regime, or by granting them a credible commitment to redistribution through democratization. Because the cost of redistribution (to elites) is a function of income concentration, the prediction is that democracies in contexts of high inequality will be short lived. In light of the current trend of income concentration, several scholars add to this idea as they foresee a democratic recession (Diamond,

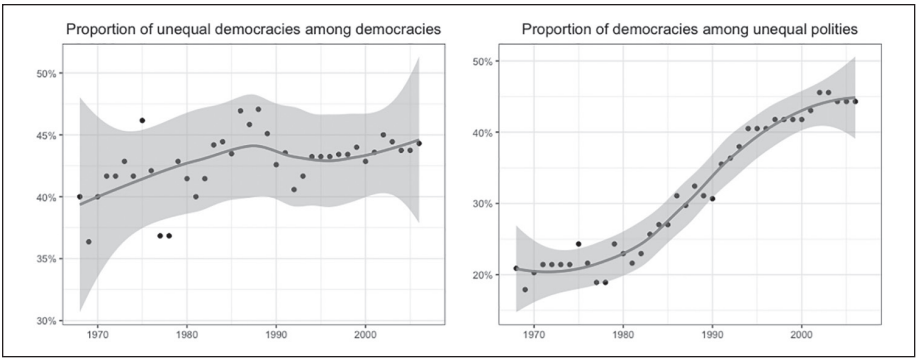

Figure 1. Unequal Democracies in the World.
Note. Democracies as coded by Boix and compiled by V-Dem. Unequal polities = Gini index superior to average global score as coded by V-Dem.

2015; Kurlantzick, 2013; see also Levitsky & Way, 2015, for an opposite view) and increasing vulnerability of current democracies (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

On the other hand, democracies with high levels of inequality are more numerous and more durable today than in any time in history. As observed in Figure 1, almost half of democracies show high levels of inequality and the share of unequal countries that are democracies increased steadily in recent decades.

Latin America, commonly held as the most unequal region in the world, inflates the rate of unequal democracies. While democratic rule consolidates in the region, the assumed causes of authoritarianism remain in place, among them income inequality (Blofield, 2011a). Since democratization, Latin American elites have been challenged by unions, left-wing parties, social movements and guerrillas, while also facing extreme levels of criminal violence. Moreover, research shows that elites in the region acknowledge inequality as the cause of social conflict (López, 2013b, 2016; Reis & Moore, 2005). However, elites less often pursue democratic reversals.

Revisions of the distributive conflict approach have concentrated in discussing the causes of elite support of democratization in contexts of high inequality (Albertus, 2015; Albertus & Gay, 2017; Ansell & Samuels, 2014), but have generally not addressed why elites remain loyal to democracy afterward (exceptions are Albertus & Menaldo 2018; Dunning, 2008; Ziblatt, 2017). A criticism often made to the distributive conflict approach relates to its strong assumptions of rationality, which often contrast with observed outcomes (Weyland, 2019). Originally, distributive conflict theory assumes that economic elites hold perfect information about the distributive consequences of future regimes, and are capable of predicting the course of action of the poor under different political institutions. This expectation contrasts with research showing that elites' understanding of the poor and the threats they pose is culturally bounded and inefficient (Blofield, 2011b; López et al., 2020; Reis & Moore, 2005). It is less demanding to assume that elites' update preferences based on their own experience.

In Latin America, elites gradually learned that autocratic regimes offer instant protection but provide weak long-term commitments to property rights and personal security (Albertus, 2015; Albertus & Gay, 2017; Hagopian, 1996/2007; Weffort, 1989). Elites could very well have been convinced that autocracy was in their best interest, while experiencing it, only to find out later that unequal democracy provided higher returns. This process is well illustrated by the case of Chile, where elites experienced an autocratic regime from which they benefited greatly. Chilean economic elites and upper classes supported autocratic rule, even throughout the democratic transition, but changed their preferences afterward.

Beyond Chile, it is well-established that the other military dictatorships that emerged in South America between the 1960s and 1970s were backed by elite coalitions (Collier & Cardoso, 1979; Grimes & Pion-Berlin, 2019; O'Donnell, 1973). These cases support the traditional idea that elites prefer to repress the poor through autocratic rule, as the support of South American elites for military regimes was clearly related to their desire to exclude populist rulers, suppress left-wing movements, and prevent redistribution. Nonetheless, by the early 1990s all autocratic regimes in the region were extinct.

Whether elites in fact endorsed democratization may vary from case to case. This could be an accurate description of the cases of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, but it is hardly the case in Chile where economic elites backed the authoritarian regime until its last breath. Despite variation in the processes that led to democratization in Latin America (see Haggard & Kaufman, 2016; Higley & Burton, 2006; Higley & Gunther, 1992), the current scenario is one of durable democracies in which elites do not signal a preference for a reversion to authoritarian rule.

Most of Latin America's democracies resisted economic recession in the late 1990s, and the emergence of left-wing governments in the 2000s. Elites continued to endorse formal democratic institutions despite the actions of organized political groups demanding redistribution and recognition, such as the MST in Brazil, the Piqueteros in Argentina, and the Mapuche in Chile. Elites also faced unorganized poor who threatened them with criminal violence. Despite an apparent perfect storm of inequality, only in a few cases did elites decide to coordinate coups, such as in Venezuela in 2002, Honduras in 2009, and more recently in Bolivia in 2019.

In most cases, and despite the fear of democracy that they might have had, elites learned that democratic regimes in many regards provide greater returns if compared with authoritarian ones. Several instances facilitate this new adherence to democratic rule. For once, elites were able to organize around conservative parties and interest groups in order to shape the tax code in their favor and block redistributive projects (Bogliaccini & Luna, 2019; Fairfield, 2015). Nonetheless, that type of coordination does not prevent the poor from revolting, which is the predicted consequence if no redistribution takes place. In the absence of redistribution, regime stability requires repression.

Coups Versus Legal Oustings

Coups can be defined as the forceful removal of rulers or suppression of government branches (in the case of a self-coup) through unconstitutional means (see Linz &

Stepan, 1978). A coup in a democracy implies the suspension of that regime, as elected leaders no longer rule and/or government branches no longer keep each other accountable. Throughout the 20th century, elites in Latin America sponsored military coups against freely elected rulers to shield from distributive claims. This reality backed theories that associate elite interest with autocratic rule (e.g., Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2013; O'Donnell, 1973; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992). Contemporary elites know from past experience that coups are feasible endeavors, and an important resort to foster protection in the face of distributive threats. The rationale is straightforward: more distributive claims call for either redistribution or repression, and given that elites might prefer not to redistribute, a fast shift toward a repressive regime seems their best alternative. If this mechanism was constant in Latin America, we should have continued to observe regressions toward authoritarianism in the region. Contrastingly, there are few clear cases of coups in the post-1975 period, such as Bolivia (2019), Ecuador (2000), Honduras (2009), Peru (1992), and Venezuela (2002). Of those cases, only the coups in Bolivia, Honduras, and Venezuela can be clearly assumed as events in which distributive conflict drove elites to sponsor a coup against a left-wing incumbent. Distributive conflict was also relevant in Peru given the threat of a Marxist inspired guerilla, which helped justify President Fujimori's self-coup.

Meanwhile, constitutional removals of acting presidents in the form of impeachment trials were more frequent and in a way replaced coups in the region, as argued by Pérez-Liñán (2007). Some impeachments targeted left-wing administrations, such as the ousting of Lugo in 2011 in Paraguay and that of Rousseff in Brazil in 2016. As coups, legal interruptions promoted by impeachment trials are also a symptom of instability. Nonetheless, the implications for democracy are completely different in one case and in the other. Impeachment trials remove unwanted rulers within the boundaries of law, while coups represent a break with the existing constitutional order.

The consequences of impeaching an acting president and those of removing him or her by force are thus completely different. Had President João Goulart been impeached in the mid1960s in Brazil, instead of overthrown by a military coup, the political history of that country would have been certainly very different. Goulart was already substituting Jânio Quadros, who resigned. If Congress had managed to impeach Goulart, it would be up to the Congress itself to appoint his substitute through an indirect election.[4] Instead, the coup brought a military junta in his place, inaugurating over two decades of autocratic rule. Autocratic rule in Brazil, as that of Argentina, Chile, and many other cases in the region, was initially effective in insulating the elites from redistributive demands, but later proved to be a source of important externalities, including weak commitment to property rights, which led elites to abandon authoritarian coalitions in support of democratization (Albertus, 2015; Albertus & Gay, 2017; Hagopian, 1996/2007; Weffort, 1989).

In trying to avoid the unintended consequences of coups, elites promote legal oustings. This usage of democratic formality relates to Levitsky and Ziblatt's (2018) concept of constitutional hardball, which facilitates the deterioration of democratic regimes. The shift from coups to impeachments erodes rules of mutual tolerance between elites, weakening democracies. But the institutional bases of political regimes remain

unaltered in the immediate aftermath of legal oustings, preserving the basic procedural traits of democratic rule and, to some extent, preventing democratic breakdown.

This is not to say that political instability in the region is over, far from it. As noted, the implication is also not that Latin American democracies present high or constant levels of democratic quality. Some cases in the region experienced democratic improvement, others suffered erosion and many more stagnated (see Mainwaring & Bizzarro, 2019). What is novel in the region is that conflict resolution more often takes the form of legal interruptions of presidential mandates, such as those allowed by impeachment trials and less often in the form of democratic breakdowns.

State Segmentation: Concept and Theory

The limited coverage of citizenship rights in Latin America is a matter of extensive research (e.g., Brinks, 2007; Brinks & Botero, 2014; O'Donnell, 1993). Such limitation is commonly understood as a manifestation of low stateness, low state capacity and institutional inefficiency (see Brinks and Botero, 2014; Brinks et al., 2014; Fukuyama, 2004; Luna & Soifer, 2017; Soifer, 2013). This literature adds to a long tradition in Latin American and latinamericanist scholarship regarding the duality of authority structures in the region (e.g., Lambert, 1967; Sarmiento, 1874; Taylor & Bacha, 1976; Weissman, 2014).

Those authors account that citizens can receive radically different treatment from the state, depending on their position in the socioeconomic structure. Instead of mitigating it, democratization sharpens this contrast because elites now experience the rule of law, while the poor remain vulnerable to arbitrary state action. It can be said that, by implementing different patterns of interaction with different segments of the population, the state segments the enforcement of citizenship rights. State segmentation can thus be defined as a form of political inequality, resulting from the uneven coverage of formally assured citizenship rights. Rights are not violated by incumbents to retain power, as observed in competitive authoritarian regimes (Levitsky & Way, 2010). Instead, state actors violate citizenship rights by skewing the distribution of goods and the use of force, protecting the well off from the worse off. The mechanisms of state segmentation are for the most part informal and violate the assumption of political equality that lies at the normative core of democracy. But they do not necessarily harm the procedural aspects of democracy.

In Latin America, it became clear that the segmentation of state action is a part of, and not a deviation from, the region's political equilibria. Previous research has accounted for other forms of segmentation in the region. For instance, Luna (2014) portrays the segmentation of party–voter linkages as a key mechanism in attending both the poor and the rich without altering the overall pattern of income concentration. In a related argument, Holland (2017) describes how some basic needs of the poor can be contemplated by the politicians' decision to waive law enforcement, generating income through illegal and informal channels without taxing the rich. Both theories indirectly relate to state segmentation and portray equilibrium patterns that prevent more meaningful redistribution from taking place.

Distributive conflict theory predicts that, unless elites credibly commit to redistribution, high inequality will prompt the poor to coordinate and revolt, taking over the state and expropriating accumulated resources. In that scenario, elites' venue for self-defense is repression. Because authors dismiss the possibility of repression under democracy, traditional models of distributive conflict portray that elites must choose between redistribution and repression and, by doing so, between democracy and autocracy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005; Boix, 2003).[5] State segmentation, on the other hand, portrays the continuity of repressive procedures in well-established democracies, thus substantially changing the incentives for elites and the poor.

Segmented states are efficient in repressing demands for redistribution and recognition. Franklin (2020) shows that states in Latin America tend to respond to public demonstrations by increasing the levels of state violence perpetrated against nonpolitical actors, whereas the effect is the opposite for formal political groups. In other words, state violence and terror are more likely to be experienced by common, unorganized citizens who would benefit from redistribution and would otherwise have strong incentives to demand it. Examples of brutal dispersion of peaceful and spontaneous demonstrations could be seen in 2019 in Chile and Ecuador, as well as in Brazil in 2013. Organized minorities claiming recognition are also less likely to be protected by courts (Perricone, 2020) and state perpetrators of human rights violations are less likely to respond judicially (Brinks, 2007).

State segmentation also accounts for the repression of the poor in more subtle and frequent ways. Arbitrary searches, routinary harassment and other forms of rights violations remind the poor of the costs of mobilization and contestation. These conditions lead many to comply with social injustices, even though the legal framework is, in theory, to their advantage. Regarding human rights abuses in Latin American slums, for instance, locals commonly advise to keep a low profile instead of denouncing police misconduct.

As an alternative to protest and activism, poorer citizens can use the tools of democracy and elect politicians that are more responsive to their claims. A well-known phenomena in Latin America was that of the pink tide, a succession of left-wing administrations in the region during the 2000s which was in part the outcome of demands for social justice and effective citizenship rights (Grugel & Fontana, 2019). The administrations of PT in Brazil, Frente Amplio in Uruguay, MAS in Bolivia, the MVR (later rebranded as PSUV) in Venezuela and others managed to incorporate large sectors of society, reducing inequality and engaging in different levels of conflict with economic elites. In two of those cases, Venezuela and Bolivia, elite coalitions promoted coups against incumbents. In the other cases, elites were for the most part reassured that states would not be reformed. As Brinks and Botero (2014) note, the levels of state violence increased after democratic transitions, a reality that remained unaltered after the left-turn.

Elites, on the other hand, experience a well-functioning rule of law and would hardly fear being victimized by state arbitrarily. Segmented states in unequal democracies offer elites the possibility of supporting regimes that are effective in their

repression of the poor, as well as in providing a credible commitment to the elites in regard of their own civil rights. To elites, state segmentation signals that repressive forces are on their side. To the poor, state segmentation represents higher costs for collective action and at times life under siege. It is a continuous reminder that they are susceptible to state violence. Of course, poor citizens organize around unions and social movements anyhow, and get important concessions. But they do so at significantly higher costs.

Although state segmentation benefits elites, the implication is not that states are segmented by design, nor that state actors and elites always converge. Segmented states more likely result from contingent historical processes anchored in authoritarianism (López, 2018). For the present argument, what is crucial is that segmented states, once in place, modify the incentives that elites are likely to perceive regarding democratic rule.

Summary of the Argument

I assume that elites are pivotal to regime stability and regime change, and that elites act in pursuit of (a) securing their assets from expropriation by the state and (b) securing their assets from rebellious poor. High inequality increases the costs of redistribution vis-à-vis repression, in theory making repressive (autocratic) regimes preferable to nonrepressive regimes. Nonetheless, autocracies increase the risk of expropriation by the state, prompting elites to reconsider the benefits of liberal institutions. After democratization, state segmentation prompts state actors to reproduce repressive patterns of interaction with the poor. Elites soon learn that this new scenario provides greater returns and guarantees compared with previous autocratic rule. Consequently, elites prefer to rely on repression within democracy instead of reversing the regime back to authoritarianism. It follows that democracies with high state segmentation should be less likely to experience democratic breakdown.

What State Segmentation Is Not

Because this is a wide covering concept, it is important to clarify what should not be taken as state segmentation. State segmentation is not truncated vertical accountability. This does not contradict that unequal democracies may have, as they often do, elite biased outcomes in terms of political representation (Bartels, 2018; Gilens, 2012), nor does it dismiss the relevance of money in politics (Diamond, 2008; Hacker & Pierson, 2010). State segmentation derives from the interaction between citizens and the state, not voters and politicians.

State segmentation is not rent seeking. The idea that economic elites often extract resources from the state in the developing world is well-established (see Bates, 1981), but this is not directly related to state segmentation as it could occur regardless of it. On the other hand, state segmentation can facilitate the exploration of cheap labor and modern slavery, because it undermines the citizenship rights of the poor and may foster informality. Elites can thus profit from state segmentation, but this is not directly

related to the causal link between state segmentation and democratic durability, because elites would, presumably, also be able to exploit the poor in autocratic regimes.

State segmentation is not, nor implies, competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky & Way, 2010) nor illiberal democracy (Zakaria, 1997). Such regimes are accounted in the literature as those in which elections and the separation of powers are present but systematically violated by incumbents. There are implications of state segmentation for the quality of democracy, but not for the procedures of democratic rule. Democracies with segmented states can be accounted as full democracies, from a procedural perspective, if they fulfill the prerequisites described in the literature: free elections and separation of powers. Those attributes are only partially present in cases of competitive authoritarianism.

Finally, state segmentation is not segmented representation (Luna, 2014) or forbearance (Holland, 2017), although these are close concepts, as noted. The difference between state segmentation and those accounts is that state segmentation is not directly related with party–voter linkages. State segmentation is not a derivation of accountability, representation, or distribution, but one of citizenship rights.

Alternative Explanations

Other revisions and updates of the distributive conflict framework offer important alternative or complementary explanations to the one I am proposing. Nonetheless, they often focus on why transitions to democracy occur in unequal settings, less on why such cases remain democratic. In a sense, scholars seem to assume that the causes of democratization and those of democratic stability are the same. Some revisionist accounts indicate that there are other variables that should interact and potentially change the effect of inequality on democratization. For instance, Acemoglu et al. (2011) and Soifer (2013) explain unequal democracies by adding the impact of state capacity to the distributive conflict model. According to those authors, elites are more likely to endorse emerging democracies whenever they believe that states will not be capable of implementing redistribution. Similarly, Albertus and Menaldo (2018) posit that elites accept democracy when they are able to intentionally craft state incapacity by designing constitutional constraints during transitions. In common, those propositions rely on state incapacity as a key explanatory variable for why democracy consolidates in contexts of high inequality.

Although Latin America inspired two out of the three mentioned studies, the set of unequal but durable democracies in the region includes important cases that are accounted as having high state capacity. For instance, Chile is often portrayed as a champion of state capacity in the region, but also as a case where democracy became stable at high levels of income inequality. Other cases, such as Paraguay and Brazil, implemented new constitutions after democratization and did not experience coup attempts since. Variation in state capacity and in having preauthoritarian or postauthoritarian constitutions does not seem to fully explain regime continuity in the region.

Commonly assumed as facilitating autocracy, another variable that was theorized as altering the effect of inequality on democratic rule is the abundance of natural

resources, as argued by Dunning (2008). The author argues that the costs of redistribution decrease when elites are able to attend distributive demands using natural resources instead of their own wealth. This would allow elites to cope with democracy in unequal settings. His main case is, ironically, Venezuela. Latin American countries are predominantly dependent on the revenue from natural resources. Yet, among the cases of greater dependency on oil, gas, and minerals we find varying levels of democratic stability, with Venezuela's collapse on the one extreme and Chile's regime stability on the other.

Another intervenient variable analyzed in the pertinent literature is the strength of conservative parties. Looking at Europe, Ziblatt (2017) posits that democracy's survival occurs when elites succeed in organizing conservative parties before competitive politics is fully installed. Preexisting party organizations would then prevent the distributive outcomes of democracy and, by doing so, also allow elites to accept democratic rule. The argument is compelling and mirrors Gibson's (1996) comparative study of (the lack of) conservative parties in Argentina.

On the other hand, democratic survival is unlikely to be attached to the strength of parties of any kind in Latin America. Elites often rely on new and ephemeral right-wing parties, as more clearly seen in Peru (Levitsky & Cameron, 2003). In Brazil, conservative parties were weakened during and after regime change, forcing elites to ally with center and center-left parties instead. Argentina lacked any competitive conservative party for most of its recent history. It is true that, possibly due to the absence of strong conservative parties, elites traditionally relied on the military to prevent undesired distributive outcomes, a fact that suits Ziblatt's argument. However, conservative parties remain weak (as do most parties) in current times.

Finally, alternative accounts to the distributive conflict approach offer causal explanations that are not centered on games between elites and the poor, but instead on games within different sectors of the elite. In that vein, some authors argue that elites endorse democracy to protect assets from the action of autocrats (Albertus, 2015; Albertus & Gay, 2017; Ansell & Samuels, 2014).[6] This is part of the argument put forward here as well, as I assume that the elites endorse liberal institutions aiming for protection. My approach is thus complementary to theirs.

All mentioned revisions of the distributive conflict framework neglect the role of repression by focusing on redistribution alone. Furthermore, those accounts focus on regime change but say little about regime durability. Contrary to what these authors sometimes seem to imply, the original proposition by Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) does not suggest that inequality always prevents democratization, but that democracies in unequal settings should be short-lived. Why unequal democracies endure, not why they emerge, is the main puzzle that previous models let uncovered. Among the studies reviewed above, only Albertus and Menaldo's (2018), Dunning's (2008), and Ziblatt's (2017) offer specific theories for democratic durability, while accepting inequality as the main cause of regime change.

There are of course alternative explanations beyond the scope of the distributive conflict approach. Studies in international relations point to the role of international markets in creating the conditions for democratization (Frieden, 1992; Roberts, 1998).

Campello and Zucco (2016) show that the fate of Latin American incumbents is tied to exogenous economic conditions. Their assessment of the popularity of incumbents and the likelihood of electing successors could be transposed to that of regime stability. But economic exogenous shocks were particularly hard during the 1990s in Latin America, to no apparent effect regarding democratic breakdowns.

Given the scarcity of coups in the region one might question whether coups are indeed an option. From a collective action point of view, it is clear that elites in Latin America have the resources to stage coups. What makes them less frequent in current times has to do with a number of factors, including, presumably, the effect of global markets. Although external incentives to sustain market economies and democratic rule are virtually the same for all cases, some turn out to be stable unequal democracies and some do not. It follows that within-case variables must play an important role.

Another possible explanation relates to the left-right divide. A classic distinction between left-wing governments in Latin America points to the cases of "good left," which includes the cases of Brazil under PT and Chile under the Concertación, and those of "bad left," which includes Venezuela under Chavismo (see Blofield, 2011b; Levitsky & Roberts, 2011). Good or bad being relative to business perspectives. In that sense, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013) and Campello (2015) argue that democratic stability lies not only on the left abandoning its revolutionary aspirations but also on their adherence to the market economy. In their account, elites' attachment to democratic regimes would reflect the left's commitment with market fundamentalism. Although the contrast between market-friendly and market-enemy lefts should have a significant effect on elites' overall strategies, it fails to predict the events in which economic elites turn against "good left" administrations. Neither the administrations of Rousseff in Brazil nor that of Bachelet in Chile implied a shift toward a revolutionary path. This was not elites' perception of matters however, which indicates that their interpretation of conflict may be somewhat disconnected with what left-wing administrations are actually implementing.

In that sense, Weyland (2014, 2019) argues that elites overestimate threats from below, acting based on bounded rationality. His is not a rival theory to my own, but another way of framing how elites react during crises. Bounded rationality is not incompatible with my explanation, as I expect elites to act on imperfect information. I also argue that elites update their regime preferences based on their experience. The question is not whether elites use cognitive shortcuts or not, but what are the elements that inform their decision-making processes.

I thus argue that elites react mainly based on their perception of security, which is based on the institutional and informal guarantees that neither the state nor the poor will expropriate their wealth. As noted, there are good models for why elites react to distributive conflict with the poor (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005; Boix, 2003) and good models for why they fear distributive conflict with the state (Albertus, 2015; Ansell & Samuels, 2014), but such models are incompatible and reach opposite conclusions. The first suggests that elites in contexts of high inequality will resort to coups in order to shield from the poor, while the latter predicts that elites will sustain democracy to prevent expropriation in the hands of autocrats. My theory reconciles those

propositions by describing how segmented states account for scenarios that are both fully democratic, in a procedural sense, and highly repressive, thus protecting elites from the state and the poor. Having learned the benefits of democracy under state segmentation, economic elites should avoid ruptures, all else constant. This does not imply that other revisions, such as Albertus and Menaldo's (2018), Dunning's (2008), or Ziblatt's (2017), are incorrect or rival to my own, but that the effect of segmentation should be relevant even if accounting for those other factors.

Data and Method

The sample includes data from 18 cases in Latin America from 1975[7] to 2016. Countries enter the data set as they democratize, in the case that they were not yet a democracy by 1975. The year of democratization is coded after historical record, as shown in Table 1.

The focus on Latin America offers important advantages. First, this is a region marked by high-income inequality and, more so in the recent past, high regime volatility. Most of the world's unequal democracies, which are the cases I aim to explain, are in Latin America. Second, the region shares a common colonial history, similar political institutions, economic structure, and culture, which facilitates comparisons.

Table 1. Cases in the Sample.

Countries	Year of democratization
Argentina	1983
Bolivia	1982
Brazil	1985
Chile	1990
Colombia	pre-1975
Costa Rica	pre-1975
Dominican Republic	1978
Ecuador	1979
Guatemala	1996
Honduras	1982
Mexico	2000
Nicaragua	1990
Panama	1990
Paraguay	1989
Peru	1980
El Salvador	1992
Uruguay	1985
Venezuela	pre-1975

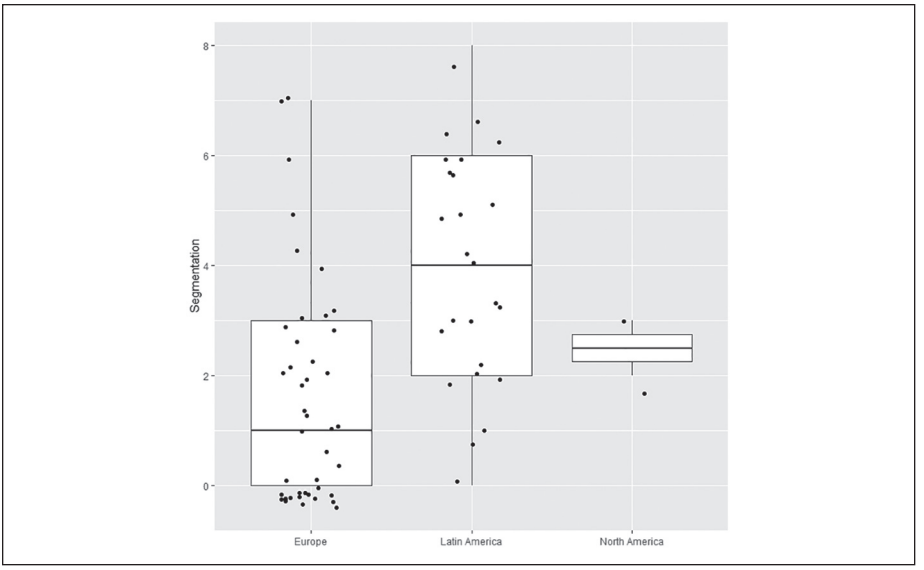

Figure 2. Box-plot of state segmentation in 2016.

Input Variable

To provide evidence about the effect of state segmentation in preventing political instability and democratic regressions I use data from the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem). V-Dem offers three variables that directly speak to the concept of state segmentation: (a) the effectiveness of the civil rights of the poor compared with the rich (in a 5-points scale, including 0); (b) the effectiveness of the civil rights of unprivileged groups compared with the rich (in a 5-point scale, including 0); and (c) the effectiveness of rights throughout the territory (in a 3-point scale, including 0; see Sigman & Lindberg, 2015). As do all V-Dem indicators, the variables result from a global expert survey. I account for the impact of each of those three variables and also combine them in an additive index resulting in a 10-point scale, which I operationalize as a proxy for state segmentation. Higher numbers imply more violations of rights of the poor and underprivileged groups and regions in contrast to the well assured rights of the elite. In Figure 2, we observe the contrast between the average levels of state segmentation in the three regions of the world where democracies prevail. As seen, Latin America stands out for its levels of violations of citizenship rights of the poor, unprivileged groups and regions.

State segmentation can also be assumed as of ordinal nature, ranging from low segmentation to high segmentation. To address this alternative I clustered low scores (≤ 4), as well as high scores (≥ 7) in a three points ordinal measure of segmentation

Outcome Variables

The data distinguishes interruptions of presidential mandates through legal means, such as impeachment trials and resignations, from coups d'état, that is, breaks in the constitutional order that suspend the democratic regime. The coding for interruption of presidential mandates comes from Pérez-Liñán's (2007) data set, and was updated for recent interruptions (e.g., Paraguay 2011, Brazil 2016). Coups are coded after Przeworski (2013) until 1999, with the addition of Peru's 1992 self-coup. Recent coups were coded using the same criteria as Przeworski et al. (2000). Those are: Ecuador 2000, Venezuela 2002, and Honduras 2009.

Legal interruptions of presidential mandates and coups are fundamentally different. For instance, impeachment trials do not imply the violation of constitutional order as long as they are predicted by law, the implication being that democracy remains at least in procedural terms. Impeaching the president or pressing for his or her resignation, instead of removing him or her by force, can be interpreted as elites actually preventing a coup. On the other hand, mandate interruptions are a strong sign of political instability and should not be encouraged by state segmentation. Given that impeachments and resignations are more democratic procedures if compared with coups, the effect of state segmentation in the odds of observing a legal interruption should be negative but not as strong as the effect observed in the odds of experiencing a coup.

Control for Alternative Explanations

As noted, there are three main revisions of the distributive conflict framework that offer explanations for why unequal democracies survive. The first accounts for the effect of strong conservative parties (Gibson's, 1996; Ziblatt, 2017). I code the presence of such party organizations if at least one proclaimed or socially acclaimed right-wing party, founded prior to regime change, either held or holds the presidency since democratization or is one of the majoritarian parties in congress in subsequent legislatures.

The second alternative model posits that unequal democracies endure when their constitutions were written by representatives of ousting autocrats during or prior to transitions (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018). To account for that explanation, the presence of an authoritarian constitution was coded following historical record, whenever the constitution in place was conceived during nondemocratic times.

The third alternative explanation is that resource abundance allows elites to attend redistributive claims at lower costs (Dunning, 2008). To account for the potential effect of resource abundance I rely on Haber and Menaldo's (2011) measure of resources (metals and energy) per capita.

Controls

I control for levels of income inequality using the standardized Gini coefficients in the SWIID data set (Solt, 2016), for the level of democracy as measured by the Polyarchy Index in the V-Dem data set, a logged measure of GDP per capita also from the expanded version of V-Dem, and account for fixed effects by country.

Table 2. Descriptives.

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.
State segmentation	5.8	1.29	3	9
State segmentation (ordinal)	2.1	0.6	1	3
Component 1: Rights less effective to poor	1.87	0.9	0	4
Component 2: Rights less effective to groups	2.88	0.63	2	4
Component 3: Rights less effective in territory	1.05	0.67	0	2
Interruption (other than coup)	0.03	0.18	0	1
Coup	0.01	0.09	0	1
Authoritarian constitution	0.30	0.46	0	1
Conservative party	0.34	0.47	0	1
Natural resources per capita	410.67	146.41	0	5524.18
GDP (log)	8.87	0.56	7.59	9.98
Gini	49.77	5.09	36.9	62.2
Polyarchy	0.69	0.15	0.19	0.93

Descriptives for the proxy of segmentation, outcome variable and other covariates can be seen in Table 2.

Regression Models

I use logistic models to predict the events of legal interruptions of a presidential mandate and the events of coups, the latter implicating a democratic breakdown. As stated before, the negative association between state segmentation and coups, that is, the idea that the segmentation of the coverage of citizenship rights elites prevents democratic breakdowns, is the fundamental one for the present theory.

Democratic breakdowns are rare events in contemporary Latin America. To account for potential biases and problems of separation I modeled the data using penalized logistic models (see King & Zeng, 2001). I also use multinomial logistic models in which the dependent variable assumes one of three values: 0 (no interruption), 1 (legal interruption), and 2 (coup).

All models for Latin America account for the alternative explanations and controls described above, and for either fixed or random effects of countries. I also estimate logistic models with random effects for the full V-Dem data set, including autocracies and democracies between 1900 and 2008, without accounting for the aforementioned alternative explanations. The results of the latter are presented in the appendix. Replication data are offered as supplementary material (available online).

Results

After transitions, the new Latin American democracies inherited much of the repressive apparatus of previous autocratic rule (López, 2018). Consequently, these new democracies distribute citizenship in uneven ways, in what can be called state segmentation. Figure 3 displays the evolution of state segmentation in Latin America since democratization.

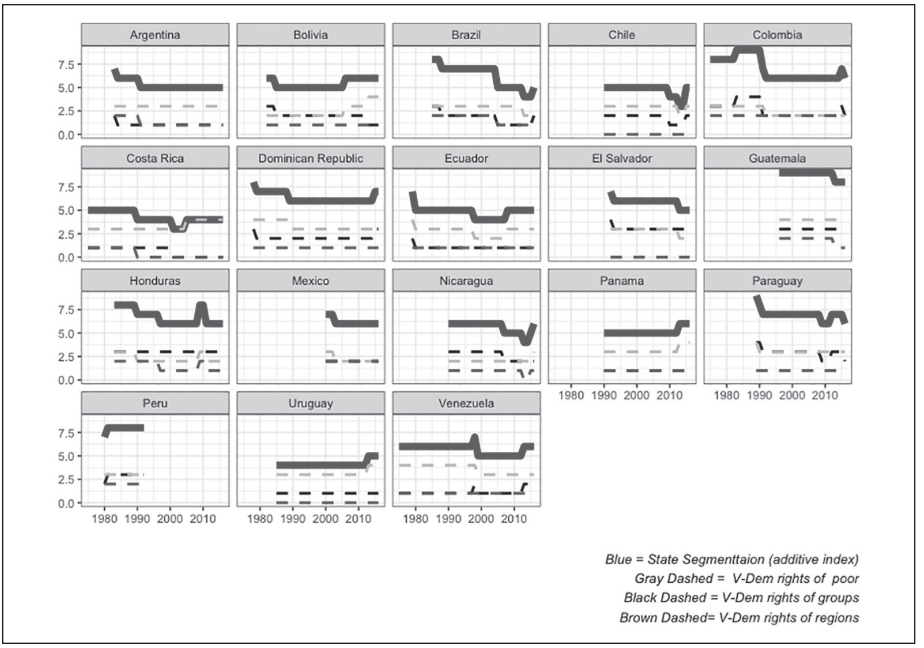

Figure 3. State segmentation since democratization.

Latin American countries tend to have high state segmentation. High scores are observed in some of the region's largest and more durable democracies, such as in Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia. As elites experience democracies in which states segment the distribution of civil rights, they learn that liberal institutions can coexist with effective repression of the poor and marginalized groups. Having a reference of how an authoritarian alternative would look like, their experience of state segmentation helps change their strategies regarding democratic continuity.

Cases of democratic breakdown did occur after the third wave in the region however. If the present argument holds, we should observe differences in the levels of state segmentation between the cases in which democracy survived and those where it did not. Table 3 displays penalized logistic models for the effect of state segmentation on legal interruptions of presidential mandates and coups, the latter representing democratic breakdown.

As citizenship rights become more segmented between economic and social groups, or across the territory in each country, the odds of experiencing democratic breakdowns tend to diminish, as seen in Model (6) of Table 3. This negative association becomes even more salient at higher levels of segmentation, as described in Model (7) of the same table. The effect over legal oustings is much more modest.

Current theories of distributive conflict portray that wherever inequality is high, elites should more frequently resort to coups in order to reverse democratization. Assuming a scenario of high inequality (Gini = 0.6), the predicted probability of coup when segmentation is low (≤4) is 0.02 in Latin America, which is already a low probability. At intermediate levels of state segmentation, the predicted probability diminishes to 0.01. If one

assumes high levels of state segmentation (≥7), the predicted probability further reduces to 0.005, four times lower than the predicted probability at low levels of segmentation. Regarding episodes of legal ousting of the incumbent, predictions portray a probability of 0.1 at low and intermediate levels of state segmentation, which is very high for such an extreme event. That probability diminishes to 0.06 when assuming high levels of state segmentation.

The negative association between state segmentation and democratic breakdown resists the inclusion of the three main alternative explanations—within the scope of the distributive conflict framework—for why unequal democracies endure. As predicted in the literature, the models in Table 3 portray that constitutions written during authoritarian times are indeed present in more politically stable cases, that is, those where interruptions of presidential mandates are less frequent. However, models do not portray a negative association between having an authoritarian constitution and experiencing a coup. The presence of strong conservative parties seems to be indifferent for either outcome. Finally, the increase in natural resources per capita is slyly associated with political instability in Latin American democracies, but not with breakdowns.

Table 4 displays results for multinomial logistic models. Results go in the same direction as those of penalized models. The implication is again that countries that experience higher state segmentation are less prone to interruptions of any kind, and are more likely to experience legal interruptions of a presidential mandate than they are of experiencing coups. Results add evidence in favor of the argument that elites will avoid democratic reversals when in presence of high state segmentation, despite the redistributive pressures typical of highly unequal settings.

Another angle to this process regards the evolution of cases in which interruptions of presidential mandates did occur. Table 5 displays the evolution of segmentation in positive cases within a sample of one interruption per country.

With the exception of Peru, who suffered a self-coup by the hands of Alberto Fujimori in 1992, all other cases present significant negative variation of state segmentation prior to interruptions. The average reduction in state segmentation is substantial in Brazil prior to 2016, when leftist president Dilma Rousseff was ousted through an impeachment trial (see also Figure 3). After 13 years of left-wing rule of the PT, during which the country experienced significant reductions in income inequality, elites coordinated the replacement of President Rousseff by her conservative vice-president Michel Temer. Another case where reduction of segmentation was substantial according to V-Dem measures is Honduras prior to 2009, the year when military forces removed President Emanuel Zelaya from office.

Interruptions of presidential mandates cannot be attributed to variations in state segmentation alone, or mainly. But the patterns observed indicate that state segmentation plays a role and helps explain why elites choose one strategy or the other. In Argentina for instance, the resignation of Fernando de la Rua in 2002 was clearly the consequence of the economic meltdown and rioting that took over the country. However, considering the levels of political instability that followed de la Rua's resignation, the fact that the regime did not collapse deserves further justification. Had it occurred at any other time in the country's history, the social landscape of the early 2000s in Argentina would have merit a coup. All in all, the data show a pattern that is compatible with the theory of

Table 3. Penalized Logistic Models for the Effect of State Segmentation on Probability of Ousting.

	Interruption					Coup				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
State segmentation ($t-1$)	−0.232 (0.256)					−1.357** (6.134)				
State segmentation as factor: intermediate ($t-1$)		−0.499 (0.752)					−3.895*** (1.577)			
State segmentation as factor: high ($t-1$)		−0.715 (0.905)					−5.337*** (2.087)			
Rights less effective to poor ($t-1$)			−0.402 (0.449)					−1.134 (0.781)		
Rights less effective to groups ($t-1$)				−0.476 (0.484)					−1.408 (0.896)	
Rights less effective in territory ($t-1$)					0.239 (0.567)					−0.539 (0.727)
Authoritarian constitution	−1.839** (1.040)	−1.876 (1.028)	−1.835** (1.047)	−1.946** (1.051)	−1.862** (1.017)	0.615 (1.498)	1.850 (1.499)	0.594 (1.434)	0.222 (1.269)	0.374 (1.072)
Conservative party	−0.031 (0.788)	−0.082 (0.812)	0.113 (0.836)	0.007 (0.792)	−0.075 (0.824)	1.173 (1.401)	0.546 (1.207)	0.763 (1.452)	0.640 (1.284)	0.331 (1.093)
Resources per capita	0.001** (0.000)	0.001** (0.000)	0.001** (0.000)	0.001** (0.000)	0.001** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country random-effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N countries	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
N country-years	494	494	494	494	494	494	494	494	494	494

Note. Results are presented in this fashion: regression coefficient, standard error in parenthesis.
*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Table 4. Multinomial Logistic Models for the Effect of State Segmentation on Probability of interruptions and coups.

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)	
	Interrupt	Coup	Interrupt	Coup	Interrupt	Coup	Interrupt	Coup	Interrupt	Coup
State segmentation ($t-1$)	−1.390** (0.503)	−21.434*** (1.320)								
State segmentation as factor: intermediate ($t-1$)			−1.854 (1.220)	−28.932*** (0.843)						
State segmentation as factor: high ($t-1$)			−6.227*** (1.706)	−68.468*** (0.000)						
Rights less effective to poor (t-1)					−1.588 (0.848)	−7.352*** (0.665)				
Rights less effective to groups ($t-1$)							−2.590* (1.114)	−19.349*** (0.520)		
Rights less effective in territory ($t-1$)									−0.817 (1.424)	−19.135*** (0.172)
Authoritarian constitution	−36.102*** (0.806)	−7.911*** (1.101)	−34.854*** (0.891)	67.894*** (0.986)	−11.733*** (0.922)	10.033*** (0.329)	−17.301*** (0.781)	10.896*** (1.033)	−22.446*** (0.990)	9.917*** (0.627)
Conservative party	−23.112*** (0.534)	135.416*** (1.101)	−30.178*** (0.754)	37.866*** (1.097)	−11.910*** (0.816)	−0.629 (0.329)	−16.585*** (0.746)	29.744*** (1.033)	−24.604*** (0.739)	39.150*** (0.627)
Resources per capita	−0.000 (0.002)	0.044** (0.017)	0.001 (0.002)	0.046*** (0.011)	−0.000 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.007)	−0.000 (0.002)	0.015 (0.011)	−0.001 (0.002)	0.005 (0.005)
Controls	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Country fixed-effects	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
N countries	18		18		18		18		18	
N country-years	494		494		494		494		494	

Note. Results are presented in this fashion: regression coefficient, standard error in parenthesis.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 5. Variation in State Segmentation Prior to Oustings.

Case	Variation	Output
Argentina (1983-2001)	−0.10***	Resignation
Bolivia (1980-2003)	−0.03***	Resignation
Brazil (1985-2016)	−0.12***	Impeachment
Ecuador (1979-2000)	−0.05***	Coup
Honduras (1982-2009)	−0.10***	Coup
Paraguay (1989-2011)	−0.06***	Impeachment
Peru (1980-1992)	0.03	Self-coup
Venezuela (1975-2002)	−0.02**	Coup

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

state segmentation: higher state segmentation diminishes the probability of democratic breakdown, and oustings are preceded by reductions in state segmentation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed at solving an important puzzle left unanswered by the proponents of the distributive conflict framework as well as by their critics and revisionists: why do unequal democracies endure? As noted, several studies build on the assumption that elites contrast the costs of redistribution to the costs of repression when deciding their next political move, in the aim of preventing the poor from expropriating (either through taxation or by force) their wealth and resources. The assumption that elites have more incentives to sustain autocratic regimes in contexts of high inequality was challenged by Ansell and Samuels (2014) and Albertus (2015), among others, who claim that elites also need to shield against autocrats and might support democracy in order to foster property rights. By adding the state as a source of threats, those authors show that elites' decision making is much less straightforward than previous theories portray. Nonetheless, the state can also be a source of protection against the poor.

Building on this apparent contradiction, I argued that elites have antithetical preferences for both liberal and repressive institutions as they need to secure individual rights but also need to shield from the redistributive demands of the poor. I proposed the concept of state segmentation to describe how current Latin American democracies combine liberal institutions with informal procedures that result in violations of the citizenship rights of the poor and underprivileged groups. State segmentation is a key but overlooked variable that helps explain why elites cope with democracy in contexts of extreme inequality, such as those present in Latin America.

The uneven distribution of the rule of law is regularly assumed as a factor that compromises democracy in Latin America and elsewhere in the developing world, as in O'Donnell's (1993) classical account of brown areas. From a normative point of view, it is clear that the uneven effectiveness of civil rights hurts the quality of democracy (Altman & Pérez-Liñán, 2002) as it contradicts our expectations of equal treatment under the law. An argument could be made that, precisely because of this

counterintuitive outcome, regimes with segmented states cannot be considered "true" democracies. This can be the case if one adopts a normatively charged conceptualization of democracy, in line with O'Donnell (2004) and Morlino (2004). Alternatively, democracies with segmented states could be considered diminished subtypes, in the lines of Collier and Levitsky's (1997) classical strategy of concept formation. It remains that competitive regimes with freely elected civilian rule, separation of powers, and a formal set of political and social rights compatible with the ideal of democracy—shall we call them democracies or not—may find equilibrium and become more durable when equipped with informal mechanisms of repression.

Most countries in Latin America, a region historically characterized by the prevalence of coups and the imposition of authoritarian regimes, have for the first time experienced decades of uninterrupted democratic rule. In support of my argument, I have shown that countries with more segmented states are much less likely to experience democratic breakdown. This is not to say that elites in the region have become democrats. As shown, they now more frequently use the formal tools of democracy, such as impeachment trials, to oust undesired rulers. By doing so they often bend the purpose of such institutions, promoting new forms of political instability. Concordantly, the increase of antidemocratic sentiments among the population and the growing sympathy of the well off for far right leaders add to the fragility of democratic sentiment in the region. It remains that these unfavorable conditions for democracy no longer tend to result in regime breakdown.

Beyond Latin America, democratic durability in highly unequal cases such as South Africa, Botswana, and Israel suggest that the mechanisms portrayed here could travel to other regions where democracy meets repressive states. Increasing segmentation of citizenship rights also describes recent trends in advanced economies, as in the case of the United States. While the processes highlighted here tell a very Latin American story, the data corroborates that the segmentation of citizenship rights is likely to be negatively associated with coups in democracies beyond the region (see the appendix).

The implications of the present argument for future research and developmental policy are substantial, as we learn that elites may cope with democracies for their undemocratic components. The assumptions guiding my theory do not need to lead to a fatalistic view of stable democracies in developing. But the argument does posit that the unexpected resilience of democracies in contexts of high inequality owes in part to such violations.

Appendix

Table A1 shows estimates for the entire V-Dem data set and for the third wave period, in both cases accounting for autocracies and democracies. The association between state segmentation and democratic survival is estimated with interaction terms accounting for the effect of being a democracy and experiencing segmentation of citizenship rights in different levels. Results indicate a negative association between two components of segmentation and coups: ineffectiveness of citizenship rights for the poor and for social groups. The data provides grounds for the generalization of the argument, but also portrays it as much more relevant for Latin America. It remains that democracies that skew the effectiveness of citizenship rights are less likely to experience coups.

Table A1. Logistic Models With Full V-Dem Data Set.

	1900-2008				1975-2008			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
State segmentation (t-1)	0.000 (0.000)				−0.000 (0.000)			
Rights less effective to poor ($t-1$)		0.006 (0.004)				0.011* (0.005)		
Rights less effective to groups ($t-1$)			0.010** (0.03)				0.013** (0.005)	
Rights less effective in territory ($t-1$)				−0.000 (0.000)				0.000 (0.000)
Democracy ($t-1$)	−0.061** (0.020)	−0.054*** (0.010)	−0.055*** (0.010)	−0.056** (0.020)	−0.036 (0.27)	−0.052*** (0.014)	−0.056*** (0.014)	−0.028 (0.27)
Democracy × State segmentation ($t-1$)	−0.000 (0.001)				−0.000 (0.001)			
Democracy × Rights less effective to poor ($t-1$)		−0.013* (0.006)				−0.023** (0.008)		
Democracy × Rights less effective to groups ($t-1$)			−0.016*** (0.005)				−0.025*** (0.007)	
Democracy × Rights less effective in territory ($t-1$)				−0.000 (0.001)				−0.000 (0.001)
Latin America	0.082*** (0.017)	0.059*** (0.016)	0.063*** (0.016)	0.083*** (0.017)	0.055** (0.020)	0.039* (0.018)	0.041* (0.018)	0.055** (0.020)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country random–effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N countries	123	129	129	123	118	129	129	118
N country-years	6,305	6,888	6,888	6,305	2,770	3,055	3,055	2,770

Note. Results are presented in this fashion: regression coefficient, standard error in parenthesis. Controls are: GDP per capita, Gini index, polyarchy index, year, and world region.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. For a critical view of this assumption, see Cammack (1990). For alternative accounts based on mass behavior, see Inglehart and Welzel (2005). In support of this assumption, see Higley and Burton (2006) and López (2013a).
2. Democratization is accounted here as the transition from a nondemocratic regime to a democratic regime.
3. Boix's version of distributive conflict theory conditions the effect of inequality to that of mobile versus fixed capital, arguing that elites that rely on fixed assets have further incentives to support authoritarianism. Latin America's heavy reliance on fixed capital adds to the puzzle of democratic resilience in the region.
4. As does the current constitution, the Brazilian Constitution of 1946 (Article 72 § 2) established that if both the seats of the president and the vice-president were vacant, and the first half of the mandate was concluded, the congress would be called to designate a new president.
5. The assumption that democracies always redistribute and never repress, and that autocracies always repress and never redistribute finds no empirical ground (see Albertus, 2015; Ross, 2006).
6. The idea that democracies serve property rights, and thus the elites, can be traced back to North and Weingast (1989) classical account of democracy as a regime that provides credible constraints to the ruler.
7. 1975 Is accounted as Year 1 of the third wave after Portugal's transition

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How Protesters and the State Learn From One Another: Spiraling Repertoires of Contention and Repression in Ukraine, 1990-2014

Olga Zelinska[1]

Abstract

This article employs a contentious politics framework to examine the mobilization–repression nexus as it occurred in Ukraine from the 1990 Revolution on Granite, through the 2000-2001 Ukraine without Kuchma campaign and the 2004 Orange Revolution, to the 2013-2014 Euromaidan movement. Comparative analysis of these four cases suggests that developments in both the contentious and repressive repertoires resembled spirals: each campaign became more complex and of longer duration than the last, and each was driven by the repeated protester–government interactions and by the political, economic, and technological environment that changed over time. In the transit from autocracy to democracy, Ukrainian activists adopted and "normalized" political protest much more quickly than did the authorities. The activists creatively innovated as they borrowed from earlier dissent traditions and from other social movements abroad. For the government, the process of learning how to manage contention with means other than their usual repression tactics was much longer, and it is not over. As it slowly transits from Soviet past to democracy, Ukraine continues its development into a "social movement society."

Keywords

protest, Ukraine, repression, mobilization, government

Introduction

Do protesters and the state learn from each other, and if so, what do they learn? The learning relationship between the protesters and the authorities is often referred to as

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the mobilization–repression nexus (Davenport et al., 2005; see also protest policing literature, e.g., della Porta & Retier, 1998; Earl & Soule, 2006; on the repression and "backfire" see the vast nonviolence literature, e.g., Hess & Martin, 2006; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). Scholars of comparative research on protest and repression argue that there are specific styles of challenger–authority interaction within nations that are embedded in regime types and national histories (Erdem Aytaç et al., 2017). Whereas studies on the protester–authority relationship tend to focus on Western democratic countries and on policing (Earl et al., 2003; Earl & Soule, 2006; Soule & Davenport, 2009; see also Sullivan, 2016; Thyen, 2018), analyses of the mobilization–repression nexus in post-Communist states, and especially Ukraine, are rare (Marat, 2014; Peacock & Cordner, 2016). This introduces a theory bias. Western cases of mobilization–repression nexus focus on how the state grows into increasingly formalized and normalized repressive techniques. But for post-Soviet states, the history that the protesters and the state draw on is quite different. We know little of the mobilization–repression nexus in posttotalitarian societies that inherited brutal Soviet-era tactics and quickly transmitted them into the state learning curve.

This article examines the mobilization-repression nexus as it occurred in Ukraine from pre-Independence 1990 to the Maidan protests of 2013-2014. Ukraine is an interesting case to understand the learning of contention and repression of the state. Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (Ukrainian SSR) was exposed to the full-scale Soviet command-administrative system and repressive apparatus for about seven decades—a depth and length of totalitarian experience that few countries of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have gone through. The independent Ukraine, at the same time, witnessed several major "successful" upheavals, from the Orange Revolution, to Euromaidan, something which was not characteristic of its neighboring countries, which had the same Soviet legacy.

How does learning contention and repression function when the state has a much richer history of repression to draw from? Referring to the existing theories one may claim that as the country transits from autocracy to democracy, with each repeated interaction the relationship between the protesters and the authorities would become increasingly institutionalized. In a democratic setting, when the governments think about reelections, they are less likely to engage in open repressions (Erdem Aytaç et al., 2017). This "normalization of protest" has happened in other parts of the CEE region, for example, in Poland, in the early transition years (Ekiert & Kubik, 1998). On the other hand, it is possible that the protest suppression culture would be so deeply imbedded in the architecture of the state–society relations that the faith of the emerging dissent would remain highly uncertain. An example of the Russian Federation suggests that authorities manage to keep opposition divided and under threat of repressions (Luxmoore, 2020; Robertson, 2013). This argument is supported by studies that suggest that transitional regimes—ones that are neither fully authoritarian nor democracies—are especially prone to violence against their populations (Davenport, 2007; Davenport & Armstrong, 2004).

Independent Ukraine inherited both a vast repressive apparatus and a vacuum of understanding of what a political protest, beyond conversations at the kitchen table, is,

and had to learn how to manage both in the new settings of transit from autocracy to democracy. Since 1990-1991 the discourse concentrated on the new reading of the political system. As I will demonstrate below, the "streets" adopted and "normalized" political protest much quicker than did the authorities. For the government, the process of learning how to manage contention, with means other than repressive machine, was much longer and is on-going. Tackled first by the academic research, then leaked into the lecture halls, the idea of "normalized protest" slowly became articulated by the political experts and advisers, and finally made it into the rhetoric of the politicians (Балабан, 2017). In the moments of crisis, however, the government called on police, which, in turn, might or might not properly execute the order, which leaved the faith of contention highly uncertain. Slowly transiting from Soviet past to democracy, Ukraine is yet to learn being a "social movement society" (see Jenkins et al., 2008; D. Meyer & Tarrow, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

My approach to analyzing Ukraine's post-1990 history of protest is based on contentious politics framework. Scholars define *contentious politics* as public and collective claims making by a connected network of people and groups, where government is the object of claims or is the third party in these claims (McAdam et al., 2007). The set of means a group has for making claims at a point of time is a contentious *repertoire* (see Tilly, 1986). Repertoires are limited, rigid, historically grounded reflections of the general culture dominating in the society, and thus "require historical understanding" (Tilly, 2008, p. 4). Looking back at the past contentious events would explain why social movements or other contentious interactions have certain features, track the changes in the claim-making over time, and help explain the conditions which make it possible (Tilly, 2008).

At the same time, repertoires evolve, slowly. Successful tactics *diffuse* across space, from one protest cite to another, as protesters borrow from their comrades from different localities or countries (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007, p. 31). Depending on the channel of information the repertoire diffusion can be relational (through face-to-face human interaction), nonrelational (through media) or moderated by a third party that deliberately spreads the information on contention and puts in contact potential adopters (Vasi, 2011). One approach in the social movement literature is that protesters' tactical choices are strategic, and based on efficacy and cost calculations (e.g., McAdam, 1983). Cultural explanation, however, suggests that tactics define protest movements—activists have "tastes for action" and select only those tactics which match that "taste" (e.g., Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004).

Repertoires also evolve in time through larger cycles of mobilization (Tarrow, 1995). Often protesters *innovate* during what Zolberg (1972) called the "moments of madness." Innovation is a result of the *critical learning process*, caused by a search for a tactical advantage and to attract attention of other actors and groups. These changes happen through *reciprocal* adjustments of both the claimants and the claim targets, that is, "circle of action and reaction" (della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Changes in repertoire, as contentious politics in general, occur within *political opportunity structures (POS)*—the interplay of power, repression, and facilitation that facilitate or inhibit political actors' collective actions (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). Although an indispensable component of the political process theory of social movements (McAdam, 1999; D. S. Meyer & Minkoff, 2004), the concept of POS presents a challenge for researchers, who have to identify which aspects of the external world affect the development of social movements and how. While the general logic of this concept is clear, its conceptualizations vary greatly and are often case specific (a detailed overview by Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; see also Gamson & Meyer, 1996).

Methodology

Following the contentious politics framework, my *unit of analysis* is a contentious episode, rather the social movement organizations or the entire movements. In each narrative I connect regime features and protest development, as well as the relations between collective actors and the mechanisms they employ. I analyze the major properties of each episode. Following McAdam et al. (2007), I group these properties into (a) political opportunities, operationalized as a presence of influential allies inside the polity, (b) performance repertoires, (c) claims making via analysis of demands, and (d) consequences and concessions of actors.

I pay specific attention to the features of repressions employed by the government(s), understood in a broad sense, as the actions of the repressive subjects which raise the price of the collective actions of the challengers (Tilly, 1978). Due to the limited scope of this article, however, I would be able to focus only on the "hard" repressions, for example, arrests and protest dispersal, as opposed to the "soft" ones, for example, administrative pressure from tax or other control agencies. I will mostly analyze the developments in Ukraine's police, as it is the main agent of state control (Гомза, 2018), and the most likely executor of the repressive actions targeting the dissent. However, whenever necessary, I will also highlight the position of other security and law enforcement agencies, as the security services.

This article uses a diachronic research design, that is, views development of the protest and repression repertoire over time. In social sciences, historical analyses of a single country are commonly used for the development of hypotheses in the new fields (della Porta, 2008). In particular, I borrow from a historical case study—a research strategy initially developed for the analysis of political discourse, which blends history and case-oriented analysis, adopts both a retro and current view of the cases, incorporates existing data sources, and generates both specific and general types of knowledge (Widdersheim, 2018).

In this small-N study, I focus on four major contentious episodes which happened in Ukraine since 1990 to 2013. To control for hypotheses, I assume that the exit parameters of each episode do not vary. These include space—episodes unroll first on Ukrainian SSR's Square of October Revolution and then Maidan Nezalezhnosti—Independence Square in central Kyiv. All four are shaped by the political culture characteristic to Ukrainians and overshadowed by the legacies of the decades of Communist

rule, which Ukraine experienced. The main operative variable is time: I assume that the protest and repression repertoire at time $t + n$ is different from that at time t. Ukraine in different time periods thus is treated as a set of distinct cases. Although selecting on a dependent variable is quite common in protest studies, I did not choose cases on the outcome—three out of four episodes described here ended with at least some concessions. In this way, I avoid focusing on positive cases, that is, cases where the protest repertoire was effective and led to concessions. At the same time, all four contentious episodes are all-national campaigns, which I assume were supported across the country.

Particularly, I analyze the 1990 Revolution on Granite, the 2000-2001 Ukraine without Kuchma (UWK) campaign, the 2004 Orange Revolution, and 2013-2014 Euromaidan (also called Maidan and Revolution of Dignity). These four episodes are the major contentious events in the post-1990 Ukrainian history. In selecting these episodes and defining their time boundaries, I referred to the vast literature on protest history in Ukraine (Сапицька & Золотар, 2014; Gomza, 2014; Khmelko & Pereguda, 2014; Kowal, Mink, et al., 2019; Kowal, Reichardt, et al., 2019; Kudelia, 2014; Onuch, 2014a, 2014b; Pishchikova & Ogryzko, 2014; Smyth, 2018; Wawrzonek, 2014; Way, 2015; Мацієвський, 2014; Перегуда, 2014).

For the following analysis, I used official documents, found on the web sites of Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine) and Central Electoral Commission, and multiple secondary sources: studies carried out by Ukrainian and foreign historians and political scientists; analytic pieces by *Democracy Initiatives Foundation*, a Ukrainian think tank, and materials by Maidan Monitoring Information Center[1]; reports by major Ukrainian (*Den', Ukrain'ska Pravda, Tyzhden', Kyiv Post, Dzerkalo Tyzhnya*), as well as international (*Deutsche Welle, Radio Liberty*) media outlets; documentaries and published interviews with witnesses and activists. In what follows, I present the narratives of four episodes, followed with the conclusions and discussion. But first, I broadbrush the background by describing the key characteristics of protest in Soviet Ukraine.

Background

Ukrainian People's Republic, a predecessor of independent Ukraine, de facto ceased its existence in 1921, as the Bolsheviks extended control over what would ultimately become the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and the founding member of the Soviet Union in 1922. The Soviet society was built on the foundational idea of the class struggle, which supposedly ended with 1917 October revolution (Szabo 1996). The new social order was based on the people's power, and by default could not include cleavages or conflicts, as the people could not protest against own will and the general good. The challengers to the regime were labeled counterrevolutionaries, the enemies of the people, the dissidents, the unconscious element or simply treated as mentally ill, but never as protesters or the opposition. Although some suggest there was a place for limited dissent in the Soviet society (e.g., Viola, 2002), by and large contentious actors were treated as being "outside" of society, deprived of the rights and privileges society members had, and had to be "eradicated" by the repressive machine (Sharman, 2003).

Consequently, there was no public information about the mass protests—nowhere to learn about contention, nowhere to study how to do it. In reality, however, Ukraine, just as other parts of the USSR, hosted mass protests against the Communist regime. In 1932, 923 mass protests happened in Ukraine, 57% of all those happening in the entire USSR (Тиліщак, 2016 cited in Балабан, 2017). In 1933 man-made famine, Holodomor, now recognized as a genocide by a number of countries, killed millions of ethnic Ukrainians, turning Ukrainian society into pacified, loyal, and nonprotesting (Балабан, 2017).

The Second World War created an opening for active development of the national liberation movement, aimed at restoration of the Ukrainian independence. Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), and its militant wing, Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA), engaged in guerrilla warfare against Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, the Polish Underground State and Communist Poland. After Germany surrendered in 1945, the Soviet authorities turned their attention to insurgencies taking place in Ukraine, first by mass terror against OUN and UIA members, and then through infiltration and espionage. OUN underground was effectively liquidated by the mid-1950s.

Decades of fear followed. Mass "cleansings," arrests and killings of Ukrainian intelligentsia and clergy, members of the Dissident movement, effectively limited any potential large-scale organized dissent to what Johnston (2006) labeled "resistant episodes." An "army" of Committee for State Security (KGB) operatives were infiltrated in educational entities and labor collectives, collecting information on the antiregime expressions in private talks, among friends or colleagues. Most of the historians of the KGB agree that Soviet security services, at least within some periods, operated as a separate "corporation" within the ruling class, and were just as, if not more, powerful, as the Party apparatus (Єрмоленко, 2019). Independent Ukraine inherited both this vast repressive apparatus and a vacuum of understanding of political protest, and had to learn how to manage both as it transited from autocracy to democracy.

Episode 1. 1990: Revolution on Granite

The *political opportunity structure* for the revolution of Ukraine's independence was the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union as a whole. In July 1990, parliament of Ukrainian SSR announced The Declaration of the State Sovereignty (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1990). This was a symbolic step to signal the self-determination of the Soviet Ukraine, and it did not question the fundamental premises of communist ideology, especially the leading role of the Communist Party. As a result of the partially free parliamentary elections held in the spring of that year, the majority in parliament remained pro-Communist with many Ukrainian dissidents representing the national–democratic opposition. Despite the command economy was increasingly failing to provide goods and services to Soviet citizens, the Council of Ministers, chaired by the pro-Union Vitaliy Masol, carried out the preparation of the new Union Treaty.

Students turned out to be the most proreform and the most "radical" social group. In mid- and late-1980s well-organized student unions emerged in Kyiv and Lviv. In

early 1990, they *learned to act collectively*—organized a joint action of students' solidarity in big university cities across the country (Громенко & Бондарук, 2015), becoming a *key actor* in claims making. As for *performances*, veteran participants recalled the process of development of protest ideas in the student community, and eventually agreeing on a hunger strike—"the greatest way of nonviolent sacrifice" (Возняк, 2013). Student leaders recognize that they were inspired by the example coming from abroad, suggesting the early case of protest repertoire *international diffusion*. In a situation, when no public information on protest tactics was available in the country, students travelled to Bulgaria on a Komsomol exchange, where they eyewitnessed the protest against Bulgarian President (Вишницька, 2013).

The protests, later called The Revolution on Granite, began on October 2, 1990. Students laid out tents as a camp on the Square of the October Revolution in Kyiv. On October 8, 1990, Parliamentary commission reported, that 158 people from 24 cities went on a hunger strike (Громенко & Бондарук, 2015). The protesters issued key five *claims*: (a) snap parliamentary elections based on the multiparty system no later than spring 1991; (b) nationalization of the Communist Party property; (c) to prevent the signing of the new Union Treaty; (d) resignation of Vitaliy Masol, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR; and (e) return of Ukrainian soldiers serving in the army to the territory of Ukraine (Базилівська, 2013).

Strikers managed to engage the *media* as a mechanism for contention. When parliamentary speaker Kravchuk came to the protesters to talk, the students were broadcasted by national television's Channel One (Громенко & Бондарук, 2015). When the country had two channels in total, getting into the news of Channel One was a success (Диваки Продакшн, 2011). The students *brokered* with the workers' associations and educational entities. Kyiv protesters were soon joined by supporters from other universities (Капшученко, 2013) and factories (Возняк, 2013). Ten opposition MPs joined the protesters and announced a hunger strike (Диваки Продакшн, 2011). The protest *spread outside Kyiv*. Some travelled to home cities and called fellows to join Kyiv strikers. Students in east and west of the country held the protest actions in support of the Kyiv strike.

As for *repressions*, the camp was surrounded by the numerous police and special police forces "OMON." OMON was created in 1988, as a special police unit under the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs, for (a) protection of public order during sociopolitical, sports, cultural events, as well as during natural disasters, epidemics, major industrial accidents, catastrophes, and other emergencies; (b) prevention of group disturbances in public order, riots; and (c) participation in activities to detain armed criminals (Министерство Внутренних Дел Российской Федерации, n.d.). OMON members were considered the "elite" police unit; carefully selected among the best police and army officers and sportsmen, they received extensive physical, tactical, and psychological training. In 1991, Kyiv they were ready to demolish the camp (Диваки Продакшн, 2011). However, the authorities never gave that order, perhaps taken by surprise by the unprecedented hunger strike, the media attention and public support it attracted, or calculating the balance of powers among the competing groups within the

late-Soviet establishment, under the conditions of failing command economy and growing wage arrears.

The protest spread. On October 13, students walked to parliament. About 70 students announced a sit-in (Громенко & Бондарук, 2015). That same evening, protesters occupied the central building of Kyiv University. Two weeks after the announcement of the hunger strike, on October 17th, the Ukrainian authorities agreed to *concessions*. Parliament adopted the Decree, agreeing to all five of the students' demands (Відомості Верховної Ради УРСР, 1990). On October 23, Vitaliy Masol's resignation was voted. The new union treaty was never signed, and in 9 months a democratic Ukraine declared independence. However, this was only a part of the deal. After 1990, elections were not held until 1994. At the same time, the parliament raised the age threshold for potential candidates, so most of the young charismatic protest leaders could not enter politics.

Episode 2. 2000-2001: Ukraine Without Kuchma

The decade following Ukraine's independence was full of political events, which largely shaped *political opportunity structure* for the protests in 2000. Leonid Kuchma won the 1994 and 1999 election, supported by the network of "red directors." Through economic ties turned into new forms of political support, he relied on multiple competing parties and patronage networks, that all depended on the president's support (Way, 2015). Since 1996, he also carried out the massive project for Ukraine's centralization, effectively channeling all tax flows from country's regions to Kyiv. As a result, Kuchma's two presidential terms were characterized by relative economic stability (Сапицька & Золотар, 2014). At the same time, the key features of his regime included repeated attempts to control the dissent: forcing nongovernmental actors to cooperate with the regime, and using the secret service in conflicts with the political opposition (Кузьо, 2004). Despite Kuchma regime's official claims to transition from the communist-totalitarian past to the capitalist–democratic future, its supposedly democratic features were questioned by the general citizenry and the majority of the intellectuals who railed against president's neo-authoritarian policies (Мацієвський, 2006).

The protests were *triggered* by the Gongadze affair. Georgi Gongadze was a Ukrainian journalist and the founder of oppositional "*Ukrain'ska Pravda*" newspaper. His body was found in the forest near Kyiv on November 2, 2000 (Газета День, 2015). A week later, the recordings from Kuchma's office became public, that suggested that the president, his chief of staff, the minister for internal affairs, and the head of security services were all involved in the murder of Gongadze. "UWK "protest *performance* started on December 15, 2000, as a small tent camp emerged on Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti. As the global web was gaining in popularity, the protest also went *online*. This had the effect of rapidly expanding contention beyond its initial borders.

Collective actors of the protest, unlike a decade ago, were multiple and heterogeneous, and included members of 24 opposition political parties and organizations. The *demands* of the protesters included resignation of the president and other high-level

officials, potentially involved in journalist's murder, transparent and just investigation of Gongadze's case (Інститут "Республіка," 2015).

The regime learned from the previous protests and was well-prepared to *suppress* this dissent. In 1992, short while after the Revolution on Granite and after the official fall of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian government reformed the old Soviet OMON into the "Berkut" under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. With gradually improving public budget capacity, the government was able to provide various material benefits to this special unit to ensure its loyalty. They stationed Berkut in every province (oblast), initially to fight organized crime that flourished in the conditions of economic and political turmoil. Members of Berkut, like their OMON predecessors, preserved the status of "elite" police and paramilitary force, trained to carry out arrests against armed criminals and to free hostages. Berkut members were positioned in separate facilities, where policemen lived, trained, and stored the arsenal (Телевізійна Служба Новин, 2014). They were also paid about two times more than a regular police officer.

Gradually, the fight against organized crime has become a mere secondary task of Berkut. Now the special unit's main task was "to secure the public order during state but also social, political and religious mass events, as well as during sports and cultural happenings" (Perepadya & Ostaptschuk, 2013). In 1998, the Berkut violently dismantled the tent camp of protesting miners with sticks and tear gas, and 22 miners were injured. This marked one of the first episodes of violence against peaceful protesters in the history of independent Ukraine (Якимчук, 2013).

Experts note that the Berkut police were indoctrinated and persuaded by their superiors that their targets were dangerous extremists that should be eliminated by any means. As a quasimilitary organization, they followed orders from their superiors; there was no culture of disobeying legal or illegal orders (Perepadya & Ostaptschuk, 2013; Sukhov & Goncharova, 2017). These special units partially operated in a legal vacuum, regulated by the decrees of the interior ministry (and whatever government was in power), leaving the parliament deprived of any oversight or control mechanisms (Perepadya & Ostaptschuk, 2013).

In 2000, shortly after the first protest on the Maidan, on December 23, as the Kyiv Maidan prepared for winter celebrations, the UWK *spread across Ukraine* (Майдан Інфо, 2001). Tent camps "mushroomed" in all Ukrainian oblast centers. Shortly after, the activists reported the first *repressions* against oblast protests. Tent camps were dismantled by the police who had beaten and arrested the activists (Дзеркало Тижня, 2001). In early February, after the winter holidays, activists marched from the oblast centers to Kyiv, holding rallies on the move (Майдан Інфо, 2001). However, this time the marches were less well attended. Veterans remember the lost cohesion of the protesters camp—major political opposition parties apparently changed plans and withdrew funding, saving the resources for the upcoming parliamentary elections (Солодько, 2006).

The final and the most well-attended event was scheduled for March 9, a day commemorating a Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. At that point, the protest on Maidan was declared illegal by the court and dismantled by the police. Disobeying the court ruling some protesters marched to the governmental district where they threw eggs at

the building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Солодько, 2006). Sporadic demonstrations and clashes between the activists and Berkut riot police went on in different Kyiv districts throughout the day (Інститут "Республіка," 2015). Almost 20 activists were sentenced for participation in mass protests, police disobedience, and damaging state property (Канал 24, 2011). This contentious episode ended with no concessions, a situation tailored by president Kuchma and that later become a common characteristic of the political regime.

Episode 3. 2004: Orange Revolution

Discontent after the 2002 parliamentary elections and the fraudulent presidential elections of 2004 formed the *political opportunity structure* for the Orange Revolution. The elections of 2002 reshuffled the composition of the opposition parties. "Our Ukraine," the Tymoshenko Bloc and the Socialist party took over half of the parliamentary seats (Вінничук, 2007). The Kyiv mayor publicly supported the opposition, signaling that Kuchma's regime was gradually losing public support (Мацієвський, 2014).

At the eve of the 2004 presidential elections, activists reported that the regime relied heavily on *administrative resource* (on the use of administrative resource in post-Soviet states see Trebin, 2015), as well as *selective law-enforcement* (e.g., surveillance and invitations of the opposition activists "for talks" to the security service), as a leverage in their conflict with the political opposition (Солодько, 2011).

Kuchma's announced successor, former Donetsk governor, Viktor Yanukovych, and a leader of the political opposition, Viktor Yushchenko, were the elections' frontrunners. After the second round of presidential elections, the victory of Yanukovych was announced. Yushchenko accused the regime of electoral fraud and called his supporters to join the campaign of national resistance. This *triggered* mass protests across the country.

The Kyiv Maidan Nezalezhnosti again hosted 17-days *protest performances*. Protesters blocked access to the presidential office, the government and the parliament buildings. Nearly, 2000 tents went up on the Maidan (Українська правда, 2004a). The protests were coordinated by many *collective actors*, including political opposition—Yushchenko's and other oppositional parties, individual members of parliament, and nongovernmental organizations, including student organizations. Bright orange color, dominant in protest symbolic, "has been a way to express dissent without speaking" (Polese & O Beachain, 2011). Gradually, Kyiv protests *spread* to supportive rallies held in Ukraine's oblasts (Літопис, n.d.).

Activists learned from the last major protests. One of the organizers remembered this *learning* and *innovation* process through studying the experience of other nonviolent revolutions, searching for appropriate slogans and music, including the slogans tested during the UWK campaign (Солодько, 2005). *International diffusion of tactics* was evident. The campaign later named "PORA" emerged out of the group of activists who in 2001-2003 attended the trainings on nonviolent civic resistance campaigns, organized by Dutch Alfred Mozer Foundation (since 2013 Max van der Stoel

Foundation), where they learned the *best antiregime practices* by Serbian Otpor, Belarusian ZUBR and Georgian Kmara (Романюк, 2005).

Protesters both in Kyiv and the other Ukrainian cities, with bright-orange flags of Yushchenko's party, *demanded* another round of free and fair elections (Шамайда, 2013). This time, the protesters managed to *broker* with *influential foreign actors*. Opposition parties actively cooperated with public campaign "I know!"—an umbrella initiative, supported by U.S.-Ukraine Foundation (2005, p. 6). The activists conducted voter education and mobilization activities: printed informational leaflets, managed TV and radio information advertisements, organized flash-mobs, provided consultations via the hotline, and coordinated the network for parallel election results count (В асильченко, 2004).

In 2004, the Berkut special police surrounded the Kyiv Maidan to guard the public order. This time, however, the law enforcement officials publicly stated that they had no intention to beat the protesters. The analysts note, however, that in 2004 Ukraine's coercive apparatus was far too divided to carry out the large-scale repression. Security services broke from the regime at the beginning of the electoral campaign, and published the taped phone conversations proving the electoral fraud. The military openly came out against the use of force (Way, 2015). The *refusal* of the top officials inside the police, the security services and the army to "clean-up" the protests was considered one of the reasons of protests positive outcomes (Маціевський, 2014). In a situation of Kuchma's regime gradually loosing support, of the uncertainty of the electoral outcomes, under the closer scrutiny of the international community and an impressive public support, the government did not risk the violent repression of the protests.

Yushchenko engaged existing *institutions* by filing a case to the Supreme Court questioning the elections results. Following three rounds of negotiations which included the government, the opposition and the international community representatives, the Supreme Court ruled the actions of Central Electoral Commission illegal, and the elections results—illegitimate (Українська правда, 2004b). Additional factor was the international pressures from the EU and the United States, which helped to limit the level of repression during the campaign and prevented the fraud at the polls (Polese & O Beachain, 2011). So called "third" electoral round was held in December 2004, and led to Yushchenko's victory with 52% vote (Літопис, n.d.). The decision for final election round was *a compromise* for both candidates and become *an institutional solution* to the escalated conflict, which allowed avoiding the violent scenario (Маціє вський, 2014).

Ukrainian experts evaluated the 2004 protests as *a mixed result*. With no open *repressions*, the Orange Revolution boosted the development of civil society, and led to a better international image of Ukraine. Yet the political confrontation intensified, and corruption continued. After Yushchenko's inauguration, parliament voted a constitutional reform, limited presidential powers, and turned Ukraine into a parliamentary–presidential republic (Сапицька & Золотар, 2014). Aware of the potential impunity in the actions of the Berkut special police units, and responding to multiple calls for more oversight over the law enforcement, Yushchenko tried to regulate Berkut's tasks and the enforcement strategies. He brought in human rights experts and oversight groups

to monitor the activities of the Berkut (Perepadya & Ostaptschuk, 2013). These attempts, however, were rolled back as his successor, Viktor Yanukovych, came to power a few years later.

Episode 4. 2013-2014: Maidan, Euromaidan, or the Revolution of Dignity

Over the next decade, creeping authoritarianism combined with the legacy of "street politics" formed the *political opportunity structure* for Maidan 2013-2014. In January 2010, Viktor Yanukovych won a presidential race (Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2010). In September 2010, the Constitutional Court declared that the transfer to a parliamentary–presidential mode of governance in 2004 was illegal, and de facto granted President Yanukovych with many of the powers his mentor, Kuchma, enjoyed while he was in office (Верховна Рада України, 2010). Following this substantial expansion of presidential powers Yanukovych created a strict executive hierarchy and appointed his Donetsk fellows to all key governing positions in the country. President's position was especially strengthened following the self-governments elections in spring 2010, when his Party of Regions, enjoying loyal judiciary, "administrative resource" and regime-backed lawmaking won in a majority of oblast councils for further "efficient and disciplined implementation of the presidential agenda" (Миселюк, 2010).

President Yanukovych also learned from Kuchma to *use* "*selective law-enforcement*" *as a political leverage*. Loyal police and security services carried out "soft" *repressions*, targeting parliamentary opposition, but also independent public organizations, educational entities, and contentious citizen groups, effectively *preventing the dissent*. Criminal proceedings were opened against the former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko (Українська правда, 2011) and other top officials of the previous regime. Majority of those accused were detained. Experts stressed that the precautionary measures, which were used, significantly exceeded the public danger from crimes in which the relevant officials were accused (Цимбал, 2014).

By 2013, the Yanukovych's regime successfully manipulated all three branches of power. Some characterized the regime as "soft authoritarianism" (Валевський, 2014). Presidential administration de facto became the fourth branch of power, "manually" intervening in the activities of the entire executive vertical, appointing and dismissing the officials in Ukraine's oblasts. This diminished the role of the opposition, including through representative institutions at all levels, and large corporate interests solidified their influence over parliament.

Deprived of meaningful legal instruments to affect the lawmaking, especially after the elections of 2012, including through the political opposition, the challengers to the regime had to resort to *extra-institutional tactics* of "street politics" (Рудич, 2014, p. 16). This tactical choice echoed with growing popular dissatisfaction with the country's economic performance after the 2008 financial crisis. Calls for a general protest became a "common denominator" which united heterogeneous agendas of the

opposition actors (Цимбал, 2014). In 2013, the political opposition *learned to act collectively*. One example of a protest campaign was "Rise up, Ukraine!" a joint action of Fatherland and Freedom parties, which was a series of protests in the oblasts and in the capital Kyiv, and lasted March through August 2013. Yet, politically engineered, it failed to attract a wider participation beyond the party supporters (Цимбал, 2014). The genuine *mobilization* came few months later, and was *triggered* by November 21, 2013, decision by the Ukrainian government to suspend signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Following the official foreign policy agenda of Ukrainian EU integration and more than a year of preparations at all levels, the reversal of the European foreign policy course was perceived as a "stolen dream." The EU at that time was perceived as the "institutional anchor" that could halt Ukraine's slide into a nondemocracy (Zelinska, 2015).

The *collective actors* who mobilized first were students and active Kyivites, who gathered in the Independence Square in Kyiv, soon joined by the opposition parties. This protest, grown into a nationwide social movement, was later called Euromaidan, Maidan, and the Revolution of Dignity. Euromaidan *demanded* resignation of the cabinet of ministers and signing of the Association Agreement (Батьківщина, 2013). After president Yanukovych refused to sign the EU deal, Maidan demanded his impeachment (Gorchinskaya, 2013).

The regime did not hesitate to introduce *repressions*. On November 30th, the Berkut violently cracked student demonstrators on Maidan (Gorchinskaya & Shamota, 2013). As a result, over 60 young people were injured, over 30 were detained. Notably, at this point regime had distanced itself from the actions of the law enforcers: President Yanukovych has expressed his deep concerns regarding the actions of the police (Way, 2015). The minister of internal affairs announced publicly that the "riot police abused their power," and promised an investigation (Erdem Aytaç et al., 2017, p. 72). In a situation when many orders were given orally, and not written down, this reaction of the regime might have sent a signal to the law enforcers that in the case of a crisis they would be the ones to blame. Yet they remained loyal to the regime, and repressions continued.

Introduced early in the cycle of contention, *repressions did not lead to protest dispersal, but resulted in a "backfire."* Observers note that Maidan stopped being the Euro-integration protest, and turned into the antiregime movement (Колодій, 2014). The next day, thousands of people protested against police violence, demanding president and government dismissal. Tents on the Independence Square emerged again as a *protest performance* (Burlakova, 2014). Protest headquarters emerged in the House of Labor Unions on the Independence square, the same location as during the Orange Revolution. Sit-ins and demonstrations were supported by the constant flash mobs and Automaidan rallies. Kyiv protests also *spread* into mass demonstrations in the oblasts. In Ukraine's cities and towns, protesters held rallies—local Maidans—in support of the Kyiv Maidan, demanding the resignation of the local Party of Regions members from public offices and issuing other local-level claims (Zelinska, 2015).

Following police attempts to clean-up the square, Maidan—The Protest was turned into Maidan—The Fortification and then Maidan—The *Sich* (for more details on this

categorization, see Золкіна, 2014). The epos of 16th-century *Cossaks*—members of democratic, self-governed, and semimilitary communities, who lived in Zaporizhian *Sich* on Dnipro river—was revived in 21st-century Kyiv's central square. Maidan Self Defense was formed. Protesters erected barricades and introduced a strict hierarchy. Maidan "population" was divided into hundreds, each responsible for specific tasks, and taking rotational shifts.

Studies showed that developing Internet and Communication Technologies, in particular social networks, became one of the important mechanisms behind the mobilization, as they facilitated the connectivity, increased coordination, speeded up the flow of information (Bohdanova, 2014; Onuch, 2015). Use of Facebook and, especially, Twitter already proved highly effective in mobilization of activists during the Arab Spring protests in 2011, and this tactic for coordination of large numbers of protesters might have diffused to Ukraine. However, despite in Ukraine the proregime politicians actively promoted a message of Euromaidan being "staged" by the third parties using the Arab Spring scenario (Політика і Культура, 2013, Українські новини, 2014), no evidence of any organized regime disobedience trainings for Euromaidan activists was found.

2013 Euromaidan was the first all-national campaign when Yanukovych's government employed "*Titushky*"—usually young males, dressed in the sports gear, who act as agents provocateurs. These hired thugs, former or acting martial arts sportsmen, were bussed to the protest sites to crack down on protests and provoke clashes. The term was coined after Vadym Titushko, one of the men who attacked journalists during "Rise Up, Ukraine!" campaign in spring 2013. Police was not stopping *titushky*, and often supported their operations ("From Maidan to Berkut," 2013).

Repressions went on. After the winter holidays, on January 16th, 2014, Ukrainian parliament voted a number of the antiprotest laws ("Ukraine Parliament Pushes Through Sweeping Anti-protest Law," 2014). They introduced liability for large gatherings, blocking and seizure of public buildings, wearing a hamlet, and installing a tent or voice equipment (Amnesty International, 2014). Among other, these laws also freed Berkut from liability for beating peaceful protesters (Українська правда, 2014b). One of the laws in the infamous package demanded organizations receiving grants from sources outside Ukraine to register as "foreign agents," which would potentially lead to administrative and reputational pressure of public organizations receiving funds from abroad. The authors of this law referred to the experience of Russia and the United States. The experts, however, noted a great difference between the Ukrainian bill and the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act. At the same, Russian legislation, used as an example, was indeed targeting the financial aid to civil society organizations and independent media (Дзеркало тижня, 2014). The entire package, very soon labeled as "dictatorial laws" in the popular discourse, had been ratified by the president the next day without further debate.

As a response, a group of young protesters, identified as activists of right-radical organizations, added *violent repertoire* and began fighting police with Molotov cocktails and bricks (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2014a). Activists had occupied the buildings of the Ministry of energy and the Ministry of justice. The confrontation went

on and off, as the government and political opposition held rounds of unproductive *negotiations*. In the oblasts, local Maidan activists stormed the buildings of the oblast administrations.

Back in Kyiv media reported members of Berkut participating in protest suppression with *increasingly brutal measures*. At the height of the protests in January 2014, a video was uploaded on YouTube video hosting service with Maidan activist being stripped naked in winter cold and beaten by police officers (Sukhov & Goncharova, 2017). In 2014, Berkut was using water cannons, tear gas, rubber bullets (Jacobs, 2014), and later—grenades and pneumatic guns (Лойко, 2014; Радіо Свобода, 2014) against the crowd. On February 18, 2014, law enforcers broke through the barricades causing protesters' resistance. According to the reports, as a result of the active clashes with police, including with the use of snipers, as of February 20, 70 to 100 people were killed, most of them protesters (Лойко, 2014; Станко, 2018), and hundreds more were injured (Podufalov, 2014).

The unprecedented high-intensity coercion set in motion the rapid collapse of the regime. Shocked by the bloodshed, the Parliament of Ukraine returned to work. It voted for prohibiting the use of firearms in Kyiv and sending the law enforcers back to their locations. The United States and European Union announced a range of sanctions targeting high-level members of the Yanukovych's regime involved in the Maidan crackdown (Way, 2015). *Concessions* followed. The leaders of the opposition and president Yanukovych signed an agreement on the settlement of crisis in Ukraine ("Agreement on the Settlement of Crisis in Ukraine," 2014a). A partial success, the deal, however, was not accepted by the Maidan, as activists issued an ultimatum and demanded presidential resignation (Українська правда, 2014a). On February 21, 2014, Parliament voted for restoration of the 2004 Constitution, on February 22, 2014,—supported the impeachment of president and set up the snap presidential elections.

Open fire on civilians also increased the cost of loyalty of the law enforcers. Security services and police units stationed in western Ukraine openly announced their support of the protesters (Канал 24, 2014; Газета День, 2014). Observers claim that even Yanukovych's security guards defected (Way, 2015). Viktor Yanukovych fled the country (Fugitive Viktor Yanukovych Out of Sight," 2014b).

New government was appointed on Maidan (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2014b). On May 25, 2014, Petro Poroshenko, one of the Maidan leaders, was elected as Ukraine's president. The same year, snap parliamentary elections took place, finalizing the "power reload." As a bitter aftermath, in response to the Kyiv events, on March 18, Russia announced its annexation of the peninsula, presented as an attempt to protect Russian speakers against the new "nationalist junta" Kyiv government ("Ukraine crisis: Putin signs Russia-Crimea Treaty," 2014). East of the country boosted with violent Amtimaidan, separatist, and pro-Russian protests ("Pro-Russian Militias Fill the Vacuum as Kiev's Control," 2014c). Ukrainian troops started the antiterrorist operation ("Ukraine Troops Begin," 2014), which later developed into a war and brought multiple casualties on both sides. Russia further supports self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, fueling military conflict and placing

Ukraine into a state of constant conflict and instability, undermining its economy and further reform efforts.

Spiraling Repertoires of Contention and Repression

This article drew on research on the mobilization–repression nexus and contributed to the theory of the reciprocal relationship between contentious politics and state response with an in-depth analysis of post-Soviet Ukraine. My analysis revealed a strong connection between major case episodes of Ukrainian contention such that the dissent-authorities interaction shaped the gradual development of Ukraine's contentious repertoire from the 1990 to the 2014. As Table 1 summarizes developments in both the contentious and repressive repertoires in Ukraine resembled spirals, each campaign being more complex and long, and were driven both by the repeated interactions and by the political, economic and technological environment which changed over time.

Challengers learned from past experience from both Ukraine and abroad. They learned to pull together various collective actors and, importantly, keep the unity within the protest headquarters: while the 2000 UWK campaign was successfully "divided and pacified," Euromaidan managed to keep the relative unity of coordination headquarters. Since the Revolution on Granite protesters mastered the tactic of tent camp organization, holding rallies and marches, sit-ins, and building occupations. Veteran activists became mentors for the next generations of protesters (Onuch, 2014a). Seeking for tactical advantage the activists innovated by adding new tactics, such as auto-rallies since 2004 or barricades since 2013, to the overall contentious repertoire. "Maidan—The *Sich*" was another successful innovation, as it appealed to many, immediately recalling the needed image from memory. The research suggests this image was not accidentally created, but was a conscious attempt of development of modular innovative protest performance, neither "imported," nor "created by scratch," but rooted in Ukrainian tradition (Oleinik & Strelkova, 2015).

The recent episode of contention in 2014 witnessed an emergence of the violent repertoire—that is, such damaging people and property (della Porta & Tarrow, 1986), as throwing bricks and Molotov cocktails during clashes with police. A closer look at Ukrainian protest events data suggests that violent tactics, such as riots, beatings, fights, or property damages were detected during protests since 2009 (for details on the data, see Center for Social and Labor Research, n.d.), but they were never a part of nation-wide campaigns and their share was modest comparing to predominant nonviolent repertoire. Overall Euromaidan movement, as a result, benefited from the "radical flank effect" (see Haines, 1984), as the actions of a militant faction pushed the authorities into negotiations with the "moderate" wing—the political opposition. On the other hand, the images of violent Maidaners had provided a rich ground for discreditation of the Euromaidan movement goals and its immediate achievements.

Ukrainian authorities also learned to manage the protests in their own way, studying from the previous iterations and from other governments how to prevent and repress dissent. With increasingly authoritarian tendencies, characterizing Kuchma's and then Yanukovych's rule, the regime was not interested in developing platforms

Table 1. Summary of Protest and Regime Features During Four Contentious Episodes in Ukraine, 1990-2014.

	Revolution on Granite	Ukraine without Kuchma	Orange Revolution	Euromaidan
	1990	2000	2004	2013-2014
Presence of influential allies in parliament	Yes	No	Yes	No
Key repertoire	Tent camp Demonstrations and marches Hunger strike Sit-it Occupation of buildings	Tent camp Demonstrations and marches	Tent camp Demonstrations and marches Auto-rallies	Tent camp Demonstrations and marches Barricades Auto-rallies Sit-in Occupation of buildings Self-defense units Hundreds Molotov cocktails Throwing bricks
Media	Television	Internet	Internet	Internet, social media
International diffusion of repertoire	Yes	No	Yes	No information
Brokerage with a foreign party	No	No	Yes	Yes
Key repressive instruments	OMON	Berkut	Berkut	Berkut Titushky thugs Snipers
Police or security defection	No	No	Yes	Yes
Repressions	No	Yes	No	Yes
Concessions	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

which would channel the dissent and provide a place for articulation of various interests, such as public councils (Zelinska, 2018). Instead, as the budget capacity of the government was increasing, authorities invested in repressive instruments, such as Berkut special police unit. Not subject to parliamentary control, and obeying directly to whatever government is in power, former Soviet OMON-turned-Berkut, was regime's loyal, obedient and highly effective coercive instrument (although this loyalty, as I will discuss later, came at a price). Regime increasingly did not hesitate to use the police, controlled judiciary and an "army" of inspectors of various sorts for "selective law-enforcement," pressuring individuals and organizations which supported the opposition, or just happened to have different interests from that of the ruling elite. Since 2013, the regime started using *titushky* provocateurs, who, unlike the police, did not have to obey the law, in street protests, spreading a fear of physical harm.

Discussion and Conclusions: Legacies and "Tastes for Action"

Throughout the decades of independence, Ukrainian protesters drew inspiration from other protest movements worldwide: contentious frames and specific tactics diffused from abroad. In doing so, they showed selectivity, by preferring some tactics over the others, dependent not solely on tactical advantage, but also on legacies and traditions in activist environment. Tracing Ukrainian mobilization based on expert and activist recollections, Onuch (2014a), suggested that the national liberation movement of the early 20th century could be viewed as an origin of contemporary activism in Ukraine (57). Another source of learning the contentious repertoire was the nonviolent struggle of the Ukrainian Dissident movement against the Soviet regime (Onuch, 2014a). At the same time, her interviewees mentioned many contemporary foreign social movements as a source of inspiration, among them Solidarność, Otpor, Khmara, the U.S. civil rights movement, or the campaign of Vaclav Havel (57-58).

In 1990, when student protesters thought over the repertoire for their Revolution on Granite, for them the default option was the nonviolent sacrifice, and they choose a hunger strike, which they were "lucky" to discover in Bulgaria at a time of information vacuum in the USSR. In 2004, in the midst of the "electoral revolutions" tide, activists imported Gene Sharp's nonviolent resistance techniques, brokering with Serbian Otpor veterans, who at that time "became tutors of transformation, deans of democratization, and rectors of revolution" (Polese & O Beachain, 2011, p. 118, but see Beissinger, 2013, for a nuanced view of this "democratization" rhetoric).

A shift to more radical repertoire in 2014 resonates with very different tradition, also found in Ukrainian past. 16th-century Cossacs, national liberation movement of the early 20th-century glorified militant struggle aimed at achievement of a greater good. In the situation of 21st-century Ukraine, as the authorities continuously "punished" the nonviolent methods, these methods must have lost credibility in the minds of challengers. In this way, the activists were "pushed" to adopt a completely different repertoire.

At the same time, in their actions aimed at dissent prevention and repression, Ukrainian government(s), security and law enforcement agencies operated in the shadow of the Soviet past. Ukrainian authorities inherited a powerful coercive apparatus, a profile of large-scale repressions and effective protest preemption tactics—everything for effective suppression of any dissent. Security services and law enforcers, previously reporting directly to Moscow, were initially reluctant to subordinate to the government of the independent Ukraine and assumed a great share of independence, which remained their characteristics ever after.

The old institutions are "sticky." Berkut police unit was formally disbanded by the order of the new interior minister after the Euromaidan. Yet, many claim that this was liquidation in name only, as overwhelming majority of unit members still serve as reformed Ukraine's police special forces (Станко, 2018; Sukhov & Goncharova, 2017). New institutions are hard to introduce. For example, in 2017, the subunit of Ukraine's National Police called the Dialogue Police was created. Their task is to prevent conflicts without the use of force, but through verbal communication. As of 2018, Ukraine trained 600 police personnel, using the know-hows from the Czech Republic. The entire project relied on the EU grant support. Experts on the law enforcement reform remained skeptical of the actual impact of this innovation and treated it as a show-off project for the foreign donors. Some claimed that the Dialogue Police did not work in coordination with the regular police units present at the protest site (Радіо Свобода, 2018). In critical situation, the authorities are likely to use the long-tested coercive means rather than hoping for verbal conflict resolution.

In a way, security and law enforcers remained a "corporation" within a regime. Their loyalty had to be "purchased," with higher salaries and various privileges, but also by assurances of immunity in case of postprotest proceedings. Yet, the government could not be sure how long such loyalty would last, and when they would defect—early in the protests, as with Kuchma during the Orange Revolution, or after several rounds of repression, as with Yanukovych during the Euromaidan movement. Alike examples of military disobedience, police and security forces' defections had been spotted in the regimes around the socialist block from 1989, when Honecker's intent to crack down the demonstrations in East Germany was blocked at the last moment by his security chief (Karklins & Petersen, 1993) to decades later, when a failure to enforce the state of national emergency in Georgia lead to fall of regime during the Roses revolution (Polese & Beachain, 2011). Growing literature on the military and security apparatus siding with the opposition suggests the faith of protest is highly affected by defections, just as the regime's survival depends greatly on the capacity of the incumbent elite to digest these lessons (e.g., Gallopin, 2019; Nepstad, 2019; Peon-Berlin et al., 2014).

Independent Ukraine inherited both a vast repressive apparatus and a vacuum of understanding of what political protest is, and had to learn how to manage both in the new settings of transit from autocracy to democracy. As I had shown, the Ukrainian activists, just as their CEE comrades, had adopted and "normalized" political protest much quicker than did the authorities. Not bound by bureaucratic procedures, they borrowed from the earlier dissent traditions, from other social

movements abroad, and creatively innovated. For the government, the process of learning managing contention with the means other than long-tested repressive machine, was much longer and is not over. Although some attempts had been made to channel the dissent or manage it with noncoercive means, in the moments of crisis, the Ukrainian presidents, just as many of their former USSR colleagues, called the police. A "corporation" within the regime, security and law enforcers, in turn, still enjoyed a wide independence and might or might not properly execute the order, which leaved the faith of contention highly uncertain. Slowly transiting from Soviet past to democracy, Ukraine is yet to learn being a "social movement society."

I admit potential limitations of this article. First one is coming from selection of cases under analysis. Although my selection was guided by the existing studies, they might not always provide a comprehensive account of Ukraine's protest. Researchers have pointed out to the gap in analyzing the protest events both prior (Дутчак, 2016) and post-2013 (Gladun, 2020): although the protests on socioeconomic grounds dominated in Ukraine at least since 2009, they were less addressed both by the literature and by the media, comparing with the protest on ideological, political, and geopolitical issues. As a result of this limited selection some all-national contentious events—for example, miners' strikes of the 1990s, or the Tax Maidan of 2010, are left out of analysis, creating gaps in the patterns of contentious repertoire development. Second, in order to perform the comparison, I had to add the controls by assuming that the political culture, shared beliefs and values in the Ukrainian society are constant. This is, of course, not true. Further analysis on this topic has to move the societal preferences and expectations from the background into the analytical center. After all, "the repertoire is at once a structural and a cultural concept, involving not only what people *do* . . . but what they *know how* to do and what others *expect* them to do" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 30, italics in original). Last but not least, although this paper relied to media accounts to a great extent, it did not specifically address the role Ukrainian media played in reflecting dissent or repression, and how it shaped public opinion in each of the episodes. Under very peculiar conditions of "media oligarchy" in Ukrainian media market (Porzgen, 2016), when TV is the most important medium in the country, and the major channels are privately owned (plural, but not independent), the position of the media and their owners may play differently on the protester–government interactions, comparing with the cases of other countries.

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Note

1. Their "Maidan" website was an official information source of the Ukraine without Kuchma protest action in 2000 and operated ever since (see https://maidan.org.ua/en/aboutmaidan/mmic/).

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Article

Protest Issues and Political Inequality in Latin America

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Abstract

Many studies reveal that socioeconomic resources increase protest participation, lending more political voice to the affluent and reinforcing preexisting political inequality. But existing studies ignore whether this holds across different protest issues. We argue that some issues reinforce political inequality, while other ones do not. We differentiate between survival protests—in which people react to direct threats to their material and social survival—and furtherance protests—which press authorities to make policy changes that seek to improve some aspect of society. Regression models with Latin American survey data show that people with higher socioeconomic status are overrepresented in furtherance protests, by implication reinforcing preexisting political inequality. However, survival protests attract people socioeconomically similar to national averages, contributing to a more balanced political field. Our results emphasize the need to reconsider the place of issues in the study of protest participation, political inequality, and political behavior in general.

Keywords

protest, socioeconomic status, political inequality, Latin America

Introduction

Since the 1970s, abundant research across the globe has shown that protest participation is more frequent among people with higher socioeconomic status (SES hereinafter) as indicated by higher income, education, and/or occupational status (Barnes & Kaase, 1979, Dalton et al., 2010; Schussman & Soule, 2005, Verba et al., 1995). This finding, which we refer to as the "elitization of protest," challenged the long-standing

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claim that protest and rebellion are mostly the weapons of deprived groups for improving their lot—a claim consistent with contemporary distributive conflict models (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005, Boix, 2003). Additionally, this finding revealed that collective protest, while less institutionalized than other forms of participation, reproduced the socioeconomic biases consistently found in most types of political activities (Verba et al., 1995).

The elitization of protest is a problem for democracies. It indicates that citizens who already enjoy material and symbolic privileges will also have a stronger voice in the streets, while "what public officials hear clearly influences what they do" (APSA Task Force, 2004, p. 16). Gilens and Paige have recently demonstrated that, in the United States, the preferences of a tiny minority of wealthy citizens have stronger effects on a wide array of policy outputs than the preferences of the much more numerous nonaffluent citizens (Gilens & Page, 2014; Page & Gilens, 2017). For this reason protest elitization, as a mechanism for signaling opinions and preferences, may ultimately deepen political and economic inequalities. This "participatory distortion" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 178) contradicts, in practice, the basic tenet of democracy that all citizens are politically equal (Dahl, 2006; Dubrow, 2014, 2015; Dubrow et al., 2008; Verba, 2003). To be clear, by "elitization," we mean a positive relationship between resources and protest. We do not mean that those who protest belong to the wealthiest 1% or 2% of the population (or any akin criterion).

Given the substantive importance of this topic, we revisit the debate about the socioeconomic inequalities in protest participation. A characteristic feature of most protest participation studies, including those cited in the first paragraph as well as the few available for Latin America (Desposato & Norrander, 2009, Justino & Martorano, 2016, Machado et al., 2011, Moseley, 2015), is that they employ survey questions that ask respondents about their past participation in protests *in general*—that is, disregarding the issue driving the event. The implicit assumption is that protest elitization remains constant across issues. However, in most nations, diverse issues drive protest participation, from low wages and lousy working conditions to environmental degradation, nuclear threats, or minority rights to name a few. We argue that different issues will attract protestors with different and, at times, even opposite socioeconomic profiles. For instance, protests motivated by economic scarcity should disproportionately attract lower class individuals, typically more exposed to unemployment and misery (Piven & Cloward, 1979). Conversely, protest elitization should be specially marked on issues that, by requiring more resources and civic and political skills, disproportionately attract the better-off. If this is the case, lumping all protests together may hide significant variations across issues with different implications for political inequality. Not all protests reinforce preexisting political inequalities, and some do so to a greater extent than other ones.

Given the inattention of past research to protest issues, this article contributes to debates about protest participation and political inequality by showing that the socioeconomic biases of protestors depend on the issue of the protest. We propose a distinction between survival and furtherance issues. Survival issues apply for protests in which people react to direct threats to their material and social environment and their

immediate reproduction—like flooding, worsening economic conditions, or lack of basic services. Furtherance issues drive protests aimed at pressing public authorities to improve some aspect of society through public policy, even in the absence of survival threats—for instance, reforming the educational system or increasing political transparency. We argue that, by convoking people with different socioeconomic profiles, furtherance protests reinforce preexisting political inequalities, while survival protests do not.

Specifically, using survey data for 17 Latin American countries comprising over 30,000 respondents, we show that people with higher SES are overrepresented in furtherance protests, which by implication reinforces preexisting political inequalities. However, survival issues attract protestors with a socioeconomic profile very similar to that of the average citizen, contributing indirectly to a more balanced political field. We study empirically the relationship between SES and protest issues, but do not examine how socioeconomic biases affect political inequality (Paige & Gilens, 2017, for the United States). We leave for further research an empirical examination of this question in Latin America. More broadly, in line with Verba et al. (1995, chap. 14), our results highlight how different issues or collective problems shape political participation in different ways.

The Impact of Socioeconomic Resources on Protest Participation

There are two basic predictions about the impact of SES on protest participation. First, deprivation theories predict a negative relationship between SES and protest. For instance, absolute deprivation theory argues that people with low living standards and material shortages develop feelings of frustration and resentment that lead them to mobilize collectively for improving their situation (Piven & Cloward, 1979; Snow et al., 2005; Wilkes, 2004). Relative deprivation theory focuses on the relationship between conditions and expectations, but it also suggests a negative relationship between SES and protest, since frustration and grievances should be more frequent among the lower classes (Gurney & Tierney, 1982; Gurr, 1970). Deprivation theories are broadly consistent with contemporary distributive conflict theories, which argue that high inequality and the prospects of successful redistribution encourage the poor to revolt (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005; Boix, 2003).

In a different vein, the resources thesis predicts a positive effect of SES on protest participation. Like any other political action, protest often requires a wide array of resources such as free time, energy, organizational networks, and money—for instance, for moving to the protest site or devoting a weekday to protest. Such resources are more common among high SES people (Dalton et al., 2010). Also, high SES is associated with more political efficacy, interest, information, and civic skills (Verba et al., 1995). All these factors increase protest chances. Indeed, one of the reasons why the wealthiest citizens have more political clout than the rest (Gilens & Paige, 2014, Paige & Gilens, 2017) is because they participate more in politics—be it protesting, voting, or donating money to politicians.

As part of our focus on socioeconomic resources, we are also interested in exploring the impact of student status on protest. Research on youth activism shows that college students, disregarding their SES, concentrate the abovementioned resources, skills, and political drives to a greater extent than the nonstudent population. For instance, full-time college students have a surplus of free time and energy not devoted to survival tasks, routinely develop civic skills in the classroom, and have access to politicized social networks on campuses and student centers. This explains their high rates of protest participation (McAdam, 1986; Paulsen, 1991, 1994; Schussman & Soule, 2005). Considering two adults with the same SES, one being a full-time student and the other one not, the former one should be more likely to protest.

Over the years, the accumulation of empirical studies provided more support to the resources theory than to deprivation theories. Research in developed countries has repeatedly shown that, on average, protestors have higher SES than nonprotestors (Dalton et al., 2010; Dubrow et al., 2008; Verba et al., 1995) and that students protest more than nonstudents (Paulsen, 1991, 1994; Schusmann & Soule, 2005). Latin American studies have arrived at similar conclusions (Justino & Martorano, 2016; Machado et al., 2011; Moseley, 2015).

Still we believe it is too early to close the debate. We argue that this is the case because researchers do not account for the kind of demands or issues put forward by protesters and how they relate to different socioeconomic groups. While some protest issues will decidedly attract the better-off, some other ones should resonate more among groups that are closer to the average SES and even among underprivileged groups. This will motivate these groups to overcome their comparative resource deficits and engage in collective action.

What Do We Know About Protest Participation Across Issues?

Our suspicion that protest elitization varies across issues draws on recent studies based on surveys with European demonstrators. Scholars have compared demonstrators across three kinds of issues: "bread and butter" (e.g., socioeconomic equality, wages, and social security); "postmaterialist" (e.g., the environment, nuclear energy, LGBTIQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning] rights, and immigration); and austerity conditions prompted by global economic crises and governmental cutbacks (Eggert & Giugni, 2012, 2015; Grasso & Giugni, 2016; Hylmö & Wennerhag, 2015; Vráblíková, 2015).

These studies show that the socioeconomic profiles of demonstrators vary across issues. For instance, when compared with other demonstrators, participants in bread and butter demonstrations are more likely to come from those in the working class (Eggert & Giugni, 2015), who identify as such (Hylmö & Wennerhag, 2015), and have lower education (Grasso & Giugni, 2016). Those attracted by postmaterialist issues are, to a larger extent, college graduates (Eggert & Giugni, 2015). Participants in anti-austerity demonstrations stand in the middle (Grasso & Giugni, 2016).

We draw on these studies but advance them in two ways. First, except for Vráblíková (2015), they do not consider the population that does not protest, which is majoritarian in all documented cases (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Dalton et al., 2010). Thus, they cannot explore whether the elitization of protestors varies across issues *when compared with nonprotestors*. Second, while these studies refer to Europe, we explore protest elitization in Latin America. Latin America not only has deep and persistent economic inequalities (Hoffman & Centeno, 2003; M. López, 2018) but also showcases both popular (Rice, 2012; Silva, 2009) and middle-class social movements (Disi, 2017; Svampa, 2008). This seems to lend credence to both deprivation and resource theories, therefore setting an exciting puzzle for examining the role played by different issues in protest dynamics.

Protest Issues: Survival and Furtherance

While dozens of specific issues may motivate collective protest, our argument hinges on a basic distinction between survival issues and furtherance issues. We conceive them as ideal types: the issues motivating concrete protests can approach one or both issues in varying degrees, but for analytical purposes, it makes sense to distinguish them typologically.

The notion of survival issues is inspired by Inglehart's notion of materialist values (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). He argues that people facing economic or physical threats give priority to these issues and postpone "postmaterialist" considerations such as self-expression or quality of life. Inglehart's theory was influenced by the European social movements of the 1960s, which he construed as the ultimate expression of postmaterialism (see Foreword in Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Accordingly, he conceived protest participation *in general* as a type of self-expression activity and showed along with others that protest in developed countries was more common among the middle and upper classes (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Dalton et al., 2010; Inglehart, 1997).

However, other scholars have forcefully argued that immediate threats to economic and physical security can trigger collective protest. For instance, people all over the world mobilize and protest when facing economic threats due to unemployment, austerity measures, and loss of housing, land, and food (Almeida, 2018). Likewise, populations becoming suddenly aware that they were exposed to pollution also tend to organize and protest (Walsh, 1981). Snow et al. (1998) have claimed that these protests result from the disruption of the taken-for-granted routines and expectations of everyday life. They argue that environmental accidents, intrusions of strangers in safe communities, and declines in material standards can destabilize people's routines and motivate collective action, even if those affected have modest resources and must bear considerable costs for mobilizing.

In regions such as Latin America, where millions survive in precarious conditions and lack support networks (either state or community-based), these kinds of threats may move people dangerously close to the line dividing life and death. While the ensuing protests may resemble the austerity and bread-and-butter protests of richer

countries (Eggert & Giugni, 2012, 2015; Grasso & Giugni, 2016; Hylmö & Wennerhag, 2015; Vráblíková, 2015), citizens in richer countries have more resources and support networks to resist adverse times than most Latin Americans. Of course, many protests may be motivated by a sense of threat—and even better-off citizens may protest moved by threat. However, the notion of survival issues refers to immediate material, physical, and environmental threats that affect people's survival. Below, we illustrate this with concrete examples from Latin America.

The logic of furtherance issues is very different. It is more akin to the conventional understanding of protests driven by opportunities (Almeida, 2018; Tarrow, 2011). Furtherance protests occur when people mobilize to press public authorities to improve some aspect of society through public policy, especially if the expected outcomes involve complex political processes that unfold across considerable periods. Many aggrieved groups protest not because they risk survival, but because they want to improve their living conditions or change some aspect of society. The social movement organizations studied by McCarthy and Zald (1977), which pressed authorities for legislation on gun control, affirmative action, campaign finance, or gambling to name a few, seem more engaged in furtherance issues.

Indeed, many scholars study movements oriented to policy outcomes. As Amenta et al. (2010) note, for movements to shape policies, they often need to set the political agenda by persuading the media and political elites, build coalitions with powerful allies, influence legislative contents, and press politicians for the passage and implementation of laws. This attracts activists with considerable technical expertise, political capital, and knowledge of internal political dynamics—activists more easily found in the middle and upper classes.

It is important to note that our conception of furtherance issues differs from Inglehart's notion of postmaterialism. The latter was coined for making sense of European affluent groups which, feeling overregulated by omnipresent postwar welfare states, sought to open spaces for autonomy, expression, and participation (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). These sort of asphyxiating states, however, are less tenable in Latin America. As Davis (1999) has argued, Latin American citizens often protest for pressing the state to improve some aspect of society through public policy—in our terms, "furthering."

So far, the argument can be represented as in Figure 1.

While by definition furtherance issues point at complex policy problems, they do not necessarily imply attempts to engage with redistributive or universalist policies. For instance, upper-class citizens may take the streets to press the government to advance a regressive tax policy, but this will certainly not promote equality. Likewise, citizens concerned with corruption may participate in furtherance protests aimed at improving political transparency, an issue in itself not directly linked to redistribution.

Hypotheses

Based on the distinction between survival and furtherance issues, we contend that the association between socioeconomic resources and protest participation is twofold.

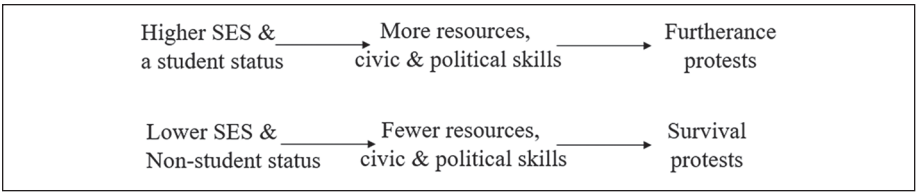

Figure 1. Socioeconomic resources and protest issues.

First, following the resources thesis, we expect that people with higher resources will be more likely to attend protests in general, but also that this pattern will be particularly acute for protests driven by furtherance issues. More resourceful people have the time, money, political information, and political efficacy required for taking care of issues whose solutions have longer time horizons and demand complex public policy processes and decisions. Less resourceful people face higher obstacles and are less encouraged to attend protests driven by these issues. Thus, the comparison between protestors in furtherance issues, and nonprotestors, suggests the following hypothesis (the ceteris paribus clause applies to all hypotheses):

Hypothesis 1: A higher SES, and being a student, increases the chances of having participated in furtherance protests, compared with not having protested at all.

Our second argument is closer to deprivation theories. We expect that protests driven by survival issues will attract people with varied socioeconomic resources, including some located at the bottom of the socioeconomic structure. Survival problems disproportionately affect the popular and poorer sectors of society, and their urgency prompt action with less regard to one's resources. Accordingly, participants in survival protests should have average resources similar to that of the nonprotesting population. Therefore,

Hypothesis 2: SES and being a student do not affect the chances of having participated in survival protests, compared with not protesting.

Following the reasoning underlying Hypotheses 1 and 2, we suggest a third hypothesis that only applies to the segment of the population participating in protests. The idea is that the sign of the association between SES and protest participation will change depending on whether survival or furtherance issues drive the protest reported by participants. Specifically, among protestors, we expect that more resources will encourage participation in furtherance protests, while fewer resources will foster participation in survival protests:

Hypothesis 3a: Among protestors, those protesting for furtherance issues have a higher SES and are more likely to be students than those protesting for survival issues.

Table 1. Distribution of Protest Issues Among Protestors During Past 12 Months in Latin America.

	% (among protestors)	Number of respondents
Survival issues (38%)		
Economic factors (jobs, prices, inflation, lack of opportunities)	21	508
Security problems (crime, militias, gangs)	6	151
Lack of public services	11	267
Furtherance issues (49%)		
Political topics (protest against laws, parties or political candidates, exclusion, corruption)	25	606
Education (lack of education opportunities, high tuitions, poor quality, education policies)	16	383
Human rights	8	192
Other issues (not considered; 13%)		
Environmental themes	4	85
Other	9	226
Total	100	2,418

Source. LAPOP 2010 (Americas Barometer, 2010).

Hypothesis 3b: Among protestors, those protesting for survival issues have a lower SES and are less likely to be students than those protesting for furtherance issues.

Survival and Furtherance Protests in Latin America

In its 2010 wave, the survey Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)—our data source fully described below—asked about 30,000 Latin Americans from 17 countries whether in the past 12 months they had "participated in a demonstration or protest march." Those who answered positively—8% of the combined country samples—were asked an open question about which was "the purpose of the demonstration or public protest."[1] If the respondent had participated in more than one protest, she was asked about the most recent protest. If the protest had more than one purpose, the respondent was asked to report the most important one. LAPOP analysts grouped the open answers into a small set of issues. As we argue below, the specific issues identified by LAPOP can be reasonably classified as either survival or furtherance issues (see Table 1).[2]

Among the whole population of protestors, about 38% declared having protested for survival issues. These include three categories: economic factors, security problems, and lack of public services. Next, we explain why.

According to LAPOP's questionnaire, protests motivated by *economic issues* related to jobs, prices, inflation, and lack of economic opportunities. They represent

21% of the protests reported. This is consistent with several studies showing that Latin Americans often mobilize against the economic consequences of market reforms implemented in the region since the 1980s and 1990s (Silva, 2009). Market reforms have dismantled the safety nets built by populist and developmental governments, resulting in informality, poverty, unemployment, and low wages. These economic threats motivate defensive reactions from the poor and the working classes in the form of protest campaigns. Major Latin American movements revolve around economic issues—such as the Argentinean *Piqueteros* (Rossi, 2017) or the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (Ondetti, 2010)—and appeal to deprived sectors. It is thus true, as one would expect, that many Latin Americans protest not because they have more resources, but precisely because they lack them (Davis, 1999, p. 612).

Likewise, 11% of protestors were motivated by the *lack of public services*. These deficits are also linked to the privatization of public services such as water, energy, and transport (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2011). One key aspect of political inequality in Latin America is that of stratified access to services depending on the socioeconomic level and region (Luna & Soifer, 2017). Facing extreme circumstances, unprivileged sectors have displayed major protest campaigns such as the "Water Wars" in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 1999. These protests erupted for opposing a water privatization contract that would increase water fees and affect the survival of poor indigenous and peasants (Assies, 2003). Similarly, in 2013, a series of mass demonstrations took place in São Paulo, Brazil, due to the rise in bus fares (Saad-Filho, 2013), later developing into widespread protests with diverse and fuzzy demands (Hagopian, 2016).

Finally, about 6% report *security problems* as the central issue of the protest, specifically linked—according to the questionnaire—to the insecurity created by crime, militias, and gangs. Countries like Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and most Central American ones have high rates of lethal violence and kidnappings. Drug barons and guerrilla groups dominate some localities, unleashing violent responses from paramilitary groups and resulting in civilian deaths and displaced populations. Feelings of insecurity and anguish have motivated massive protests (Davis & Denyer Willis, 2011). A recent example is the 2014 protest campaigns in Mexico after the assassination of 43 students by police officers and a drug cartel. Resourceful people can protect themselves through private guards and gated communities (Alvarez-Rivadulla, 2007). Yet the popular classes should be more attracted by protests against insecurity since the issue is more salient to them.

On a different vein, about 49% of protestors reported participation in furtherance protests. We believe that, in Latin America, political, educational, and human rights protests fall closer to our definition of furtherance protests. In general, protests driven by these issues seek to press authorities to remedy collective problems through political actions and policies that take time and are not directly linked to immediate survival. We elaborate below.

Protest motivated by *political issues* relates to laws, parties, political candidates, political exclusion, and corruption. They represent 25% of the protests reported. Nowadays, most Latin American countries have democratic or semidemocratic regimes, yet the quality of democracy is often low, and public institutions are weak

and inefficient (M. López, 2018; Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013). There are many recent examples of Latin American authorities that have committed electoral irregularities and fraud, attempted to change the constitution to allow presidential reelection, accepted bribes or illegal donations for funding electoral campaigns, governed by decree, or manipulated official statistics for embellishing their administrations. These wrongdoings have triggered massive protests. For instance, in 2012, a wave of national protests erupted during Mexico's presidential election campaigns. The mobilizations, led by #Movimiento132 (132 Movement), called for the democratization of the media and demanded an additional presidential debate. Self-defined as "a movement concerned with the democratization of the country," the #Movimiento132 was mostly composed of middle and upper-class university students, who skillfully used digital media to coordinate their actions against the presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto (Rovira Sancho, 2014).

About 16% of the protestors mentioned *educational issues* as the main driver of their protests. According to LAPOP, they include a lack of educational opportunities, high tuition, poor quality of education, and education policies. In recent decades, educational enrollment in secondary and tertiary education has expanded dramatically in Latin America, creating grievances among students that fueled protest campaigns (Disi 2017). We consider educational issues as furtherance issues because they strive for educational reforms and because students—the main constituencies in educational protests—would not necessarily benefit from these reforms in case they achieve their goals. Consider the 2011 Chilean student protests. Mobilized students demanded an entirely new financial system for higher education, a goal that, if achieved, would take several years and complex legislative processes that may not benefit them directly (Somma, 2012; von Bülow & Bidegain, 2015).

Finally, Latin Americans also protest due to human rights violations (8%). LAPOP does not inform about the contents of these protests. But, in Latin America, "human rights" problems are often related to the repression of civilians by military dictatorships during the 1970s and 1980s. Democratic transitions prompted the strengthening of human rights movements demanding "truth and justice" (Keck & Sikkink, 2014), and some of these movements are active to our days (e.g., the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina and the COMADRES in El Salvador). Most of these organizations are embedded in large transnational networks that supply economic, legal, and technical resources to carry out lobby and protest actions (J. A. López, 2017). They pursue institutional and legislative changes and gather substantial sympathizers among segments of the middle classes that suffered from state repression.

While we believe that this section puts some flesh on the issues that move Latin Americans to protest, it is important to recognize that in the same protest campaign, some participants may be driven by survival issues while others by furtherance issues. The 2013 protests in Brazil mentioned above illustrate this (Hagopian, 2016). These complexities do not invalidate our probabilistic hypotheses, which simply predict an affinity between socioeconomic resources and different protest issues, yet do not assume that protest events themselves are homogeneous.

Measurement and Statistical Modeling

We employ survey data from the 2010 wave of the LAPOP. This study includes nationally representative surveys of voting-age adults (urban and rural) conducted through face-to-face interviews following a multistage, stratified probabilistic design on 17 Latin American countries.[3] National sample sizes average 1,775 respondents, and sampling errors are estimated to be around ±2.35% on average (more details in Americas Barometer, 2010). LAPOP 2010 provides an exceptional opportunity to study protest participation across issues. It asked those who participated in a protest in the 12 months before the survey about the main issue motivating the protest. It also surveys nonprotestors and provides information about the most important predictors of protest participation, including SES and student status. This level of detail makes of LAPOP 2010 the best dataset for our research purposes. Other surveys, such as the World Values Survey or Latinobarómetro to name a few, do not provide information about protest issues and therefore prevent testing our hypotheses.

We estimate three sets of regression models with the dependent variable, protest participation, coded differently. The first set corresponds to a single binary logistic model (Model 1) that predicts whether the respondent had "participated in a demonstration or protest march" (1) or not (0) during the past 12 months. This follows the standard strategy in the literature of comparing protestors and nonprotestors lumping all issues together. The second set includes two regression Models (2 and 3) that predict whether respondents participated in a protest motivated by furtherance or survival issues, as classified in Table 1. Model 2 corresponds to a multinomial logit model that comprises all respondents, including those who did not participate set as the reference category; Model 3 is a binary logit predicting participation in furtherance versus survival motivated protests for the subsample of respondents that effectively participated in protests during the last year.

While these models directly put to test our hypotheses, they lump the issues categorized under each type of protest, and consequently might hide heterogenous associations between SES and student status, on one hand, and the different protest issues, on the other. Therefore, we estimate a third set of multinomial logit models that predict participation across the different issues motivating the protests. Model 4 comprises those who did not protest, while the remaining categories indicate, for those who protested, the specific issue of the protest. Model 5 is identical to Model 4 except that it drops all respondents who did not protest and its reference category is protesting for "political topics," the most frequent protest issue.

We measure socioeconomic resources in two ways. First, following a long tradition (Cowan et al., 2012), we calculate a composite index of SES that combines the respondent's education, household goods, and household income.[4] By combining these three elements, we capture the social, economic, and cultural resources available to respondents in a more reliable way. This index is calculated as the average of the three equally weighted items. The index varies from 0 to 1 and has a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71$. This statistic varies across countries included in the sample from 0.66 to 0.82.[5] As usual, the household income variable contains many missing cases in the LAPOP database

(3,149 cases, or about 10% of the total sample). We recovered these missing cases via multiple imputation by chained equations (van Buuren, 2012, chap. 2).[6] The imputation model used to predict the household income observations has a high fit ($R^2 = .45$), and includes several covariates such as education, household goods, age, skin color, employment status, and country-fixed effects. We imputed 10 complete data sets. The results shown below pool the estimates from the model fit separately to each completed data set using the rules established by Rubin (1987).[7]

Our second key predictor, student status, is measured through a dummy variable that indicates whether the respondent's main occupation is being a student (1) or not (0).

All models include as control variables the main predictors of protest participation according to previous studies. "Female" has a value of "1" for women and "0" for men. "Age" indicates the number of years of the respondent. "Employed" differentiates among those who are currently working or are not so but have a job (1), from the rest (0), including the unemployed, retired people, and homemakers. "Urban" has a value of "1" for urban residents and "0" for rural residents. We identify left-leaning respondents using a 10-point self-identification left–right scale. We coded as "leftist" (1) those choosing values 1, 2, or 3 in the scale, and 0 for the rest (including those not declaring a political identity). Some studies suggest that privileged ethnic groups protest less than those historically excluded (Schussman & Soule, 2005). Hence, in Latin America Whites should protest less than non-Whites. We use an 11-point skin tone variable coded by LAPOP interviewers using a palette, where "1" reflects the lightest skin tone and "11" the darkest tone (Telles & Steele, 2012). Previous studies show that participation in voluntary organizations promotes protest (Schussman & Soule, 2005; Somma, 2010; for Latin America, Moseley, 2015). We include an additive index of "organizational involvement" that records the frequency of participation in meetings of religious, community service, PTAs, and professional or business organizations. To enhance the comparability of the regression coefficients, all variables, except age, were coded to range between 0 and 1.[8] See Table 2 for summary statistics.

Last, since our focus is on the individual predictors of protest, all models include 16 dummy variables indicating the country of the respondent. This absorbs any country-level variability affecting protest participation. Thus, the regression coefficients reflect the within-country association between covariates and protest.

Results

We present the estimates from the binary and multinomial logit models as coefficient plots in Figures 2 and 3, where the horizontal segments correspond to 95% confidence intervals of the point estimates (see Section A of the online supplement for complete information of all regression models in tabulated form). Figure 2 contains the results from Models 1 through 3. Model 1 predicts whether respondents participated during the last year in a protest event or manifestation. Model 2 is the multinomial logit model predicting type of protest issue, with nonprotestors as the reference category, and Model 3 is equivalent to Model 2 but drops respondents that did not protest.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables.

	Number of observation	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Female (dummy)	30,159	0.51	0.5	0	1
Age (divided by 10)	30,121	3.88	1.59	1.6	9.8
Skin color	30,103	0.33	0.16	0	1
Urban location	30,159	0.7	0.46	0	1
Left wing	30,159	0.21	0.41	0	1
Organizational Involvement Scale	30,089	0.19	0.16	0	1
Employed (dummy)	30,065	0.55	0.5	0	1
Student (dummy)	30,065	0.08	0.27	0	1
Household income (not imputed)	27,010	0.4	0.22	0	1
Household income (imputed)	30,159	0.41	0.22	0	1
Year of education (not imputed)	30,056	0.52	0.25	0	1
Year of education (imputed)	30,159	0.52	0.25	0	1
Household goods (not imputed)	30,087	0.48	0.14	0	1
Household goods (imputed)	30,159	0.48	0.14	0	1
Socioeconomic status (not imputed)	26,883	0.47	0.16	0.04	0.98
Socioeconomic status (imputed)	30,159	0.47	0.16	0.04	0.98

Source. LAPOP 2010 (Americas Barometer, 2010).

Model 1 confirms that in Latin America higher SES and a student status strongly and independently increase individuals' chances of having participated in protests in general. The coefficient of SES equals 1.57, which implies that the odds of protesting among those with the highest observed level of SES is 4.8 times higher than those with the lowest SES level. In a similar fashion, but more moderately, the odds of having protested among students ($\beta = 0.46$) is 1.6 times higher than among nonstudents, while controlling for SES and all other variables.

Estimates from Model 2 (center of Figure 2) show that the association between socioeconomic resources and student status, on one side, and protest participation, on the other, vary dramatically according to the protest issue. The coefficient of student status predicting participation in survival protests is negative, close to zero and nonsignificant (as the confidence intervals include the value of 0), while the coefficient predicting furtherance protests is, in contrast, positive and significant. Regarding SES, the estimates indicate that the chances of participating in survival or furtherance motivated events increase significantly with SES, but it does so much more abruptly for the later type of issues. The odds of participating in survival protests ($\beta = 0.66$), versus not participating in any protests, is two times higher among respondents with the highest observed level of SES compared with those with the lowest level. The equivalent estimate ($\beta = 2.68$) for furtherance issues is 15 times higher, certainly a very large difference.

Among respondents who effectively participated in protests during the last year, the estimates from Model 3 (right side of Figure 2) corroborate that the likelihood of

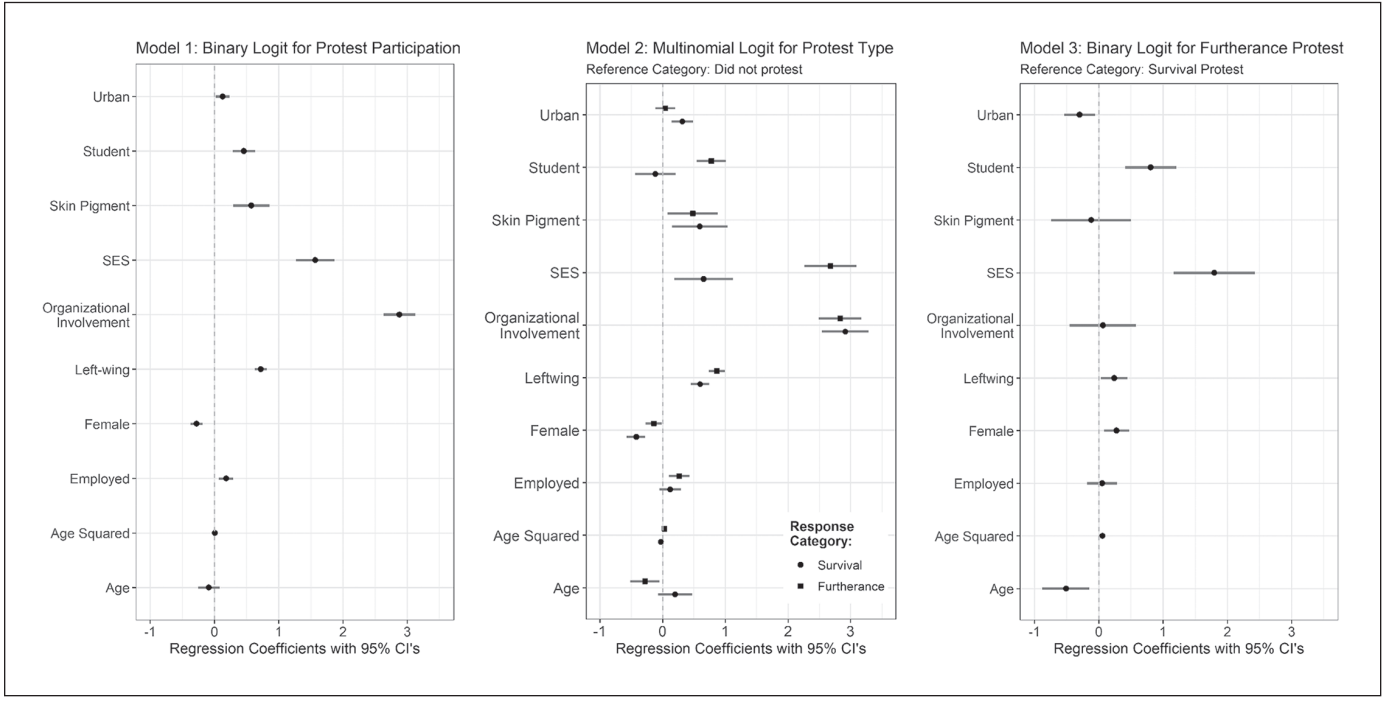

Figure 2. Binary and multinomial logit regression coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) predicting protest participation (Model 1, number of observations = 29,722), protest type among all respondents (Model 2, number of observations = 29,376) and furtherance protest among respondents that protested last year (Model 3, number of observations = 2,089).
Source. LAPOP 2010 (Americas Barometer, 2010).

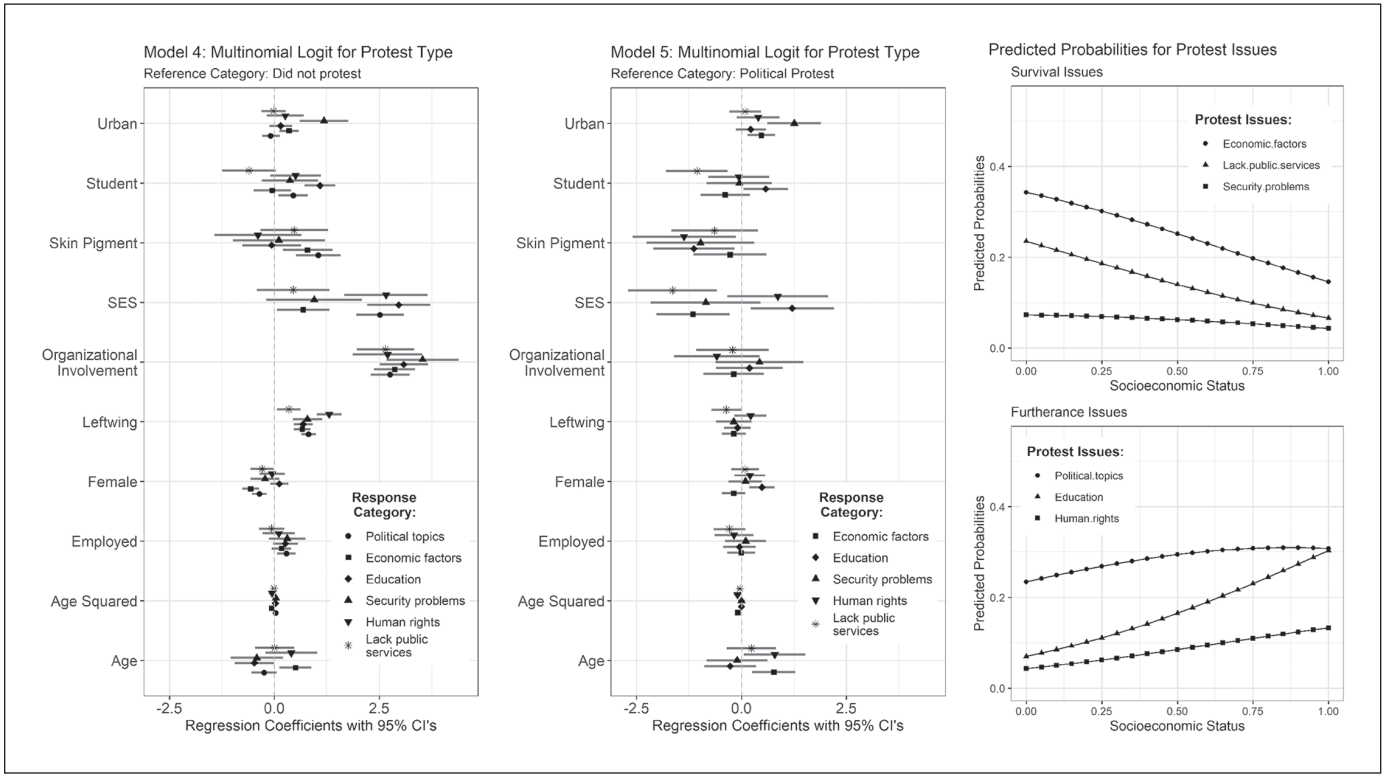

Figure 3. Multinomial logit regression coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) predicting issue of protest participation for all respondents (Model 4, number of observations = 2,089), issue of protest participation for respondents that protested last year (Model 5, number of observations = 2,089), and predicted probabilities for issue of protest participation by socioeconomic status and type of issue based on parameter estimates from Model 5.

Source. LAPOP 2010 (Americas Barometer, 2010).

participating in furtherance protests, versus survival protests, strongly increases with SES. The odds of participating in the former type of protest ($\beta = 1.8$), versus the later, is six times higher among those with the uppermost observed level of SES compared with those with the lowest level. In a similar fashion, respondents who were students during the time of the interview were 2.2 times more likely to participate in furtherance protests than in survival protests.

The results from Models 2 and 3 provide strong support for our first two hypotheses. As predicted by Hypothesis 1, a higher SES and being a student increases, both significantly and substantially, the chances of participating in furtherance protests, compared with not having protested. Support for Hypothesis 2, according to which a higher SES or being a student has a null effect when compared with those not protesting, is also strong but involves a slight nuance. It holds perfectly well for student status but contains a small deviation for SES; the coefficient of this variable in Model 2 is positive and significant, but as we saw above, the magnitude of this association is marginal compared with the influence of SES predicting participation in furtherance protests.

We now consider the statistical models that estimate the associations between the predictor variables and protest issues separately. Results from Model 4 (left side of Figure 3) show that the association between socioeconomic resources and protest participation varies dramatically according to the main issue of the protest. Most important for our purposes, it also shows that such variation aligns with our conceptual distinction between furtherance and survival type issues. When compared with those that did not protest, the coefficients of SES predicting furtherance issues (education, human rights, and political topics) are positive, significant, and of large magnitude. For example, the odds of participating in a protest about educational themes ($\beta = 2.97$) and human rights ($\beta = 2.66$), relative to not protesting, are 19.5 and 14.3 times higher, respectively, for those with the highest observed level of SES compared with those with the lowest SES. In contrast, the coefficients of all three survival issues (economic, lack of public services, and security problems) are much smaller, and even nonsignificantly different from zero for lack of public services and security problems. The SES coefficient associated with economic protests is significant at a 95% level, but only doubles the odds of participation relative to not participating at all.

The estimates for student status follow a similar pattern to that of SES, but in a more modest fashion. Two of its coefficients, education, and political topics, are positive and significant at a 95% level of confidence, while the coefficient for the third furtherance issue, human rights, is also positive, but not significant. In terms of magnitude, being a student increases 2.97 times the odds, relative to nonstudents, of participation in educational protests. The coefficients for survival issues, as expected, follow a less clear pattern. The effect of student status on participation in public service protests is negative and marginally significant, whereas the coefficient for economic protests is very close to zero, and for security problems is positive but not significant.

Does this apparent alignment between the SES coefficients and our conceptual distinction of furtherance and survival type issues hold in a more formal test? In other

words, can we formally conclude that the magnitude of the effects of SES over furtherance and survival issues is similar across protest issues? We evaluate this possibility testing the following null hypotheses:

$$H_0^F : \beta_{Education}^{SES} = \beta_{Human\,Rights}^{SES} = \beta_{Political\,Topics}^{SES}, \text{ and}$$

$$H_0^S : \beta_{Economic}^{SES} = \beta_{Public\,Services}^{SES} = \beta_{Security}^{SES}$$

To test this restriction, we calculate a multivariate Wald test for imputed data suggested by van Buuren (2012). The results indicate that neither H_0^F ($d = 0.73$; $p = .39$), or H_0^S ($d = 0.001$; $p = .98$) can be rejected at any reasonable level of confidence. Therefore, the effect of SES on protest participation is similar within survival issues, and within furtherance issues. We believe this similarity lends further credence to the suitability of our conceptual distinction.

Last, we consider the result from Model 5, shown on the left side of Figure 3, which only includes respondents who participated in protests. The hypotheses motivating this specification assert that among those who protest, protesting for furtherance issues is positively related to SES and student status (Hypothesis 3a), and negatively related to participating in survival protests (Hypothesis 3b). The results are consistent with these expectations, though more so for SES than student status. All three survival issues have clearly negative SES coefficients, with only the one predicting participation in security protests being not significant at a 95% level. This confirms that lower SES increases the chances of participating in survival protests as compared with political protests. In contrast, the two furtherance coefficients are positive, and one of them, education, is statistically significant.

To illustrate the results more intuitively, we provide on the right side of Figure 3 the predicted probabilities of participation in protests motivated by different issues by SES, while all other variables are held at their sample average (or mode if categorical).[9] The steep negative curves predicting economic and public service protests range from 0.34 to 0.15 and 0.24 to 0.07, respectively. In contrast, the positive curve predicting educational protest varies from 0.07 to 0.30. These trends reflect two sides of a coin: economic and public service protests are dominated mostly by popular segments of the population with low SES, while educational protests are largely composed by members of elite segments of society. Political protests also increase with SES, but the slope is less steep, and therefore, cuts across socioeconomic groups more frequently.

The results for student status indicate that current students, even when controlling for SES, have a significantly lower propensity to participate in protests about lack of public services and a higher propensity to participate in educational protests. In terms of odds ratios, participating in each type of protest is 0.35 and 1.78 times, respectively, more likely among students than among nonstudents. The signs of all other coefficients are consistent with Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b, but they are not significant.

In sum, among those who have protested during the year previous to the survey, there is a remarkable degree of heterogeneity in the influence of socioeconomic resources. SES and student status are the only variables of all covariates included in

Model 5 that have statistically significant effects that are both positive or negative. Following Gilens and Paige (Gilens & Page, 2014; Page & Gilens, 2017), this leads to the following speculation: while some issues reinforce the political voice, worldviews, and perhaps also the interests of the privileged ones, other issues are more representative of the overall population and perhaps even the less privileged groups, leveling the political field, and reducing political inequality of voice.

Discussion and Conclusions

Since the 1970s, most studies about individual protest participation have examined the differences between protestors and nonprotestors, arriving at a relatively robust set of findings. Grasso and Giugni (2016), however, recently noted that "studies that simply examine what variables impact on whether someone participates in a protest or not should not simply assume that the same dynamics underlie all protest participation" (2016, p. 51). This article has scrutinized this assumption by studying the influence of socioeconomic resources on protest participation across six important protest issues in Latin America. We took advantage of LAPOP 2010, a survey representative of voting-age Latin Americans which asked recent protestors about the issue of the protests in which they participated.

Our results indicate that the association between socioeconomic resources and protest participation varies greatly according to the main issue driving the protest. Participation in furtherance protests seems fairly elitized, as rising levels of socioeconomic resources increase the chances of partaking in them. Yet socioeconomic resources have a null effect on survival protests when compared with the population who does not protest. When restricting our analysis only to protestors, socioeconomic resources increase the chances of participation in furtherance protests, but decrease them for survival protests.

These findings provide new conceptual lenses for analyzing contemporary cases of protest mobilization in Latin America. Consider the protests that took place in Brazil in mid-2013. These were triggered by an increase in public transportation fares that squeezed the pockets of the popular sectors (survival). But the claims quickly shifted and centered on issues of political corruption and governance (furtherance). Those concerned with public transportation and other public services were mostly workers and neighborhood organizations, while those protesting against corruption came primarily from the middle classes (Saad-Filho 2013). Another example comes from recent mobilizations in Chile dubbed the "Chilean Spring" (Somma et al., 2020). Like in Brazil, the demonstrations began as a series of massive youth protests against an increase in subway fares (survival). As protests spread toward the middle classes, constitutional change became the main issue (furtherance). These examples show how our categories may help unraveling the dynamics of protest waves in ways that otherwise would gone unnoticed.

Taken together, these findings have interesting implications for research on political inequality. For instance, different protest issues may affect political inequality patterns in complex ways. In a hypothetical society that mostly experiences survival

protests, the authorities would hear the voice of a socioeconomically more diverse pool of citizens, presumably acting accordingly (Gilens & Page, 2014, Page & Gilens, 2017). However, in a society that largely experiences furtherance protests, the better-off may prevail in the streets, deepening political inequality of voice.

This has curious implications for the relations between socioeconomic development and democracy. Countries undergoing socioeconomic development, by reducing survival threats, may encourage shifts from survival protests to furtherance protests, which promote political inequality. This may account for Dalton's paradoxical finding that the positive effect of income on protest in general (i.e., disregarding the issue) is stronger in more developed countries (Dalton et al., 2010). Yet this ultimately creates a tension between socioeconomic development and democracy (Dahl, 2006; Dubrow, 2014), questioning old and new versions of modernization theory which expect an affinity between them (Inglehart, 1997).

And yet, economic development reduces political inequality when measured with a wide array of participatory activities (Somma & Bargsted, 2018). This opens the question about the different dynamics of political inequality across participatory activities, and its implications for democracy. The factors that reduce voting inequality may increase protest inequality, and the combined consequences of these processes may be complex. For instance, the recent erosion of well-established democracies has been mostly traced to changes in informal norms regulating the interactions among political elites (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). But can democratic erosion be also traced to conflicting patterns of political inequality of voice across participatory activities? What are the consequences for democracy of having different segments of the population trying to influence authorities through different channels? Amplified by social media, might this cacophony disorient politicians and encourage them to subvert democratic understandings to reassert their power? We raise these questions but leave for future research an empirical examination of the relationships between protest elitization, political inequality, and democracy.

To conclude, we should acknowledge some important limitations of our article. First, the protest issues provided by LAPOP leave aside important issues among Latin American movements, such as indigenous and women's rights (which perhaps were grouped by LAPOP analysts as "other issues"). Second, the number of respondents protesting for each issue is relatively small (see Table 1). Although the results support our hypotheses, a larger sample of protesters for each issue would increase the validity of the findings.

Finally, we focused on individual predictors of protest and controlled for country-level predictors through fixed effects. Yet future studies should explore country-level predictors, since national contexts could affect the chances of protesting for different issues beyond individual characteristics. For instance, citizens in poorer or more unequal countries, or in countries facing ecological devastation, may be more encouraged to protest for survival issues disregarding their socioeconomic resources. Additionally, the national political context may moderate the influence of individual-level predictors. For instance, hugely corrupt governments may cause enough moral indignation to bring to the streets the rich and the poor alike; and grossly misogynist

or racist presidents may boost protests by men and women alike, or by people from different ethnic groups, respectively.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Unfortunately, the question about the issue of the protest was asked for all countries only in the 2010 wave. In the 2012 and 2014 waves, it was asked only in Argentina, Colombia, and Nicaragua. We performed our analyses with such data and found results very similar to those presented in this article (see Section C in the online supplement).
2. We exclude from the analysis the "other" category because LAPOP provides no information about its content, and the "environmental" category, since the number of cases is too low for multivariate analyses. Since LAPOP 2010 asks about protests during the twelve months prior to the survey, it does not capture most of the protests we mention for illustrative purposes in this section, which refer to a wider period. However, LAPOP 2010 provides unique information about a wide array of protests of thousands of Latin Americans across the region, which suffices for our purposes.
3. While the survey was also applied in the Caribbean countries, Canada, and the United States, we focus on 17 Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Details in www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/
4. Education is measured by the number of years of formal education the respondent completed. Household income is measured using a self-location 10-point scale with response categories roughly equaling the income deciles of each country. Household goods is a

composite index calculated for each country separately using Principal Components Analysis that weights the goods available in respondents' households relative to the country average. This procedure was validated with LAPOP data by Córdova (2009), and is based on the following goods (each one coded dichotomously): regular TV, flat screen TV, refrigerator, landline phone, automobile, washing machine, microwave oven, motorcycle, drinking water, restroom inside the dwelling, Internet access, and computer. Following the suggestions of Cowan et al. (2012), it would be desirable to add to our index a measure of occupational status such as those based on ISCO codes, but the available information in the surveys is not detailed enough to build an appropriate measure.

5. The factor loadings extracted from an exploratory single-factor model of the three components are 0.72 (income), 0.64 (education), and 0.75 (household goods). Given the similarity in their magnitude, we opted for a simple additive scale. The latent factor accounts for 50% of the variation in the three variables.
6. For more details on this procedure, see Section B of the online supplement.
7. Education and household goods have very few missing cases but we imputed them anyway as part of the iterated equations.
8. Age is divided by 10 so their coefficients express the amount of change on the log odds of response *j* relative to the reference category associated with a variation of 10 years.
9. To be precise, given the inclusion of country fixed effects in the regression model, we calculate the predicted probabilities at different levels of SES for each country and then average them.

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Party Positions, Income Inequality, and Voter Turnout in Canada, 1984-2015

Matthew Polacko[1]

Abstract

Scholars have focused on the relationship between income inequality and voter turnout cross-nationally and within the United States. However, rising inequality and declining turnout has afflicted Canada to a greater extent than most other Western countries. As turnout in Canadian federal elections began to decline appreciably in the 1990s, inequality began to rise. With multilevel pooled analysis utilizing Canadian Election Studies from 1984 to 2015, party manifesto data, and measures of inequality at the subnational level, this article tests the effects of income inequality on turnout in Canada, and whether the relationship is conditioned by party policy programs. In line with relative power theory, mixed-effects regressions indicate that inequality is negatively associated with turnout, especially for low-income earners. However, latent conflict is manifested when political parties propose greater redistribution, as the negative effects of inequality on turnout are then significantly alleviated.

Keywords

income inequality, turnout, Canada, party positions, elections

Introduction

Voting has long been viewed as being interrelated with the performance and health of a democracy and thus a decline in voter turnout produces anxiety over the future of liberal democracy (Gidengil & Bastedo, 2014). While declining voter turnout has many correlates, such as declining youth participation and socioeconomic factors (LeDuc & Pammett, 2014), others have pointed to economic inequality (C. J. Anderson

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& Beramendi, 2008; Filetti, 2016; Galbraith & Hale, 2008; Jaime-Castillo, 2009; Jensen & Jespersen, 2017; Lancee & Van de Werfhorst, 2012; Lister, 2007; Mahler, 2002; Schäfer, 2013; Solt, 2008, 2010; Steinbrecher & Seeber, 2011).

Mounting evidence also demonstrates that governments are far more responsive to the wealthy over everyone else (Bartels, 2008; Bowman, 2020; Gilens, 2012; Hacker & Pierson, 2010; Schakel, 2019). Thus, the nature of the relationship between income inequality and voting is important because widening income inequality can concentrate political and decision-making power in the hands of a few. Both the "relative power" and "power resource" theories posit that a greater concentration of wealth and, therefore, political power, leads to reduced turnout, especially for the lower classes (Goodin & Dryzek, 1980). However, policies that focus on the lower classes can help mitigate inequality. Conflict theory predicts that by demanding greater redistribution through mass participation in elections, lower classes can potentially redress this power imbalance (Meltzer & Richard, 1981). Indeed, as Mahler (2008) demonstrates, electoral turnout is positively related to redistribution in Western democracies. Yet, the evidence for conflict theory is sparse and the empirical utility of the accompanying median voter theorem has been questioned (Kenworthy & McCall, 2008).

A potential explanation for the lack of evidence in favor of conflict theory could be owing to the fixation that the inequality and turnout literature has had with the demands of citizens, while neglecting the potential influence that the party aspect can have. As scholars have so far primarily concentrated on the "bottom up" or demand side of the equation and neglected the "top down" supply side. However, a growing consensus of academics now emphasize that party supply—in terms of the choices that parties present to the public—substantively matter for political participation (Evans & de Graaf, 2013; Heath, 2015; Leighley & Nagler, 2014). In the context of rising inequality, how parties respond through their manifesto positions on redistribution, should then exert greater influence on whether people decide to participate in voting. Recent evidence also shows that voters do indeed listen to parties and understand their policy messages, especially on the issue of redistribution (Somer-Topcu et al., 2020). Therefore, this study builds on the previous literature by incorporating an unexplored mechanism potentially moderating the relationship—the programmatic policy choices on redistribution of political parties.

Moreover, although scholars have examined the relationship between inequality and turnout cross-nationally, and within the United States, none have focused on the relationship between inequality and turnout in Canada. Canada has experienced one of the most rapid and sustained increases in income inequality (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2015) and one of the most dramatic declines in voter turnout across the OECD (Gidengil et al., 2004). Turnout in federal elections began to decline appreciably in the 1990s, precisely when income inequality began to substantially rise. For example, between 1993 and 2004, turnout plummeted 15% and remained at this new level for the following three elections (Elections Canada, 2019). Whereas income inequality climbed 10% and has remained around this new level since (Heisz, 2016).

Only nine cross-national studies on the topic have contained Canadian elections in the estimations, with two thirds finding a negative and significant effect overall (mirroring the results of the overall pool of studies). Canada features in four of the five aggregate-level studies (Fumagalli & Narciso, 2012; Lister, 2007; Mahler, 2002; Stockemer & Scruggs, 2012), ranging in inclusion between 2 and 12 elections, from 1965 to 2008. However, only five individual-level studies feature Canadian elections from international surveys, which are typically smaller than the Canadian Election Study (CES; C. J. Anderson & Beramendi, 2008; Jaime-Castillo, 2009; Persson 2010; Schäfer 2013; Solt, 2008). Each study includes between one and three of the federal elections held between 1993 and 2004, for a mere nine cumulative elections. Furthermore, in the Canadian context, research has largely explored each phenomenon exclusive of one another and "no completely satisfactory answer for why turnout has declined in Canada has been reached" (C. D. Anderson & Stephenson, 2010, p. 27). Thus, the income inequality and turnout relationship in Canada remains considerably unexplored, despite it being an ideal case study.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps in the literature through a longitudinal multilevel pooled analysis utilizing CES surveys from 10 federal elections held between 1984 and 2015, as well as macro-level socioeconomic and political data, to examine the effect of income inequality on voter turnout in Canada.

The article proceeds by reviewing the Canadian story and situating it within its international comparators. This is followed by a comprehensive review of the existing relevant literature, including the key hypotheses. The research design and modelling strategy are then outlined, followed by a test of the expectations against a unique data set of 100 province-year elections over three decades. Last, the article will conclude with a discussion of the key limitations, implications, and avenues for future enquiry.

Situating Canada

Income Inequality

Income inequality has risen both in countries that have traditionally had high levels of inequality such as the United States, but also in countries where it has traditionally been low, such as Denmark and Sweden. The Gini coefficient is the most popular indicator for measuring income inequality in a population and ranges between 0 and 1 (Osberg, 2018). The strength of the Gini is that it responds to all changes in the distribution of income but it tends to be more responsive to changes in the middle of the distribution, which can understate tail-end changes in inequality at the very top or bottom (Heisz, 2016). The average Gini coefficient for OECD countries stood at 0.29 during the mid-1980s but has since increased by roughly 10% (Sran et al., 2014).

Canada ranks above the OECD average in both its current inequality levels and the degree of the increase since the 1980s (Heisz, 2016; OECD, 2015). Prior to the Second World War, income inequality roughly matched current levels in Canada, then steadily declined until the late 1980s. Subsequently, between 1988 and 2004, in what has been dubbed the "Great U-Turn" (Yalnizyan, 2010, p. 4), Canada's Gini coefficient rose

dramatically from 0.282 to 0.322. It then fell after the financial crisis down to 0.312 in 2011 but has since continued its upward trajectory (Statistics Canada). As Figure 1 shows, the steepest rise in the Gini rate[1] occurred in the mid-1990s, which coincides precisely when the largest decline in federal turnout occurred. Inequality rose dramatically in the 1990s, largely due to Canadian governments shifting to the right by substantially reducing redistribution in its tax and transfer system, which had previously kept pace with rising market inequality (Banting & Myles, 2013; Heisz & Murphy, 2016).

Examining inequality across provinces and time has many advantages.[2] Canadian provinces possess considerable comparable autonomy in administering social policy and research shows that inequality shifts are predominantly owing to provincial rather than federal transfers (Boychuk, 2013). Inequality has risen across every Canadian province and region since 1988, although each province has experienced their own trajectory (Yalnizyan, 2014). Canada's richest provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario), along with Newfoundland, have witnessed the largest rises, while New Brunswick, Quebec, and Saskatchewan the smallest increases. Saskatchewan was able to avoid the sizeable rises that occurred throughout the rest of the country in the 1990s, likely owing to the domination of its government by the leftist New Democratic Party during the 1990s (Sealey & Andersen, 2015). While, Newfoundland has differed from its Maritime neighbors in witnessing a pronounced rise in recent years following an offshore oil boom (Fortin & Lemieux, 2016).

Voter Turnout

Across the West, voter turnout has declined steadily from an average of 82% in the 1970s to 72% (Schäfer & Streeck, 2013). The trend is nearly universal and the decline in turnout is particularly acute in Switzerland, and three Anglo-Saxon countries (the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada). Postwar turnout at national elections averaged around 75% in Canada until 1988. Since then it has declined dramatically and averaged in the low-60s in the five elections between 2000 and 2011 (See Figure 1 above). The one exception being the 2015 election, which saw a substantial rise to 68.3%. However, it remains to be seen if this number is sustainable long-term, as it was an unusually competitive election, with essentially a three-way dead heat in polling up until the final few weeks of the campaign. There was also a deep desire for change, and much of the increase was owing to unprecedented youth turnout, despite continued underlying apathy and low political knowledge among the young (Urban, 2016). Although the turnout rates since 2000 have been roughly 10 percentage points higher than American presidential elections, they are still around 10 percentage points lower than the median average turnout for OECD members (Blais & Rubenson, 2013).

The leading explanations as to why Canada's turnout is comparatively low, stem from its political system and demographics. As turnout tends to be lower by 3 percentage points in majoritarian systems, and tends to be lower in federal systems, as well as large, sparsely populated countries (Gidengil et al., 2004). Consensus is lacking in explanations for Canada's marked turnout decline, which is particularly acute among

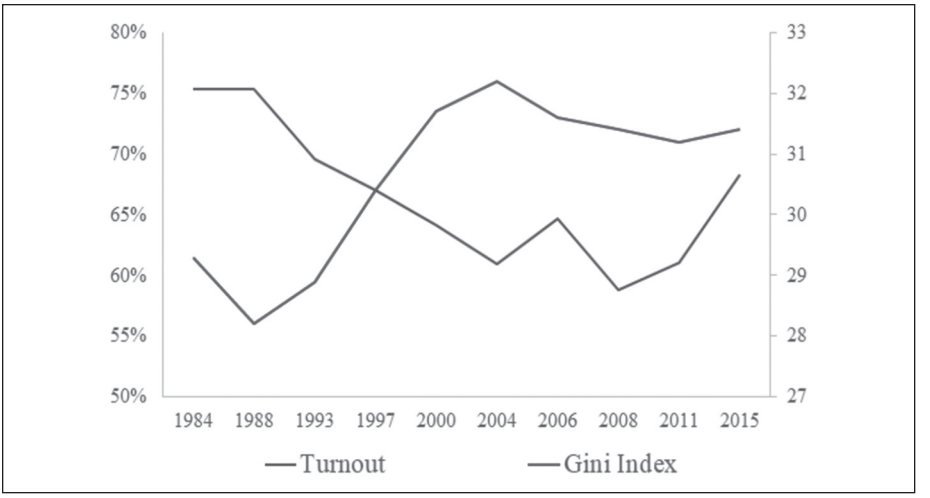

Figure 1. Turnout by Gini Index, Canada, 1984–2015.
Source. Elections Canada, Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums; Statistics Canada (n.d.-b), Table: 11-10-0134-01 (formerly CANSIM 206-0033).

the young. The leading explanations rely on period cohort effects in recent generations having lower political interest, knowledge, and civic duty (Blais et al., 2004), and a decline in the competitiveness of elections (Johnston et al., 2007).

Canada is also an anomaly in having higher turnout in subnational elections (Studlar, 2001). This is in part owing to Canada's pronounced regionalism and diversity. As according to Fearon's (2003) diversity index, it is the most ethnically and culturally diverse Western country. Exemplifying this regional diversity, Canada's two Atlantic island provinces have long stood out on turnout. Prince Edward Island has since Confederation had the highest turnout, due to its extremely small constituency sizes and high interest in politics, while Newfoundland stands out as long having had the lowest turnout, due to it being a latecomer in joining Canada (1949), lower education levels, and general disengagement toward federal affairs (Blake, 2005). The island provinces have maintained their leading positions at opposite ends of the spectrum, having experienced largely uniform declines in turnout. Moreover, Alberta has voted the second least in all but three of the 10 elections, while the remaining provinces tend to not substantially differ from one another each election.

Previous Literature

Although most of the West has witnessed declining turnout and rising inequality the past few decades, only in recent years have scholars focused on the relationship between the two. They have so far only examined the relationship between income inequality and turnout cross-nationally, and within the United States. Country-case studies have also only been undertaken twice—a decade ago—involving American

presidential (Galbraith & Hale, 2008), and gubernatorial (Solt, 2010) elections. Within this literature, inequality has been found to exert either a negative or null relationship on turnout, with scant evidence of a positive relationship. Academics have also developed three principal theories attempting to explain the effects of inequality on turnout: "relative power," "conflict," and "resource" theory. Therefore, this study formulates three separate hypotheses, one for each theory.

Relative Power Theory

Relative power theory predicts that income inequality has a negative effect on turnout and that the turnout of all income groups is expected to decline. This occurs due to inequality generating a greater concentration of wealth into the hands of high-income individuals, who then translate that increased wealth into more political power, as policy makers respond to their interests over the poor (Goodin & Dryzek, 1980). Consequently, low-income earners become disengaged from the political process as they "conclude that politics is simply not a game a worth playing" (Solt, 2008, p. 57). Eventually, the turnout of high-income individuals also declines (although not to the same extent), as less engagement is then required to maintain their dominant position in the political process (Steinbrecher & Seeber, 2011).

Hypothesis 1: Increased income inequality leads to reduced voter turnout among all income groups.

Solt (2008) finds evidence in support of relative power theory both cross-nationally and at the U.S. state level (Solt, 2010). He has produced the most pronounced results, whereby political participation is lower in countries with above average income inequality, particularly among those on low incomes. Similarly, Galbraith and Hale (2008) find that higher U.S. state-level income inequality leads to lower turnout in presidential elections in their study covering 1980-2004. Beyond the U.S. context, Steinbrecher and Seeber (2011) find in a round four European Social Survey sample of 27 countries, that income inequality lowers turnout at the individual level but also reduces the income gap in turnout.

Conflict Theory

In contrast to relative power theory, conflict theory predicts the opposite effect on turnout. It builds on Meltzer and Richard's (1981) median voter model, by predicting that higher income inequality will lead to a more conflictive politics because increasing income inequality stimulates more engagement in the political process for all income groups. This occurs because low-income individuals will start to push for more redistribution, due to being made worse off from increased inequality. This in turn becomes costlier for the rich, who then become more politically engaged so that they can counter the adoption of redistributive policies (Stockemer & Parent, 2014).

Evidence for conflict theory is sparse, although Leighley and Nagler (2014) find some support in their case study of U.S. presidential elections from 1972 to 2008. They find that people who perceive greater policy differences are more likely to vote and that the poor are less likely to perceive policy differences than the wealthy. However, even though people largely underestimate the true extent of income inequality, often by substantial amounts (Hauser & Norton, 2017), polling indicates that the public is still very concerned about rising inequality in Canada. A 2014 EKOS Research poll found that 74% of Canadians believed "the middle class is shrinking and falling backward," and a similar 2014 Pollara poll revealed that 85% "believe income inequality is no longer about the gap between the rich and the poor, but rather the very rich and everyone else" (Osberg 2018, pp. 43–44). Moreover, two thirds of Canadians feel that the gap between the rich and poor is widening (Adams, 2017) and an equal number believe the rich should be taxed more to support the poor (OECD, 2019). Despite heightened public concern about inequality it continues to rise in Canada, and governments have responded with less redistribution (Banting & Myles, 2013). Therefore, the second hypothesis tests whether turnout decline could be stemming from a lack of effective policy offerings on redistribution, as voters can only respond to the policy choices presented to them:

Hypothesis 2: When political parties propose greater redistribution, overall turnout increases during periods of high inequality.

Power Resource Theory

Power resource theory posits that an individual's participation in the political process depends on the amount of resources available to them (Verba et al., 1995). Greater income inequality typically results in less resources for lower class citizens and more for upper-class citizens. Thus, the greater the amount of income inequality in a society, the less politically active the poor become, as opposed to the wealthy, who increase their political engagement. More equal societies should also have a more equal system for provisioning services to all members of society and make it easier for the lower classes to participate in civic life (Lancee & Van de Werfhorst, 2012). It is possible that overall turnout can still rise with increased inequality because if all income groups are getting richer in absolute terms, then they will still have more resources available to participate in politics, despite the fact that the poorest are getting poorer in relative terms (Jaime-Castillo, 2009). However, the theory generally predicts that greater inequality is positively related for high-income earners and negatively related for low-income earners (Solt, 2008). This tends to lead to overall declining turnout, as well as greater turnout inequality.

Hypothesis 3: Increased income inequality leads to reduced voter turnout among low-income individuals, and increased turnout among high-income individuals.

Cross-national support for power resource theory can be found in multiple studies. C. J. Anderson and Beramendi (2008) find in a World Values Study from 1999 to 2001,

that inequality suppresses turnout across national contexts because individuals living in more unequal countries are less likely to vote, with a consistent linear pattern for all income groups. Using data from the 2006 wave of the European Social Survey, Lancee and Van de Werfhorst (2012, p. 1176) demonstrate that "inequality seems to isolate low-income individuals from civic and social life," while simultaneously promoting "the social integration of the rich." Schäfer (2013) finds similar results in an expanded 1970-2008 study of 23 OECD countries, whereby predicted turnout is 18 percentage points lower when moving from the most to least equal country.

Canadian Contribution

In the Canadian context, income is known to exhibit a limited effect on voting (Alford, 1963; Johnston, 2017). Although income inequality and turnout are yet to be examined, the relationship between inequality and related political attitudes do, however, appear in two recent studies relying on the CES. Perrella et al. (2016) investigate the effect of a growing income gap on six political attitudes ranging from satisfaction with democracy, to external political efficacy from 1993 to 2011. They do not examine participation and they find that income disparities have little effect beyond reduced support for political institutions. However, they make a strong case that the CES produces conservative findings, because most of the attitudinal questions appear in the mail-back portion of the CES, whose respondents tend to be "older, more educated, and wealthier," as well as "less cynical" (Perrella et al., 2016, p. 45). Similarly, Sealey and Andersen (2015) look at the relationship between inequality and redistribution from 1993 to 2008 and find that higher inequality leads to greater support for redistribution. Although baseline support is contingent on provincial context, as provincial political cultures moderate the relationship.

Furthermore, The Samara Centre for Democracy encapsulates aspects of all three hypotheses in a recent report on the views of the politically disengaged in Canada. Members of a low-income focus group that rarely votes, outlined "growing inequality" as one of the prime reasons for not participating politically (Hypothesis 1; The Samara Centre for Democracy, 2012). They also "viewed themselves as passive observers of politics—not by choice," but because of a "lack of time or energy" owing to more pressing concerns in their lives (Hypothesis 3), as well as a pervasive feeling of powerlessness at being unable to influence an unresponsive political system (Hypothesis 2; Bastedo et al., 2011).

Altogether, it appears that there is not yet a conclusive answer to the effect of income inequality on turnout and the precise mechanisms warrant further exploration. Consequently, this study builds on the previous literature by incorporating a different mechanism—the redistributional policy offerings of political parties. As voters could be abstaining due to the lack of effective representation in the policy realm. Additionally, this article provides the first country-case study outside of the United States to explore the effect of income inequality on turnout, and covers the longest duration (31 years) within a single country yet.

Data and Methodology

Methodology

Analysis is undertaken via a uniquely created data set comprising individual-level and macro-level data. The individual-level data derive from the 10 most recent waves of the CES, which is merged with subnational level data from Statistics Canada, as well as national-level data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), and Elections Canada. The CES offers the most extensive surveys on public opinion and voting for Canadian elections and contains information on respondents from all 10 provinces for each federal election since 1965. The 10 federal elections included span over 30 years from 1984 to 2015, with each survey containing roughly 3,500 to 4,500 respondents, yielding a total analytical sample of 39,560.

The data set contains individuals nested within elections over time, therefore, multilevel models are applied to pooled cross-sectional data. As the dependent variable is dichotomous, logistic mixed-effects models are estimated, which include both fixed and random effects. Since the higher level units are too small to cluster by province or election (10 each) without introducing bias into the estimates, observations are clustered by province-year, providing 100 in total (Bryan & Jenkins, 2016). Thus, all models account for the clustering of individuals within the province-year electoral contexts through the specification of a random intercept and assume that the effect for all individual and contextual variables is fixed across each election.

Individual-Level Variables

The individual-level variables are all drawn from the CES. The dependent variable is turnout, which is a dichotomous measure of the straightforward question as to whether a respondent *voted* in the recent federal election.

A key independent variable utilized is *income*, which measures the total household income of each respondent, divided into five quintiles (lowest to highest). Quintiles were chosen because they have been the most commonly used form of measuring individual income in the literature, "since an individual's ranking in the income distribution is more comparable over time than is the individual's absolute income level" (Leighley & Nagler, 1992, p. 727). A prominent problem with surveys of household income is nonresponse, but within the CES response rates were nearly as high as most other sociodemographic variables, as respondents were normally provided the option of providing their total household income or identifying their placement within 10 categories (see Supplemental Information S1, available online). Nevertheless, a robustness check is still performed on the missing income values to ensure that the data set does not contain any bias (see Supplemental Information S5, available online).

The most relevant individual-level controls to turnout are included. Young people tend to vote in low numbers and the likelihood of voting increases substantially as one gets older until around age 55, when it then begins to level off (Blais, 2000). This curvilinear relationship has been found to be especially pronounced in Canada (Blais

& Rubenson, 2013). Therefore, *age* and age-squared (*age*^{2}) variables are included. Voting is also positively related to education, marriage, nativity, and religious and union status (Smets & van Ham, 2013). Therefore, *religion, union, married*, and *native* dummy variables are included, and *education* is added as a categorical variable. Gender is also controlled for via a *female* dummy variable. Last, a respondent's *political interest* is included, to control for the notion that greater political interest predisposes one to vote. The variable is measured based on responses to the question: "how interested in politics are you generally?" via a 3-point (low to high) scale.

Socioeconomic Variables

Income inequality is measured at the provincial level. The adjusted after-tax Gini coefficient is employed rather than the market income Gini coefficient because the main mechanisms leading inequality to affect turnout are most likely to operate via a person's disposable income after taxes and transfers, rather than their market income (Stockemer & Scruggs, 2012). Voters are typically backward looking with a memory of roughly 1 year when evaluating the performance of government and the impact of the economy (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2013). To account for this 1-year memory of retrospective voting, I lag the *Gini* indicator for 1 year. Gini's are obtained from Statistics Canada's (n.d.-b), Table 11–10-0134-01.

Furthermore, socioeconomic variables measured at the provincial level are added as controls. *Union density* has declined a full 10 percentage points from its peak of 41.8% in 1984 (Sran et al., 2014), which could also be negatively impacting turnout. Population size has been negatively associated with turnout, as smaller populations increase the likelihood that people know the candidates in their region (Cancela & Geys, 2016). Population differs markedly among Canada's provinces, ranging from 146,000 (Prince Edward Island) to 13.8 million (Ontario). Thus, a logged measure of provincial *population* is added. To rule out spurious correlation, average logged *income per capita*, measured at current CAD dollars, is added, and lagged 1 year. In addition, the average advanced *degree* attainment for each province is added. Data for all four variables derive from Statistics Canada. Last, average level of *church attendance* is calculated from the General Social Survey (Statistics Canada, n.d.-a). As each survey includes a very sizable sample of respondents providing how often they attend religious services, on a 5-point (low to high) scale.

Political Variables

A key aggregate-level independent variable examines the policy space of the political parties in Canada. Following previous research, party issue positions are estimated utilizing party manifesto data, drawn from the CMP (Ezrow & Xenokasis, 2011).[3] The CMP is a popular data set for the study of political parties and offers reliable estimates that correlate highly with national experts and mass surveys, including 104 Canadian party experts surveyed by Benoit and Laver (2006; see also Cochrane, 2010). The policy statements are classified into 56 policy categories over seven domains and this

study focuses on the items that relate most closely to matters of redistribution. The left–right redistributional scores of the various parties have been calculated by summing up the percentages of all the sentences in the left category and subtracting their total from the sum of the percentages of the sentences in the right category (Laver et al., 2003).[4] In order to examine the extent of redistribution offered by the parties for each election, a *left–right party position* variable is constructed (rescaled 1-10 from left–right).[5] The variable is calculated based on the mean weighted by party vote share position on redistribution for each election.[6]

I also control for national-level political factors that may influence turnout in Canada. Uncompetitive elections tend to reduce incentives to vote, which has been particularly acute in Canada, and has been partially attributed with the sudden decline in turnout in the 1990s (Johnston et al., 2007). Thus, *party competition* for each federal election is measured, which is the difference in total votes between the first- and second-place parties. The effective number of parties (*ENP*) is also controlled for, and across most studies is negatively associated with turnout (Cancela & Geys, 2016), even though theory might predict a positive association (Blais, 2006).[7] Data for both variables derive from the CMP. The incumbent government is controlled for, which can influence who turns out to vote (Iversen & Soskice, 2006). As only two parties (Liberals and Conservatives) have formed the government in Canada, *incumbent party* is measured via a dummy variable (0 = "Conservative"; 1 = "Liberal"). Henderson and McEwen (2010, 2015) have shown that distinctive regional identities (including Québécois) can lead to greater turnout for those regions in subnational elections, when cultivated via regional parties. To test this at the federal level, a *regional party* dummy variable is included and coded as 1 for any province-year election, whereby a regional party achieved over 20% vote share in a province, and multiple seats in parliament (Henderson & McEwen, 2010).[8] Last, greater election frequency has been negatively related to turnout, especially in federal systems (Studlar, 2001). Thus, the time in months since the *last election* (provincial or federal) for each province-year election is calculated. These three variables derive from Elections Canada.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

First, the trends in turnout are investigated. The turnout rate is 87.6%, which is substantially larger than the actual turnout rates by a comparatively large (country-wise) 21.7 percentage points. Likelihood to vote increases with each income quintile and the richest quintile votes around 11.2 percentage points more than the bottom quintile in the sample. However, more than half of this increase occurs between the first and second quintiles. To further investigate the income gap in turnout, a ratio calculation of the turnout rate among the top quintile, versus the bottom quintile is performed. The mean ratio is 1.15, meaning that the top quintile voted 1.15 times more than the bottom quintile.

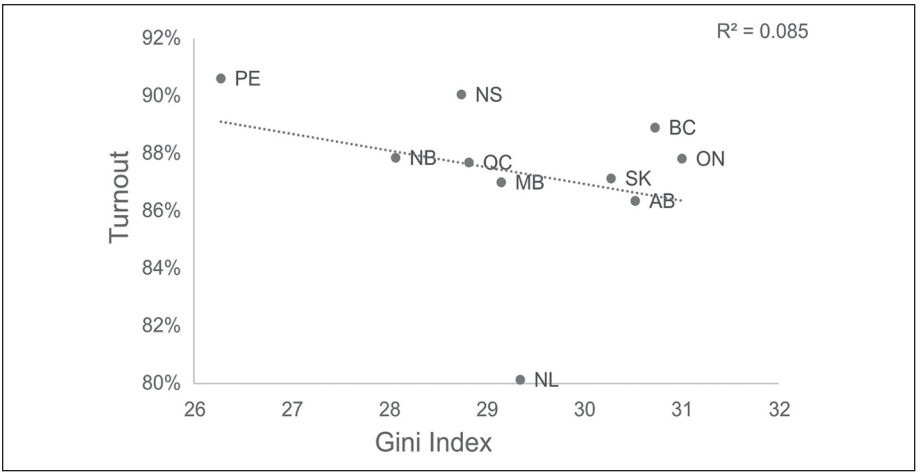

Figure 2. Provincial Turnout by Gini Index.
Note. Cross-provincial average turnout plotted against the average Gini Index.

The turnout rate also incurs little provincial variation, as nine of the provinces reside within 4 percentage points of the average turnout rate—with Newfoundland the expected outlier at 80%. Despite the very small variance in turnout, we do see a weak correlation between provincial levels of turnout and income inequality. Figure 2 displays the cross-provincial average turnout plotted by average Gini index. As expected, there is a negative correlation, as provinces with higher turnout tend to have lower levels of inequality. We can see that turnout is nearly 3 percentage points lower in provinces with the highest income inequality, in comparison with provinces with the least, which is in line with relative power theory.

When the time trends are determined, turnout increases in the sample, which is at odds with the general increase in income inequality, and the income gap in turnout also decreases slightly.

Estimation Results

To test the main hypotheses, I specify a mixed-effects logistic regression. Table 1 presents the results from three different models. Model 1 provides a baseline estimate and includes each of the individual and contextual variables. The individual-level variables largely perform as expected and are all significant. Those on high incomes are significantly ($p < .001$) more likely to vote than those on low incomes (b = .163).

Most of the contextual controls are not significant. When the Liberals are in power people are significantly less likely to vote, which could in part be owing to the Liberals centrism and role as Canada's natural governing party. As Johnston (2017) has shown, turnout is negatively related to Liberal vote share, who tend to benefit from times with high indifference, and stand to lose vote share in times of insurgency when turnout increases. When provincial average income is higher, people are also significantly less

Table 1. Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression Predicting Propensity to Vote.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Individual variables			
Age	0.061*** (0.008)	0.061*** (0.008)	0.061*** (0.008)
Age^2	−0.000*** (0.000)	−0.000*** (0.000)	−0.000*** (0.000)
Education	0.134*** (0.012)	0.134*** (0.012)	0.134*** (0.012)
Female	0.123** (0.042)	0.123** (0.042)	0.121** (0.042)
Married	0.318*** (0.047)	0.318*** (0.047)	0.319*** (0.047)
Income	0.163*** (0.018)	0.112 (0.294)	0.162*** (0.018)
Native	0.341*** (0.065)	0.341*** (0.065)	0.341*** (0.065)
Union	0.121** (0.045)	0.121** (0.045)	0.121** (0.045)
Religion	0.144** (0.056)	0.144** (0.056)	0.145** (0.056)
Political interest	0.770*** (0.032)	0.770*** (0.032)	0.771*** (0.032)
Contextual variables			
Gini $t-1$	−0.065** (0.024)	−0.070 (0.037)	0.691* (0.296)
Union density	−0.014 (0.008)	−0.014 (0.008)	−0.015 (0.008)
Income Per Cap $t-1$ (log)	−0.668** (0.255)	−0.667** (0.255)	−0.670** (0.245)
Population (log)	0.027 (0.032)	0.027 (0.032)	0.017 (0.030)
Church attendance	−0.200 (0.164)	−0.201 (0.164)	−0.214 (0.156)
Degree	−0.002 (0.007)	−0.002 (0.007)	−0.003 (0.007)
Last election (months)	0.006* (0.003)	0.006* (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)
Incumbent party	−0.246** (0.076)	−0.245** (0.076)	−0.253*** (0.071)
Regional party	0.010 (0.104)	0.010 (0.104)	0.072 (0.102)
Party competition	−0.025 (0.014)	−0.025 (0.014)	−0.025 (0.013)
ENP	−0.179 (0.132)	−0.180 (0.132)	−0.243 (0.131)
Left-right party position	−0.098 (0.229)	−0.098 (0.229)	4.286* (1.730)
Gini $t-1$ # Income		−0.002 (0.010)	
Gini $t-1$ # Left–right party position			−0.148** (0.058)
Constant	7.642* (3.119)	7.774* (3.212)	−14.358 (9.176)
Variance	−1.775***(0.209)	−1.776***(0.209)	−1.921*** (0.257)
Log likelihood	−7842.1309	−7842.1161	−7839.052
Akaike's information criterion	15732.26	15734.23	15728.1
Bayesian information criterion	15926.14	15936.19	15930.06
Province year	100	100	100
N	23,818	23,818	23,818

Note. Beta coefficients from a mixed-effects logistic regression with standard errors in parentheses.
ENP = effective number of parties.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

likely to vote. People are more likely to vote when elections are less frequent and when there are less parties, which likely is owing to the much higher turnout in the 1980s, when there were only three parties. Some evidence appears that people are more likely to vote when political parties offer more redistribution, although *left–right party position* is not significant.

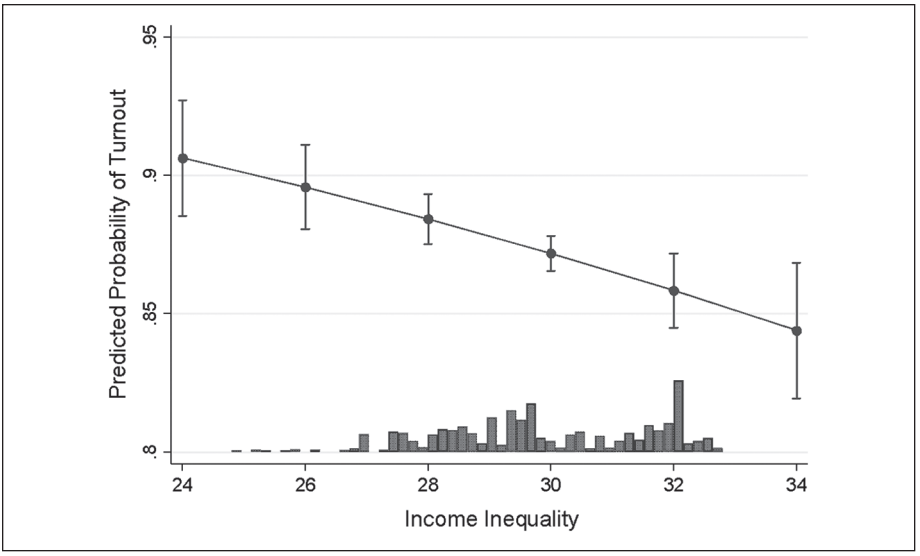

Figure 3. Predicted probability of turnout by income inequality with 95% confidence interval (Model 1).

Most important, Model 1 indicates that inequality does significantly depress turnout at ($p < .01$). Figure 3 below displays the predicted probabilities of turnout at different levels of income inequality. We can see that the likelihood to vote is substantially lower at higher levels of inequality. At the lowest levels of inequality, people are much more likely to vote (roughly 90%), but at the highest level of inequality, significantly less so (roughly 85%). Thus, support is found for relative power theory and Hypothesis 1.

Model 1 reveals a sizeable income gap in turnout that is often larger in countries with lower turnout such as Canada. Mahler (2008) reports that the income gap in turnout for the 1997 federal election was 17.6 percentage points in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, which is 6.4 percentage points larger than in the CES. Turnout is also 8 percentage points larger in the CES, which provides much less scope for a large turnout income gap. It is likely then that the CES considerably underestimates turnout inequality.

To test for power resource theory (Hypothesis 3)—that the income gap in turnout is greater when inequality is higher—Model 2 specifies an interaction between *Gini t* − 1 and *income*. The interaction is not significant, and we do not see much evidence that provincial inequality differentially affects income groups. The lack of a significant effect could be owing in part to survey underestimation of turnout inequality or perhaps to the comparatively persistent absence of class voting in Canada (Alford, 1963; Andersen 2013; Johnston, 2017).

Model 3 tests the second hypothesis—that greater policy redistribution increases overall turnout during periods of high inequality—via an interaction between *Gini t* − 1 and *left–right party position*. The interaction is negative and significant at

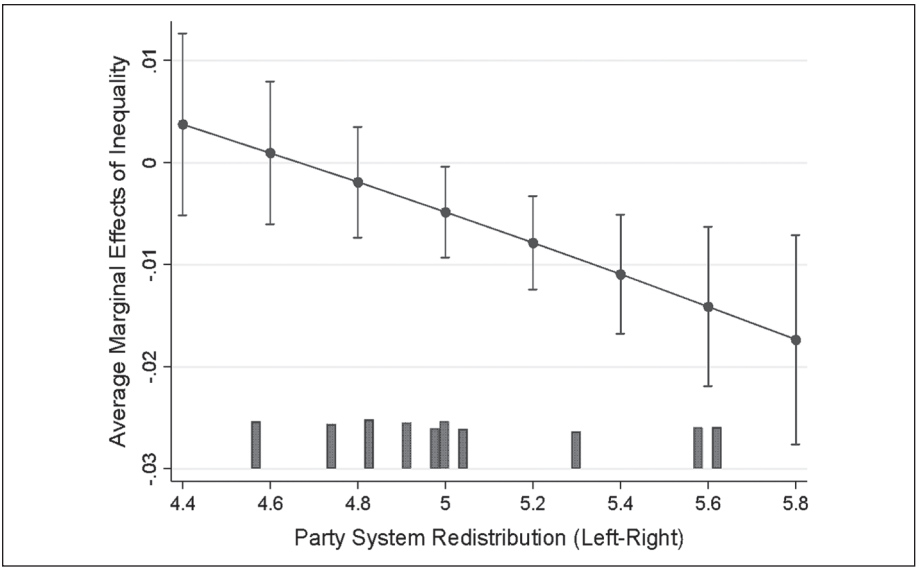

Figure 4. Average marginal effects of inequality by party system redistribution on turnout with 95% confidence interval (Model 3).

($p < .01$). Figure 4 below displays the average marginal effects of inequality by the redistributional party system position (left–right) on turnout. It shows that the effect of inequality is slightly above zero when the party system is very left-wing on redistribution, but that turnout gradually dampens the more right-wing the system becomes. When party systems move from the most leftward to the most rightward position, a 1 standard deviation increase in inequality exhibits roughly a 1.7 percentage point decrease in turnout. The interaction provides some support for Hypothesis 2. As the negative effects of inequality on turnout are exacerbated when parties offer less redistribution and are mitigated when the party system offers greater redistribution.

When we investigate the interaction further by breaking Model 3 down by income groups, we can see more precisely how conflict theory is dependent on the offer of greater redistribution. Table 2 presents the results from the interaction for the bottom two quintiles versus the rest of the population. We can see that the interaction is only significant for the bottom two quintiles ($p < .01$) and that the negative effect is nearly twice as strong for the bottom two quintiles.

Figure 5 below offers a comparison of the average marginal effects of inequality by the redistributional party system position on turnout, for the bottom two quintiles (left), and quintiles 3 to 5 (right). We can see that at the most leftward position on redistribution, the effect of inequality on turnout is around zero for the richest three quintiles, whereas for the bottom two quintiles, greater inequality increases turnout. Reduced offers of redistribution then gradually reduce turnout for all income groups, although to a much larger extent for the bottom two quintiles. This suggests that

Table 2. Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression Predicting Propensity to Vote for Bottom Two Versus Top Three Income Quintiles.

	Model 3a	Model 3b
	Quintiles 1-2	Quintiles 3-5
Individual variables		
Age	0.069*** (0.010)	0.053*** (0.012)
Age^2	−0.000*** (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)
Education	0.168*** (0.020)	0.143*** (0.016)
Female	0.140* (0.065)	0.091 (0.056)
Married	0.373*** (0.072)	0.347*** (0.062)
Native	0.288** (0.104)	0.397*** (0.083)
Union	0.304*** (0.078)	0.025 (0.056)
Religion	0.164 (0.089)	0.124 (0.071)
Political interest	0.743*** (0.049)	0.794*** (0.042)
Contextual variables		
Gini $t-1$	0.916* (0.370)	0.500 (0.368)
Union density	−0.012 (0.010)	−0.013 (0.010)
Income Per Cap $t-1$ (log)	−0.541 (0.319)	−0.860** (0.314)
Population (log)	−0.010 (0.035)	0.043 (0.038)
Church attendance	−0.157 (0.192)	−0.249 (0.198)
Degree	−0.007 (0.008)	−0.001 (0.009)
Last election (months)	0.005 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)
Incumbent party	−0.323*** (0.088)	−0.221* (0.088)
Regional party	0.160 (0.120)	−0.016 (0.126)
Party competition	−0.020 (0.016)	−0.034* (0.017)
ENP	−0.216 (0.161)	−0.192 (0.166)
Left-right party position	5.578* (2.170)	3.164 (2.150)
Gini $t-1$ # Left–right party position	−0.191** (0.072)	−0.110 (0.072)
Constant	−22.441 (11.554)	−6.412 (11.408)
Variance	−3.121 (3.316)	−1.824*** (0.328)
Log likelihood	−3194.744	−4638.7965
Akaike's information criterion	6437.488	9325.593
Bayesian information criterion	6605.621	9509.421
Province year	100	100
N	8,148	15,670

Note. Beta coefficients from a mixed-effects logistic regression with standard errors in parentheses.
ENP = effective number of parties.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

people on low incomes are affected to a greater extent by party system redistribution and that leftward positions of redistribution can increase turnout for this group under higher inequality, despite the negative effects of inequality on turnout.

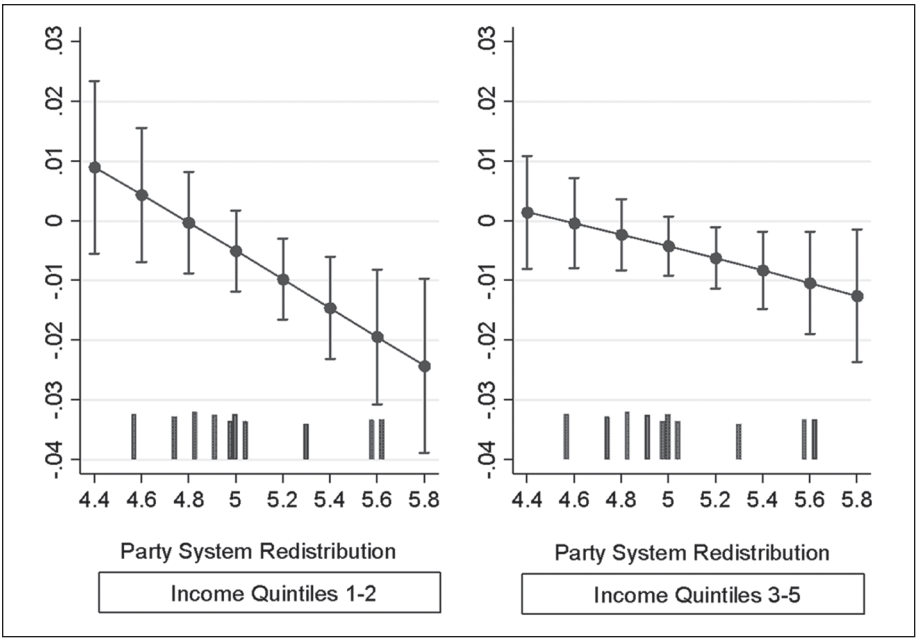

Figure 5. Average marginal effects of inequality by party system redistribution on turnout for income Quintiles 1 to 2 (left) and 3 to 5 (right) with 95% confidence interval (Models 3a and 3b).

Conclusion

This study provides a novel theoretical case study on the effects of income inequality on turnout. It makes use of two uniquely intensive developments in time that occur within a specific geography. As the marked increase in income inequality in Canada during the 1990s, forms a noteworthy comparison with the precipitous concurrent decline in voter turnout that befell the country. The study also seeks to address multiple gaps in the literature. Previous research has been focused cross-nationally or on the United States, so a case study of Canada expands our knowledge of this key topic beyond the usual regional scope. It also introduces a previously unexplored mechanism moderating the relationship between inequality and turnout—the policy choice offerings of political parties at the time of elections.

Past research has tended to offer support for either relative power or resource theory. This study offers evidence in support of the former, as it finds that income inequality does significantly reduce turnout in Canada, with low-income earners negatively affected the most. Past research has also offered little support in favor of conflict theory. However, by examining the economic policy space of Canada's party system, we can provide a more direct test of conflict theory. The results here indicate that latent conflict (Meltzer & Richard, 1981) only manifests from increasing income inequality—when parties offer greater redistribution. As this article shows that the negative

effects of inequality on turnout can be mitigated with party system movements to the left on matters of redistribution, which is especially pronounced for low-income earners. This finding is particularly relevant to current policy debates, since turnout decline in Canada coincided with a strong rightwards policy shift on redistribution (Banting & Myles, 2013; Johnston, 2017). Turnout also substantially increased in the 2015 election to the highest level since 1993, with inequality a salient issue during the campaign, and the Liberal's moving to the left of the New Democratic Party on redistribution for the first time since the CMP began coding elections in 1945.

However, further research is required, and the limitations of this study provide direction. Prime among them is the extent of endogeneity in this situation, as politics affects inequality and inequality affects politics. Another limitation involves case confinement. There are only 10 provinces in Canada, which provide a far lower number of aggregate-level units for measurement than is available cross-nationally or within larger federations such as the United States. Similarly, this study contains only 10 federal elections, which points to the lack of survey availability at the provincial level.

Nevertheless, this article sheds further light on the detrimental effects of inequality on democracy. A primary function of elections is the distribution of power and mounting American evidence demonstrates their governments are far more responsive to the wealthy over everyone else (Bartels, 2008; Bowman, 2020; Gilens, 2012; Hacker & Pierson, 2010). It would appear from this study that Canada is treading down a similar path to its southern neighbor. Although the influence of money is not as prevalent in Canadian democracy as in the United States, it is still hindered by the narrow boundaries of what is considered acceptable public debate and a sometimes "distorted presentation of economic and social realities" (Broadbent Institute, 2012, p. 5). Therefore, when there is little chance of electing a representative that will champion their interests, individuals are often behaving rationally by refraining from voting (Solt, 2010).

This article also has important policy ramifications. The self-reinforcing nature of political and economic inequality means that policy makers need to address both sides of the equation. On the political side, an important reform lies with Canada finally redressing the inequities inherent in its electoral system with a move toward proportional representation (PR). Reforming Canada's majoritarian electoral system was a central plank to the Liberals' 2015 winning campaign, with Prime Minister Trudeau promising an end to the first-past-the-post system by the subsequent election, but the pledge was expediently suppressed once in power. PR systems provide better representation for low-income earners by facilitating alliances between working-class and middle-class voters on redistribution (Iversen & Soskice, 2006) and turnout is higher in PR systems (Cancela & Geys, 2016; Gidengil et al., 2004).

This study has contributed to a growing body of literature examining the political side of inequality. It has yielded important insights into income inequality and turnout in Canada, with implications outside the country. As it identifies income inequality as another significant culprit in turnout decline and consequently provides further impetus to policy makers to adopt reforms and policies that aid in combating income inequality.

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Supplemental Material

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Notes

1. The Gini index is employed going forward to aid in interpretive purposes, which is the Gini coefficient multiplied by 100.
2. First, it substantially increases the number of cases. Second, there is 2.3 times more variation in provincial levels of income inequality in Canada, as compared with national levels for the period analyzed. Ranging from 24.0 (Prince Edward Island in 1993) to 33.2 (Ontario in 2004). Likewise, there is 2.32 times more variation in turnout at the provincial level, ranging from 47.7 (Newfoundland in 2008) to 85.9 percentage points (Prince Edward Island in 1988). Third, provincial measures of inequality allow for an exploration both within and across regions and provinces, which is especially apt in a highly regionalized country such as Canada. Fourth, data at the provincial level provides "a much more finely discriminated measure of both turnout and inequality than do national-level figures, which often represent averages of very diverse regions" (Mahler, 2002, p. 130). Fifth, research has found that local economic conditions strongly influence evaluations of the health of the national economy. As citizens use their more direct local conditions as a source for judgments to compensate for a lack of numeracy regarding macroeconomic conditions (Hansford & Gomez, 2015; Newman et al., 2015; Newman & Hayes, 2019), including in the Canadian context (Cutler, 2002).
3. Manifesto Project Dataset Version 2018b (Volkens et al., 2018).
4. Policy position on redistribution = (per401 + per402 + per407 + per414 + per505) − (per403 + per404 + per405 + per406 + per409 + per412 + per413 + per415 + per416 + per504) from the CMP.
5. To aid in interpretation, CMP redistributional party scores are rescaled from a left to right (−100 to 100) to (1-10) scale, using the following equation: (CMP score × 9/200) + 5.5 (Ezrow & Xenokasis, 2011).

6. For example, the rescaled (1-10) economic policy positions of the main parties in the 2011 election is fairly centrist at 5.01, as the three main parties from left–right are: New Democrats = 4.47; Liberals = 4.84; Conservatives = 5.56, with the two remaining parties (the Greens and Bloc Québécois), scoring 4.51 and 5.16, respectively.
7. *ENP* is calculated by first squaring the vote share of each party individually, then adding the sum of the individual parties together, and finally dividing 1 by the new total sum.
8. The only two substantial regional parties that emerged in Canada over this period are the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Party, which was a right–wing protest party centered on Western Canadian disaffection. Both parties achieved official opposition status in the 1990s and achieve a score of 1 in Quebec (for 7 elections), and in the four Western provinces for both elections in the 1990s.

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Contestation in Participatory Budgeting: Spaces, Boundaries, and Agency

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Abstract

Local political leaders as well as international organizations have embraced participatory budgeting in response to problems of political exclusion and citizens' dissatisfaction with representative democracy. This article provides a framework to highlight important aspects of the *politics* of participation. The framework allows scholars to explore how factors *external* to spaces of participation interact with aspects of participation *within* them. The framework conceptualizes participatory budgeting as political spaces, whose boundaries are shaped by ideologies, interests, and patterns of social exclusion. In dynamic spaces, such boundaries are constantly renegotiated and contestation helps maintain their openness. In static spaces, by contrast, predefined boundaries are imposed on participants who may accept or reject them. Empirical examples of participatory budgeting illustrate the usefulness of this framework. The article ends by discussing key avenues for further research.

Keywords

participatory budgeting, contestation, inequality, inclusion, power

Introduction

As widening socioeconomic gaps shape people's opportunities for equal representation in many parts of the world, researchers and democratic theorists are exploring in new ways of involving citizens in politics. In particular, studies of reforms aimed at empowering those who lack material resources and are systematically marginalized are now numerous (e.g., Montambeault, 2019; Sintomer et al., 2016; Touchton et al., 2017). Among other aspects, this research has examined effects of participatory

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reforms on people's well-being (Boulding & Wampler 2010; Gonçalves, 2014; Heller, 2001; Touchton & Wampler, 2014), as well various structural, institutional, and political factors that influence outcomes (e.g., Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2015; Baiocchi et al., 2011; McNulty, 2015, 2018; Saguin, 2018; Sintomer et al., 2016; Wampler, 2007). But what roles do citizens actually play in these new political arenas? This question appears increasingly important as participation is being promoted worldwide by many and varied kinds of actors, including the World Bank and other international organizations that are not typically associated with advancing political equality (see Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014; Goldfrank, 2012; Sintomer et al., 2016). At the heart of current debates is the issue of how people's political freedom within these new spaces may be shaped by such factors as ideology, interests and patterns of social exclusion, and what possibilities people may have to challenge such boundaries.

Participatory budgeting has a special status among these new forms of participation, having been the first significant "democratic innovation" to be advocated as a universal model to be adopted in various new contexts (Geißel & Joas, 2013; Sintomer et al., 2008, 2016; Smith, 2009). Several case studies of participatory budgeting have analyzed citizens' possibilities to participate on equal terms, take initiatives, and hold municipalities accountable (Abers, 2000; Baiocchi, 2005; Holdo, 2016a; McNulty, 2018; Rodgers, 2007; Wampler, 2007). In a few cases, citizens seem to have been empowered by participation but in many cases they seem not to. Several studies have explained these different outcomes through factors external to the process, such as available resources, degree of decentralization, and political commitment to inclusion. These factors seem crucial, but in intricate ways they also depend on interactions with participants, who bring into spaces of participation their own interests, views, and resources (see also Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014; Holdo, 2016a, 2016b; Goldfrank, 2007, 2012). The aim of this article is to bring to the fore the place for contestation within these spaces.

This article develops a framework that allows researchers to explore how factors *external* to participatory institutions interact with aspects of participation *within* them. Beginning with the notion that policies of participation create *spaces* in which participation occurs, this article seeks to highlight how people that enter such spaces often engage in contestation regarding their boundaries. Among the various kinds of boundaries that may shape participation, I focus on three that appear most clearly in the case study literature on participatory budgeting: ideological assumptions as to what participation is about and what it can be used for; ideas about public interests that privilege the views of some groups over other views; and symbolic boundaries made up of patterns of social exclusion and inclusion, including perceptions about which actors have the authority to define problems, objectives and modes of cooperation. Moreover, along these three dimensions, I suggest, we can distinguish between *dynamic* spaces and *static* spaces. In dynamic spaces, the boundaries are constantly being negotiated by the actors involved, who learn new ways of cooperating as they come to understand each other's interests and intentions. In static spaces, by contrast, the boundaries are predefined and imposed on participants, who can either accept or reject them.

The next section situates the argument for thinking of participation in spatial terms in the larger literature. It highlights, in particular, how previous research has connected contextual variables to levels and kinds of participation. The subsequent three sections examine the three different types of boundaries—ideological, interest-based, and symbolic—that, based on existing case-studies, appear, on the one hand, as highly consequential for possibilities of advancing political equality through participation, and, on the other hand, important objects of contestation. In each of these dimensions, I show, participatory spaces can be dynamic or static. The concluding section discusses the implications of the argument of this article and avenues for further research. It is hypothesized that dynamic spaces both empower citizens more and generate political legitimacy more effectively than static spaces. Further research is needed, however, to uncover the precise mechanisms that determine whether participatory spaces become dynamic and under which conditions such mechanisms may be more likely to emerge.

Context, Spaces, and Agents

Understanding the connections between contextual factors and concrete interactions, including contestation, is an important part of what Baiocchi et al. (2011, p. 28), following the work of several social theorists, call a "relational" understanding of participation. While the spatial analysis of participation offered here cannot include all the relationships between civil society and state, between political tradition, interests and ideologies, and between the various networks that make up the sphere of citizens' activism, it provides, I want to suggest, a useful way of thinking about how such relations influence what possibilities exist for participants to affect the form that participation takes. How do economic, political, institutional, and historical conditions impact concretely on citizens' possibilities to voice concerns, defend their interests and hold decision makers accountable? A number of studies have demonstrated that participatory budgeting help bring about improvements in people's living conditions by, at least under some conditions, positively affecting civil society mobilization and the formation of a public sphere for citizen deliberation (Avritzer, 2006; Baiocchi et al., 2011; Nylen, 2002). However, participatory budgeting may also, on the contrary, facilitate cooptation of social activists (Wampler, 2010) and in some places further diminish the capacity of an already weak civil society to organize independently (Baiocchi et al., 2011). Studies suggest that the intentions of decision makers is one important factor that helps explain such variations, but various other aspects of the political context may contribute as well, including structures of electoral competition and the influence of investors and businesses (Abers, 2000; Baiocchi, 2005; Fung, 2011). For example, Rebecca Abers's (2000) work on Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting suggests that participatory budgeting was shaped not only by a commitment to bottom-up, participatory decision making but also by alliances with local corporations in the construction and infrastructure sectors. She shows, moreover, that the idea of participation helped the Workers' Party to appeal not only to potential participants in marginalized neighborhood but also to middle-class voters, who were typically not demanding participation but were attracted

by the promise to make government more efficient and transparent in the way they spent tax money. Focusing on the roles of citizens' prior experiences and resources, Brian Wampler's (2010) comparative work in Brazil suggests that their possibilities of mobilizing protests functioned as "reserve threat" (p. 259), while Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright (2003) argue that "empowered participation" requires that citizens rely more on their capacity for collaboration, including such as skills of negotiation, compromise, and creative problem solving, as opposed to protest. Developing a spatial understanding of participation can help bring together external conditions and internal interactions in ways that clarify their mutual dependence.

The idea of participatory space builds on work by social theorists that have highlighted how social practices are imagined and constructed within a language of space.[1] Democratic theorists, from to Arendt (1958) to Habermas (1991) imagine citizen deliberation as taking place in a socially constructed space—the public sphere or the public domain—that is located outside of such spaces as the private sphere, the marketplace, the bureaucracy, and the world of political competition party competition. In the public sphere, citizens come together to address common concerns. Theorists such as Lefebvre (1991), Foucault (2007), and Bourdieu (1989) have developed in more detail the idea that space is constantly being produced and reproduced through social practices (see also Lamont & Molnár, 2002). If we apply this view to the context of new forms of participation, it implies that spaces of participation rather than being constituted through political decisions and received by citizens become shaped and reshaped through the social interactions generated by an initial invitation. Thus, decision makers may open up a political space for participation and invite citizens to enter but do not necessarily have either the authority or the intention to determine the boundaries of that space. As citizens enter that space, they bring into it their own histories, identities, resources, perspectives, and expectations, which contribute to its distinctive possibilities and constraints. As Cornwall and Coelho (2007) write,

> Spaces for participation may be created with one purpose in mind, but can come to be used by social actors to renegotiate their boundaries. Discourses of participation are, after all, not a singular, coherent, set of ideas or prescriptions, but configurations of strategies and practices that are played out on a constantly shifting ground (p. 14).

Possibilities and constraints of participatory spaces are in this sense, Cornwall and Coelho (2007) suggest, negotiated on-site with participants. The participants may acknowledge and accept the intentions of decision makers and administrators, but they may also ignore or misinterpret their intentions or refuse and challenge them. Not all spaces are dynamic in this way, however. We need to distinguish, I want to argue, between dynamic spaces, where, as Cornwall and Coelho suggest, boundaries may expand as participants interact on the basis of participants' histories, identities, interests and views. There may not even be an intention from any actor to stabilize the meaning and possibilities of such dynamic spaces. Other spaces, however, may be more rigid, due to invested interests, power relations and relatively homogenous worldviews and expectations among its occupants.[2] Clarissa Hayward (2000) offers a

useful distinction between social relations and forms of interaction that are "defined by practices and institutions that severely restrict participants' social capacities to participate in their making and re-making" (p. 5). Hayward contrast such constrained relations to more empowering relations that instead allow people to be "not only the subjects, but also the architects of key boundaries that delimit and circumscribe their fields of action" (p. 166). This distinction is useful, because it highlights a critical aspect of political contestation:

> It directs critical attention, not only to the ways power relations define the capacity for action *within* their terms, but also to how they shape the capacity for action *upon* (that is, action that affects) the social limits that comprise them. (Hayward, 2000, p. 162)

By static spaces, I mean spaces characterized by such constrained relations as Hayward describes. By dynamic spaces, I mean instead the more empowering relations that allow participants to contest boundaries and expand possibilities of action. Dynamic spaces allow contestation by enabling and encouraging actors to be co-producers of their boundaries. Static spaces, by contrast, discourage actors from questioning such boundaries and impose expectations that they will be accepted as they are.

Another aspect of the concept of participatory space that needs further elaboration is their dimensions, or the kinds of boundaries that shape a space. It seems useful to distinguish between at least three types of boundaries—three dimensions—that appear significant in case studies of participatory budgeting. Boundaries, I want to suggest, may consist in ideological assumptions, assumptions about public interests, or assumptions of a more symbolic kind that concern the roles people are expected to play in social interaction. These are not, I should stress, an exhaustive list, as many other boundaries may exist, and indeed be more relevant, depending on the nature of a participatory space. I only emphasize these because they appear most clearly, as I will show, in studies of participatory budgeting.

First, ideological dimension concerns the political visions involved in initiating participatory decision making. As observed by several scholars, participatory budgeting has been promoted by actors of various political orientations, from social parties such as Porto Alegre's Workers' Party to institutions associated with global capitalism such as the World Bank. The actors involved in its promotion do so with different assumptions about what participatory budgeting should accomplish, and those assumptions form ideological boundaries which may be challenged by participants.

The second dimension is public interest. Participatory institutions are commonly framed as offering opportunities for collaboration and cooperation to promote shared interests. The idea of coming together may, however, mask subtle forms of imposing a specific view of what such cooperation should achieve, that is, what is the "public interest" that participation is meant to serve. Difference theorists (e.g., Benhabib, 1996; Kohn, 2000) have drawn attention to how deliberation and the idea of shared, public interests often ignore or misrepresent the different interests actors have depending on identity and social position (see also Fraser, 2000). To challenge boundaries in the public interest dimension means to question assumptions about the shared identity

Table 1. Dynamic and Static Spaces Compared in Three Dimensions.

Dimensions	Dynamic spaces	Static spaces
Ideological	Citizens question assumptions about the purpose and role of participation	The purpose and role of participation are treated as givens
Public Interest	Conceptions of public interests may expand to acknowledge differences	The meanings of public interests are fixed and reflect the interests of dominant actors
Symbolic	Participants move from assigned roles as objects or instruments to the roles of actors and agents	Participants are assigned roles and participatory institutions cannot accommodate movement to other roles

and shared fate that underpin the notion that participatory institutions should promote public interests. For example, in participatory budgeting, women, indigenous groups, and other ethnic minorities, and poor people may need to question assumptions about what it means to work together for a common goal.

The third dimension is symbolic and concerns preconceptions about who has the authority to speak, for whom and in what space. Participatory institutions have often been valuable vehicles for promoting the rights of marginalized citizens to voice their concerns and have a say in debates and policy-making. However, being included does not always mean being listened to and having one's views and opinions considered. Cornwall (2003) distinguishes between four different roles that citizens may be assigned in participatory spaces: objects (whose enlisting helps secure compliance and lends legitimacy to the process), instruments (who help projects run more efficiently by sharing responsibilities), actors (who provide ideas and may generate wider political support), and agents (who act to enhance accountability, demand rights, criticize, and build political capabilities). In static spaces, facilitators may see citizens primarily as objects or instruments, whereas in dynamic spaces, where boundaries are negotiated, citizens may claim the roles of actors and agents. To challenge symbolic boundaries means to question the idea of in what capacity citizens may enter and agree to participate in new, political spaces.

Table 1 summarizes this framework, which highlights three dimensions in which the boundaries of participatory spaces can be challenged, renegotiated, and expanded. Static spaces are, in contrast to dynamic spaces, spaces where the boundaries are relatively fixed, due to invested interests and predefined goals.

The subsequent sections will use this framework to analyze how participants in dynamic spaces contest these three types of boundaries, while in static spaces, they face only the options to accept or reject them. For each type of boundary, I will use case studies of participatory budgeting to illustrate this distinction. As I aim to show, the framework helps to bring to the fore forms of both contestation and domination along these boundaries, that is, they highlight ways in which, in one or more of these aspects, a space may only allow action within its limits or allow and enable actors to

act in ways that affect such limits. Finally, the three types of boundaries discussed below, do not suggest mutually exclusive types of contestation. I discuss them separately only for the purpose of analytical clarity. However, challenging one type of boundary may often require people to contest others, too. For example, challenging ideological assumptions about what participatory budgeting is for may require people to contest status differences that are part of the symbolic boundaries. Contesting what counts as a public interest, as opposed to private or narrow group-based concerns, may similarly require actors to contest ideas about the purpose of allowing citizens to be part of decision making.

Ideology

That ideological commitments shape participatory institutions may seem obvious. While political parties of various orientation have initiated forms of citizen participation and deliberation, participatory budgeting was initially strongly associated with the left and framed as part of an agenda of social justice (see Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014). Commenting on the global diffusion of participatory budgeting, Baiocchi and Ganuza (2014) argue that the ideological dimension is crucial for understanding its possibilities and constraints. In its original versions, it was part of a leftist project that aimed for deeper societal transformation. Because it was part of a broader strategy of institutional reform, decisions taken through participatory budgeting became strongly linked to priority-setting by the local government. Participants were empowered in the sense of becoming part of the structure of local administrations. By contrast, when the political right uses participatory budgeting for its purposes, it is "promoted as fostering 'community cohesion,' 'innovation,' 'social entrepreneurship' and 'restoring trust' in government" (p. 31). Commitment to citizen participation has, however, affinities with various ideological views, also beyond the left (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014; Goldfrank, 2007a; Goldfrank & Schrank, 2009), and more recent research has questioned whether leftist orientation is sufficient, or even necessary, to accomplish empowerment of citizens (see Goldfrank, 2012). Other research suggests that ideological assumptions among both left and right may enable and constrain participation in various ways (see Holdo, 2019). Wampler (2010) shows, moreover, that mayors' varying political commitments and orientations affect whether participants feel entitled to question or object to how projects of participation are framed. In participatory budgeting in New York City, Celina Su (2018) shows, the public agencies involved relied on a model of "managed participation" that privileged technical over local knowledge and minimized the deliberative aspects of participation.

Although ideological commitments are widely acknowledged as a factor that shapes the spaces of interaction in participatory budgeting, few studies have analyzed, or even recognized, the roles played by participating citizens in challenging ideological boundaries. Scholars have, as will be discussed below, paid more attention to contestation of public interest and symbolic boundaries. Baiocchi and Ganuza (2014) claim, however, that with regard to the political orientations of the actors initiating participation and how these affect interactions with, and between, participants, "there

are myriad ways in which participants themselves tend to outrun the limits imposed on them" (p. 45). They quote a participant in Chicago's participatory budget, who says that she, and her association, sees participatory budgeting as an opportunity for members to "learn more about the city budget and then we can press the alderman about other things he controls, and we can move on to tackle the city budget" (p. 45). That ideologically motivated political decisions to initiate participatory budgeting cannot completely determine the uses of the space they open up for citizens is demonstrated in a number of other case studies. For example, Rodgers's (2007) analysis of participatory budgeting in Buenos Aires focuses on the relations between political elites from the ruling Peronist *Frente Grande* coalition, participants and the bureaucrats in charge of the process. The political elites in the city treated participatory budgeting as an additional means of mobilizing their own loyal supporters and solidifying their power. This mode of organizing fitted the Peronist ideology of a popular movement party that has traditionally been organized in clientelist networks (see Auyero, 2001). However, while political elites sought to politicize the participatory budget meetings, both participants and bureaucrats defended their independence. In the end, while many of the participants were sympathetic to the ruling party, the participatory budget generated "unintentional democratization," according to Rodgers. Political leaders could not control the process of participation and the interactions it generated between participating citizens and employees at the municipality, who were more deeply committed to undistorted citizen participation. As one participant told Rodgers, participatory budgeting made it possible to interact directly with civil servants and hold them accountable (Rodgers, 2007, p. 195).

Empirical studies such as Rodgers's suggest the ideological boundaries that constrain the possibilities of participation may come at least as often from left as from the right. This is to a significant part due to how participation fits the idea of a popular movement party that translates grassroots demands into public policy. The populist imaginary is that party leaders embody the collective views and interests of the people, which makes independent agency on the part of civil society irrelevant (see Laclau, 2005). In Porto Alegre, participatory budgeting functioned as a way to use the Workers Party's mode of grassroots mobilization to make citizens part of actual decision making. The party structure had a pyramidal shape, Abers (1998, p. 516) explains—small groups would meet at the level of neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces to make decisions and elect delegates zonal, municipal, and regional party conferences. Similarly, participatory budgeting meant that local popular councils would take over part of the work of government decision making. Goldfrank and Schneider's (2006) analysis highlights more clearly the strategic advantages of this approach, suggesting that it was really a form of "competitive institution building." Like many other institutions it was intended, they argue, "to privilege the interests of certain social groups in order to advance partisan goals, including electoral success" (p. 2). Although participatory budgeting's achievements in many places have exceeded such specific aims, its structure made it vulnerable to ideological domination (see Goldfrank & Schrank, 2009). In spaces that are static in the ideological dimension, participants find themselves unable to raise issues and make proposals that do not fit the political purpose for

which participatory budgeting was initiated. This was the experience of some participants in one of the districts of Buenos Aires, according to Rodgers (2007), who quotes one participant who said,

> There was so much deceitfulness and so many disappointments due to all the politicking, all the projects we wanted to set up and have included in the budget became secondary to certain people's political agendas. It became so ugly, projects were being promoted by people simply in order to gain political support, and so of course people began to withdraw from the process (p. 196)

Similar observations have been made in other cases of participatory budgeting (see Holdo, 2016b; Wampler, 2010). In ideologically static spaces, it may also, as will be further explored in the next section, become more difficult to question what kinds of public interests participatory budgeting should serve.

The Public Interest

The second dimension of political contestation concerns the idea of "public interests." Citizen deliberation, as conventionally understood, is an exchange where people speak in public terms rather than private ones. This means that participants in deliberation, including in participatory budgeting, are expected to disregard their own personal interests and focus on shared, public interests (see Baiocchi, 2005). Critics of deliberation suggest, however, that this idea often merely masks the objective reality that different participants, and participants and facilitators, usually have significantly different interests. For example, poor citizens often have interests that are not captured in elites' references to public concerns and public interests. Deliberation may often make it difficult for the less resourceful to object when the reasoning about public interests is shaped by the interests of more resourceful groups. As Jane Mansbridge (1990) puts it, deliberation is often thought to transform people's individual concerns to a shared concern—it transforms "I" into "we"—but as it does this may subtly impose the view of dominant actors. Critics have claimed that in the real world, such subtle domination is usually the point of initiating deliberation and participation. Why else would powerful actors invite the powerless into spaces of participation? (Przeworski, 1998).

This risk of domination arises partly because people are told that as participants ("councilors") they act in the interest of the city, their districts and their neighborhood, not other, narrower interests. Several studies have suggested that participatory budgeting creates division among participants by encouraging them to defend the interests of their respective communities (Abers, 2000; Baiocchi, 2005; Holdo, 2016a). This sense of competition may empower citizens to defend their interests and contest attempts of discarding them as outside the realm of public concerns. However, as Montambeault and Goirand (2016) show, in Recife, Brazil, this reinforced inequalities between groups of citizens, as it favored groups that were better mobilized. This aspect is likely to relevant in many cases where studies have not

explicitly examined it. Grillos's (2017) research in Solo, Indonesia indicates that this kind of bias toward the better mobilized begins at the proposal stage, where participants from poorer neighborhoods are less likely submit their own proposals. Along similar lines, Saguin (2018) found in his research on cases in the Philippines that when powerful actors dominated, the results for poorer participants are often disappointing. Even in the cases where participatory budgeting generates material benefits, the poor did not feel included, and, importantly, participation did not increase their trust for the government either.

However, in dynamic spaces, participants have often been able to use a discourse of public interests to their own benefit while at the same time challenging the boundaries of what can be acknowledged as public interests. For example, Baiocchi (2005) observed that at participatory budgeting meetings in Porto Alegre, participants would respect the norm of speaking public-mindedly, but they would also use their meetings to address neighborhood concerns that were not strictly relevant to budgetary discussions and even organize actions to be carried out outside of participatory budgeting. Wampler (2010, p. 120) notes, moreover, that participants criticized administrators that seemed unable to understand their perspectives. This failure of understanding was often related to the different living conditions of facilitators and participants that translate into different conceptions of public interests. Participating citizens, Wampler comments,

> do not shy away from open confrontation with government officials . . . [but] carry themselves as emboldened, rights-bearing citizens rather than as weak, subservient individuals asking for the government's support. [They] use the institutional space afforded them under PB's rules to express their frustration and anger at how the government functions and manages PB. Citizens and delegates use their allotted time to explain why they believe that government officials have been negligent or incompetent (p. 120).

Part of the tension between facilitators and participants, Wampler suggests, was their different lived experiences of needs, which also concerned the responsibilities of the government to protect and provide basic standards of living for all citizens. Similarly, in Rosario, participatory budgeting has been used by facilitators to inform citizens about their rights, and participating citizens have used the resources available to initiate campaigns to raise consciousness about the rights of citizens, sometimes with a particular focus on indigenous peoples' rights (Holdo, 2016a). In this way, public interests and public concerns become not only articulated but also appropriated for other purposes, within the space of participation. In other words, public interests become an object of renegotiation and contestation. As noted by several researchers (Baiocchi, 2005; Wampler, 2010; Holdo 2016a, Holdo 2016a), participants in Porto Alegre and Rosario have been watchful to see that participatory budgeting works to their benefit and the benefits of their communities. Many participants are conscious of the fact that the support and esteem they enjoy in their communities depend on their capacity to promote their collective interests, not the political interests of the government (Holdo 2016b, 2019).

The public interest dimension is also discussed in Hernández-Medina's (2010) study of participatory budgeting in São Paolo. After introducing a special mechanism for increasing diversity among participants, the redistributive effects of participatory budgeting increased, according to Hernández-Medina. This happened, she argues, despite the fact that the process was not initiated with the intention to address redistributive issues. With the introduction of the principle giving special priority to nine "socially vulnerable segments" (including ethnic and sexual minorities, disadvantaged age groups, women, homeless people and people with disabilities), the projects decided through participatory budgeting shifted as representatives of the "segments" began mobilizing within the budget meetings. While part of this change was due to the way that the "segments" mechanism was consciously designed to increase the voice of underrepresented groups, another part was an effect of how the participants used this new advantage to push the boundaries further. While the city administration anticipated that participants would defend the interests of their respective "segments," participants' actions frequently went beyond such expectations. By representing marginalized groups, participants helped reinforce the sense of empowerment. Hernández-Medina (2010) quotes a homeless participant who recalls threatening staff from the housing department: "We are only asking for the law to be implemented. That's all we're asking; we're not asking for anything out of this world. And if you don't want to negotiate, then we will leave . . ." (p. 526).

The study of participatory budgeting in Rosario, Argentina, found that members of indigenous groups felt that it was a continuous struggle to make other participants and administrators see that their disadvantaged positions meant that their interests were often not included in what others believed would be best for the city or for their districts (Holdo, 2016b). Those participants nevertheless found it fruitful to raise these concerns and challenge structural discrimination through participatory budgeting. In more static spaces, such actions appear less meaningful. For example, McNulty (2015) found that in Peruvian participatory budgets, women were underrepresented because of structural obstacles to participation, including domestic obligations and organizational deficiencies. Lack of political will in combination with these structural barriers prevented women, she argues, from having an equal say as to which projects would best serve their communities. Wampler (2010) suggests, in more general terms, that "PB rewards those who can mobilize, and there are few mechanisms in place that recognize that certain groups face even greater challenges as they attempt to organize" (p. 66). Moreover, while the central argument for participatory budgeting has been that it deepens democracy by making citizens part of processes where the public concerns are defined and problems are addressed, this only happens, Wampler argues, if participants are allowed to actively contest claims made by government representatives (2010, p. 281). In many cases, Wampler's study suggests, this has actually not been the case. On the contrary, participants are often expected to accept predefined public interests, as well as administrators' assessments of their projects' feasibility and way of organizing and leading meetings. When this happens the way that deliberation in participatory budgeting turns "I" to "we," as Mansbridge (1990) puts it, "can easily mask subtle forms of control" (p. 127).

Symbolic Battles

The symbolic dimension of contestation in participatory institutions concerns the roles that citizens are allowed to play in politics and society. Citizens are dominated symbolically when they cannot affect the limits of the roles assigned to them, that is, the expectations and norms that allow them to act in accordance with their views and interests (see Bourdieu, 1989). Conversely, they contest symbolic boundaries when they question such limitations and contradict them in action (see also Lamont et al., 2017; Silva, 2016). Cornwall (2003) suggests that participants in a political space may be assigned the roles of objects or instruments, whose roles are static and meant only to serve the initiators' predefined political objectives. However, they may also be given, or may take, the roles of actors that have own ideas and objectives and who may also make use of their own resources to gain leverage and political support, or agents that reshape the boundaries of political spaces to explore their potential to provide new mechanisms of accountability, the realization of rights, and the building of political capabilities. This symbolic dimension becomes crucial in participatory budgeting when citizens demand recognition for their diverse interests, identities and resources.

While the contestation of symbolic boundaries has not been a major focus in case studies of participatory budgeting, a few studies indicate that it is a central aspect of participation for many citizens. Holdo's (2016b) study of Rosario's participatory budget shows, participants constructed a new social identity around the title of councilor and used that identity as a source of esteem and public recognition. This gave them a form of "deliberative capital" (Holdo 2016b) that allowed them to balance the power of more resourceful administrators and political leaders. Having been enlisted and allowed to participate mainly to produce political legitimacy for the government, participants contested the boundaries of these roles by claiming a larger significance. Often their sense of esteem was based in part on their view that they were helping to deepen democracy by serving as crucial links in the governments' interactions with ordinary citizens, especially in marginalized residential areas. In Rosario, participants were able to use this "capital" to hold facilitators accountable, expand the budget, increase transparency, and promote minority rights (ibid). In these ways, symbolic contestation enabled them to expand the space of participation.

Similar forms of symbolic contestation take place in other cases of participatory budgeting as participants question or contradict their roles assigned to them. For example, Baiocchi (2005) reports that participatory budgeting meetings in Porto Alegre were frequently taken over by participants who wished to address issues that went beyond specific budget concerns. These "takeovers" included organizing marches to advocate for such concerns as safety in schools. As participants explored their own ways of taking advantage of how budgeting meetings brought together people with diverse ties throughout their district, the participatory budgeting forum assumed "a central place in coordinating collective action and [gained] symbolic importance as the place where 'the whole community' is present" (Baiocchi, 2005, p. 100). This, too, exemplifies how participants in dynamic participatory spaces may contest the roles assigned to them to expand the boundaries of action. They became more than objects

or instruments that serve specific purposes for the local government and claim roles as actors and agents that promoted marginalized interest in a significant political space.

As with the other dimensions of political contestation, not all spaces are dynamic in the sense that they allow participants to question and challenge symbolic boundaries and these boundaries do not affect participants equally. Wampler finds that in two Brazilian municipalities, Blumenau and Rio Claro, participants did not feel that they had the right to question the government's practices and treatment of participatory budgeting. While participatory budgeting served to increase participation nominally, it "did not develop into a political space that allowed citizens to make meaningful decisions or exercise basic political rights" (Wampler, 2010, p. 261). In other words, citizens were locked into the roles of objects and instruments, in Cornwall's terms. They were unable to expand the space for participation by challenging its symbolic boundaries and be recognized as actors and agents. Moreover, Stephanie McNulty's research in Peru (2015, 2018) demonstrates that gender roles, in particular, are crucial aspects of participation. Gender equality was not promoted, she finds, because gendered patterns of participation were built into the process, which did not promote women's participation or women's organization. Specifically, there were economic barriers to participation, including getting to meetings and social expectations that women should take responsibility for domestic duties. This made it particularly hard to participate for women in areas where poverty and patriarchy were more noticeable. In other cases, transforming gender roles has been a priority, however. Hajdarowicz (2018) shows that women were empowered as participation affected power relations in both public and private as expectations of the roles they may play (domestically and publicly) change.

Conclusion

This article has developed an analytical framework for understanding contestation in participatory budgeting in spatial terms. This framework highlights subtle but significant acts that challenge boundaries in at least three dimensions: ideological, public interest, and symbolic. Ideological contestation consists in acts of challenging conceptions of what participatory budgeting is for, that is, what kind of vision of a better society it is part of. In static spaces, it has proved difficult to challenge, on the one hand, narrow views about improving governance and increasing efficiency, and, on the other hand, ideas about how participatory budgeting may serve partisan political interests. However, citizens may also "subvert spaces of invitation," to use Rodgers' (2007) phrase, if the ideological boundaries are sufficiently dynamic. This may be the case, for example, if the need for legitimacy is strong enough to make it worthwhile for a local government to be flexible with regard to the purposes served by participatory budgeting. Similarly, contestation of conceptions of public interests becomes possible in dynamic spaces, allowing citizens to expand notion of what should be a relevant public concern, and contestation of symbolic boundaries take as their targets the expected roles and status differences imposed on people in spaces of participation.

By conceptualizing three specific dimensions of contestation, this article has sought to contribute to the development of a relational understanding of participation, in which interactions within participatory spaces are connected to various contextual factors. Spaces of participation are shaped by political interests, traditions, and economic considerations. These shapes spaces of participation by providing them with resources, authority to make or influence decisions, and public recognition. In many cases, they may be empowered to begin with, that is, even without participants' contestation. In other words, whether they are static or dynamic does not, on its own, explain outcomes in terms of effective participation. However, often participatory spaces develop into empowering forms of engagement because citizens negotiate their boundaries. A relational view recognizes the mutual dependence between concrete practices of participation and the contextual factors that provide such practices with a space.

The dimensions of contestation specified here may in practice overlap and feed into one another. Moving symbolic boundaries enables citizens to question ideological assumptions and narrow understandings of public interests. Questioning ideological assumptions about what participation should mean and what it should be used for may similarly open up new possibilities to promote diverse interests and claim more active roles and recognition in participatory spaces. And advancing previously marginalized interests may lead to new symbolic advantages and contribute to the destabilization of ideological rigor. Thus, while analytically, there are advantages to keeping them separate, crucial empirical questions concern their relationships. How does one kind of contestation depend on other kinds? Conversely, may different types of boundaries reinforce each other? These are questions that will need to be further explored in empirical research.

The argument of this article raises several additional questions for further research. While the analysis of this article highlights that political contestation may take various forms and be enabled and constrained in different political spaces, more research is need to analyze the conditions favorable to these different forms of contestation. Further research is also needed to specify the mechanisms that produce different outcomes. For example. how do different political and economic structures affect whether spaces for participation become dynamic or static? Moreover, the three dimensions explored in this article do not exhaust the possibilities for contestation in participatory budgeting or other forums. Rather, they are three dimensions that appear to be significant based on existing case studies. Further research may explore other dimensions and learn from studies from other contexts. For example, case studies of participation in environmental decision making suggest that knowledge and expertise can become a crucial dimension of contestation (Sprain & Reinig, 2018). The framework developed in this article may thus serve as a starting point for further studies that may contribute to our understanding of the types of contestation that participation may enable. This would allow us to recognize that participatory institutions may not only serve values distinct from public protests but also explore their limits.

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Notes

1. The idea to analyze participatory institutions in spatial terms appears intuitive because spatial metaphors are already part of the ordinary language used to describe and assess participation. As noted by Cornwall (2004), people who work with and study participation routinely talk about "opening up," "widening," "extending," and "deepening" opportunities for citizens to be part of democratic decision making. The word "participation" itself "evokes images of people coming together—in lines to vote, or in circles to deliberate" (Cornwall, 2004, p. 77). In contrast to these everyday metaphorical uses of spatial terms to speak of participation, Cornwall uses the intuitive sense that participation requires space to analyze actions that affect relations of power. Her analysis draws attention to how interactions between citizens and representatives of public institutions are situated in political, historical and social contexts, and how they are shaped by the expectations of the actors involved as to what they have agreed to be part of. Participation, Cornwall suggests, can be seen as a process of "creating spaces where there was previously none, about enlarging spaces where previously there were very limited opportunities for public involvement, and about allowing people to occupy spaces that were previously denied to them" (Ibid.)
2. Gaventa (2006, pp. 26-27) distinguishes between "closed spaces," "invited spaces," and "claimed/created spaces." For Gaventa, this typology helps focus on the questions "how they were created, and with whose interests and what terms of engagement" (p. 26). However, it makes the assumption that the interests and terms of engagement follow from which actor-initiated participation, which is not necessarily true in many cases of participation.

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Article

Youth, Institutional Trust, and Democratic Backsliding

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Abstract

In recent decades, many countries ranging from quasidemocratic regimes to well-established democracies have faced democratic backsliding. In this study, we draw on Foa and Mounk and other related literature to examine the effects of regime delegitimation on democratic backsliding, focusing on youth's trust in political institutions—parliament, legal systems, and political parties—relative to trust of the older population. We use an unbalanced panel data set that combines a country-year indicator of liberal democracy from the Varieties of Democracy project with aggregate survey-based measures of absolute and relative institutional trust from the Survey Data Recycling database; the data set covers 46 countries from 2009 to 2017. We find that the ratio of youth's institutional trust to that of older persons has a substantive effect on the quality of liberal democracy in the future, and that the effect is amplified by the relative size of the youth population.

Keywords

youth, trust, democracy, democratic backsliding, survey data aggregation

The long-standing assumption that Western democracies are consolidated was recently challenged by Foa and Mounk (2016, 2017), who portray that support for democratic institutions is decreasing among new cohorts of citizens in advanced democracies. Their work has drawn attention of many critics (e.g., Alexander & Welzel, 2017; Inglehart, 2016; Norris, 2017; Voeten, 2017; Zilinsky, 2019), and the debate has spurred new research into the early, small, yet troubling signs of potential deconsolidation of democracy. This new research examines democratic deconsolidation as part of the broader "backsliding" movement on the continuum from autocracy to full democracy (e.g., Claassen, 2019; Daly, 2019; Huq, 2018; Waldner & Lust, 2018).

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We join ongoing efforts that aim to explain why some countries ranging from quasidemocratic regimes to well-established democracies have faced democratic backsliding in recent decades. We draw on recent literature to examine the effects of institutional delegitimation on democratic backsliding, focusing on youth's trust in three key political institutions—parliament, legal systems, and political parties.

We presume that delegitimation, which discontent with democratic institutions reflects, can erode democracy. Strong distrust toward political institutions may encourage citizens to support alternative arrangements, such as antisystem parties. On the other hand, political elites who recognize their weak legitimacy may curtail political rights and civil liberties to constrain the opposition. Young people in particular are carriers of social change, and thus political elites endeavor to influence and captivate their political values and attitudes. We argue that low institutional trust among youth, as compared with the older population, is conducive to weakening various provisions of democratic regimes.

We create an unbalanced panel data set that combines Variety of Democracy (V-dem) measures of liberal democracy with aggregate measures of institutional trust derived from the Survey Data Recycling (SDR) database for 46 countries measured from 2009 to 2017. In our analyses, the index of liberal democracy is measured 5 years later than the level of institutional trust, because any public withdrawal of legitimization would influence democratic backsliding with some delay. We assess the extent of legitimization by measuring the level of institutional trust of the young in both absolute and relative terms. By absolute term, we refer to the mean value of young respondents' answers to survey questions about institutional trust for a given country in a given year. By relative term, we refer to the ratio of mean value of trust of young respondents to old respondents.

The Concept of Democratization and Democratic Backsliding

We follow Waldner and Lust's (2018) definition of democratic backsliding as "incremental within-regime change . . . that entails a deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance, within any regime (p. 95)" (emphasis added).[1] We regard deconsolidation as a particular type of backsliding that encompasses changes for the worse in long-established or consolidated democracies, or, in Daly's (2017) terms, "democratic orders that have attained a sufficient level of maturity" (p. 10). This view also echoes Foa and Mounk's (2017) concept of democratic deconsolidation: democracy

> can cease to be the only game in town when, at some later point, a sizable minority of citizens loses its belief in democratic values, becomes attracted to authoritarian alternatives, and starts voting for 'antisystem' parties, candidates, or movements that flout or oppose constitutive elements of liberal democracy. Democracy may then be said to be deconsolidating. (p. 9)

The concepts "democratic backsliding" and "democratic deconsolidation" belong to the repertoire that social scientists employ to study the social and political processes

whereby political regimes morph along the continuum from autocracy to consolidated democracy.[2] Both democratic backsliding and deconsolidation are complex concepts, because they subsume key elements that social scientists find inherently difficult to define and operationalize. The first element is democracy itself (see e.g., Daly, 2019; Law, 2017, for definitional challenges). The second pertains to dynamics, particularly to the process by which properties of regimes worsen (e.g., Agh, 2015, 2016; Cianetti et al., 2018; Diamond, 2008; Foa & Mounk, 2016; Huq & Ginsburg, 2018; Mounk, 2018; Scheppele, 2018; Svolik, 2008).

In addition, implicit in the concepts of democratic backsliding and democratic deconsolidation is the notion of agency in terms of both the actors inflicting the change and the means by (and intensity with) which they do so. Perhaps because of this complexity, recent research often avoids defining the terms, or discussing how they link to possible operationalization (for notable exceptions, see e.g., Agh, 2016; Bermeo, 2016; Lueders & Lust, 2018; Waldner & Lust, 2018). Rare are also detailed discussions of how democratic backsliding and deconsolidation relate to each other and to other concepts that populate the field of democratization and dedemocratization studies.

For deconsolidation, the conceptual framework of democratic consolidation constitutes an important point of reference and contrast. Studies on consolidation build on the premise that mature democracies endure because of generational socialization into valuing democracy as a whole, and good overall regime performance (for a brief overview of the theories, see Claassen, 2019); hence, the focus is the conditions that would allow democratizing societies to consolidate.[3] According to Przeworski (1991),

> democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions, when all the losers want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have lost. (p. 26; for a similar position, see Linz & Stepan, 1996)

For Diamond (1994), consolidation is "the process by which democracy becomes so broadly and profoundly legitimate among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down" (p. 15).

Democratic backsliding and deconsolidation studies constitute a critical response to the consolidation paradigm. They question the evolutionary nature of consolidation (Agh, 2016), and the extent to which consolidation protects against the risk of dedemocratization. As early as 2007, contributors to the *Journal of Democracy* voiced concerns that East-Central Europe is backsliding (see Special issue *18*[4]). Diamond (2008, p. 37) urged Western policy makers and analysts to better understand the scope of "democratic recession," followed by several scholars (Agh, 2015; Bermeo, 2016; Bogaards, 2009; Cianetti et al., 2018; Foa & Mounk, 2016).

Deconsolidation Arguments in the Context of New Research

Foa and Mounk's (2016, 2017) articles have galvanized cross-national statistical research on the fate of democracy, as critics responded to their work (e.g., Alexander

& Welzel, 2017; Inglehart, 2016; Norris, 2017; Voeten, 2017; Zilinsky, 2019) and a variety of other studies appeared (e.g., Claassen, 2019; Daly, 2019; Mechkova et al., 2017; Waldner & Lust, 2018). However, results from quantitative research about democratic backsliding and deconsolidation are mixed.

Among papers that examine possible warning signs, cross-national analyses of democratic values and attitudes using aggregated World Values Survey and European Values Study data spanning 1995 to 2014 show that the young in mature democracies, including the United States, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, espouse increasingly lower support for democracy than older people over time (Alexander & Welzel, 2017; Foa & Mounk, 2016, 2017; Norris, 2017).[4] Yet the substantive weight assigned to age effects differs starkly among authors. Foa and Mounk read this result as a cohort effect and interpret it—together with findings about the youth's declining interest in politics and political participation, and rising support for authoritarian ruling—as potential triggers of future deconsolidation.[5] Their critics largely dismiss this warning sign by contenting that age differences only "account for a negligible 0.9 percent of the variance in support for democracy" (Alexander & Welzel, 2017, p. 2), "levels of democratic support are astoundingly high even for the least supportive cohorts" (Alexander & Welzel, 2017:2; for similar views, see also Norris, 2017; Voeten, 2017), and the impact of age reflects lifecycle, not cohort effects. Zilinsky's (2019) analyses of integrated 2002 to 2017 European Social Survey data fail to find any support that the young in Europe report higher dissatisfaction with democracy than their older counterparts.

Recent quantitative research on democratic backsliding *per se* also yields mixed results. Based on trends using the Freedom House indices, Norris (2017) concludes that "the quality of *institutions* protecting political rights and civil liberties did not deteriorate across Western democracies from 1972 to end-2016" (p. 2), although it did in some non-Western democratic states, and in countries that Freedom House categorizes as "partly free." Mechkova et al.'s (2017) analysis of Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data spanning 1970s to 2016 shows that "the relative shares of democracies and autocracies have swung up and down since the year 2000" (p. 163) and some countries regressed "moderately from liberal to electoral democracy" from 2013 to 2016. In an article published 1 year later, Lührmann, Mechkova, and Lindberg (2018) reanalyze the V-Dem data including data for 2017 and adjusting for population size. They find that in 2017 most people lived under democratic rule, yet a backsliding trend is visible "primarily in the more democratic regions of the world: Western Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe" (p. 1321). Altogether, one-third of the world's population lives in countries whose democracy has declined, including India and the United States. Once population size is accounted for, backsliding becomes more visible.

Backsliding may be cyclical or, perhaps, trendless. Claassen (2019) pools existing cross-national survey data and V-Dem measures into a large panel data set covering over 135 countries and ca. 30 years, to conduct dynamic analyses on the relation between democratization and democratic mood. He finds that support for democracy (i.e., mood) ebbs and flows, even in long-established democracies in line with thermostatic model (Wlezien, 1995) predictions: controlling for prior mood and after

eliminating confounding effects of time-invariant, country-specific factors, peoples' preferences for democracy weaken as democratic rights and institutions are supplied, and they strengthen when democracy declines. Claassen (2019) concludes that these findings "undermine the concept of democratic consolidation, echoing Foa and Mounk (2016, 2017). . . . if democratic mood can weaken even in long-established democracies, then we cannot be certain that any democracy will retain majority support in future" (p. 32).

Taking new studies into account, we reformulate some of Foa and Mounk original ideas by applying them to a wider range of countries that cover various types of regimes on the continuum from autocracy to democracy and making their theoretical postulates more specific. Here are three core ideas that could lead to testable hypotheses:

First, weakening "regime legitimacy" is an important warning sign. It would reflect in the political attitudes and values, especially in *decreasing trust in*, *and hence perceived legitimacy of, democratic institutions*. Empirically, it has been established that nations with low institutional confidence are prone to political instability and changes in national cultural values consistently precede changes in democratic provisions (Ruck et al., 2020). Second, younger citizenry could undermine even consolidated democracies by getting increasingly attracted to political extremes and growing more likely to vote for anti-system parties, on both the left and the right (Mounk, 2018).[6] *Concentrating on the young* became important in studies of radical political attitudes even before 1968 and continues nowadays (Weiss, 2020). Third, it is important to *compare the young with the older cohorts*: looking at the young cohort's attitudes in relative terms, with attitudes of the old cohort as the reference, Foa and Mounk interpret the gap in the political attitudes and behavior of youth and the old in terms of cohort effects, since it is important when, in what period, young people were born. Only specific combination of age and period justifies this interpretation.

Young people's low trust in political institutions in absolute and relative terms is a sign of trouble for the democratic regime. In this article, we ask, "Does young people's trust in political institutions matter for regime performance in the future?" Put differently, is trust in political institutions correlated with democracy indicators at a later point in time across countries? To answer this question, we examine the mechanism through which low legitimacy of political institutions leads to worsening performance of democracy.

Research Hypotheses

In this article, we (a) examine the issue of legitimization of democracy via reported trust in key political institutions—parliament, the legal system, and political parties; (b) focus on the youth; (c) compare the views of youth with that of the older cohort; and (d) account for the context in which the young generation's trust operates. We investigate two essential research problems for which we formulate testable hypotheses.

First, we examine how level of trust in political institutions among the young affects the alteration of liberal democracy. We assume young people's trust is relevant for

political change because governing elites respond to the political values and attitudes of youth. The elite's response is implied by the logic of generational succession, which was observed by Mannheim (1952/1928). In essence, a system adjusts to its future: The younger generation will become a core force in all aspects of societal life in a few years, including politics. Many of the values and attitudes espoused in youth endure into peoples' middle age and manifest in their political activity. Thus, the systemic responses to youth's trust in political institutions in terms of electoral democracy and the extent to which liberal democracy emphasizes the protection of individuals' and minorities' rights are carried out with some delay because of older generations, who do not necessarily represent the same values and attitudes as their younger counterparts. Therefore, for any shift on the continuum from authoritarian regime to liberal democracy, the values and attitudes of the young are not crucial *per se*, but in how they relate to the values and attitudes of the older cohorts. Taking this into account, we formulate our hypotheses about absolute and relative institutional trust among young:

Hypothesis 1: The lower trust in political institutions is among young people, the larger the decrease in level of democracy Y in the future, implying a larger negative value of the difference $Y_t - Y_{t-n}$. Of course, assuming linear relationship, this hypothesis can be reformulated for the positive impact of trust in political institutions among young people on the degree of democratization.
Hypothesis 2: The lower the country-ratio of the average trust in political institutions among young people to the average trust among older people, the larger the decrease in level of democracy Y in the future, implying a larger negative value of the difference $Y_t - Y_{t-n}$.

Second, we investigate whether relative institutional trust among young is affected by the size of each group. We expect that size matters: the larger the group of the young relative to the size of the group of older respondents, the larger the expected effect of the trust ratio. Thus, we postulate the next hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The interaction between the mean institutional trust ratio of and the ratio of young to old in the population has a sizable and statistically significant effect on the difference $Y_t - Y_{t-n}$.

Data and Variables

We create and analyze an unbalanced panel data set that combines information from the Varieties of Democracy (V-dem) version 9 data set (Coppedge et al., 2019) and the SDR database version 1.1 (Slomczynski et al.,2017). Given our substantive interest in the state of liberal democracy across countries and time, V-dem is optimal for our analysis. V-dem provides theory-informed, multidimensional measures for different conceptualizations of democracy—electoral, liberal, participatory, egalitarian, and deliberative—for 180 countries from 1789 to 2018. These indexes are obtained by aggregating country's democracy level ratings, which were provided by more than

3,000 country experts (Coppedge et al., 2019; for an informative discussion of the V-dem methodological approach and its advantages, see also Claassen, 2019). The indexes' standardized scales enable the examination of cross-national and historical variations in democracy.[7]

Our dependent variable is *liberal democracy*. We measure it using the V-dem liberal democracy index, focusing on the time span 2014-2017. The liberal democracy index captures both the existence of electoral democracy and the extent to which the liberal democracy emphasizes the protection of individuals' and minorities' rights against the state and majority (Lührmann et al., 2019). Cutting back these rights could be viewed as the beginning of backsliding or deconsolidation (Lueders & Lust, 2018). The index ranges from 0 to 1, where high scores indicate that the country has a political system governed by a plurality of actors, rule of law that ensures civil liberties, and checks and balances of the judiciary and legislature that limit the exercise of executive power.

We also create liberal democracy$_{t-5}$, which is a 5-year lagged value of the dependent variable (2009-2012), to provide a baseline for comparing changes in the level of liberal democracy for the period from 2014 to 2017.[8] The baseline refers to the post-2008 crisis when democracy was already tested as a political system. However, even in countries that suffered most from it, this crisis did not influence the basic properties of the party system (Bértoa & Weber, 2019). The 5-year lag of the dependent variable has important implications for this analysis. First, the 5-year lag addresses omitted variable bias by capturing historical processes—which might be explained by other covariates—that contribute to the levels of the dependent variable. In addition, the 5-year lag converts the dependent variable to a change score, so the model estimates the effect of trust in public institutions on changes in liberal democracy between 2009 and 2012 and 2014 and 2017. As a result, the lag of the dependent variable leads to more reliable and robust estimates of the effects of other independent variables in the model.

Using harmonized survey data from the SDR database (Slomczynski et al., 2017), we create aggregate (i.e., country-year) absolute and relative measures of trust in the political institutions of parliament, legal system, and political parties at $t - 5$.[9] These constitute our key independent variables.

The SDR database provides individual-level measures of demographic information, political behavior, and trust in public institutions created via ex-post harmonization of information pooled from 22 well-known international social survey projects that include 1,721 national surveys covering a total of 142 countries between 1966 and 2013 (Slomczynski et al., 2016). We use the measures of trust in parliament, legal system, and political parties to capture intensity of trust on a scale ranging from 0 (*lowest intensity*) to 10 (*highest intensity*; for details on the harmonization methodology of trust indicators, see Chapter 3 in Slomczynski et al., 2016). The extensive geographic and temporal coverage in the SDR database allows us to compare cross-national variation in trust in political institutions.

First, we create an absolute measure of youth institutional trust, *trust of the young*, by aggregating answers of respondents aged 15 to 29 years at the time of the survey.

We follow the SDR analytic framework (for an outline, see Slomczynski & Tomescu-Dubrow, 2018) and account for methodological differences present in the original formulation of the trust questions (e.g. Slomczynski et al., 2016; also, Kołczyńska & Slomczynski, 2018) and for differentiation in survey data quality (for operational definition of survey quality in SDR, see Kołczyńska & Schoene, 2018; Slomczynski & Tomescu-Dubrow, 2018; Oleksiyenko et al., 2018) to calculate the best estimate of mean values of trust in each of the political institutions (see the online Supplement A for specifics; also, Kwak & Slomczynski, 2019).

Next, we construct a relative measure of youth institutional trust, *trust ratio of young to older*, which considers mean institutional trust of the young in comparison to the mean trust of respondents aged 30 years and older. We first estimate the mean value of trust in each political institution for young adults (15-29 years) and older adults (>30 years) separately. We then create country-year specific trust ratios, by dividing the predicted mean trust of the young by that of the older survey participants. Online Supplement B provides the values of both variables for 2009 and 2012. Although there is observable decrease in trust in (at least) one of the institutions in more than half of the total number of countries, the change is usually very small. Generally, the within-country variability is much smaller than that between-countries. The ratio of mean trust of young to older usually oscillates around 1, but in some notable cases is less than 1.

We also create a composite *trust index* for both the absolute and the relative measures of youth institutional trust using a factor score calculated by principal component analysis of mean values and ratios of trust in the three public institutions. The principal component analysis yielded a one-factor solution based on Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalue >1). The reliability analysis also offers Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$ for the three levels of trust of young adults and .78 for the three ratios of trust for young to older adults, suggesting a single underlying dimension.

Table 1 presents the number of country-years used as a unit of analysis in our basic regression models and in the multilevel models for robustness checks. Since the availability of trust measures in the SDR database varies by political institution, institution-specific models have different sample sizes. In addition, cases are unevenly distributed across countries and years. To prevent selection bias of countries, our basic models with lagged dependent variable cover countries with three or four observations of each trust variable between 2009 and 2012. The models with trust in parliament cover the highest number country-years (157) and the model with trust in political parties, the lowest (99). The final sample size for the basic model with a composite institutional trust index is 77 observation units in 25 countries.

Most extant studies focus on Western societies when examining the democratic deconsolidation thesis (Foa & Mounk, 2016, 2017; Norris, 2017), but for our basic models with lagged variables at least 65% of the countries are non-Western European countries, specifically, countries of Latin America. The mixture of countries, from Western Europe (from 4 to 16 countries depending on the model), Eastern Europe (from 7 to 16), and Non-European countries (14)—specifically, Latin America—is an advantage because it allows us to examine the effect of young adults' trust in public

Table 1. Sample Size (Number of Country-Years) in Models With Trust in Political Institutions.[a]

	Model with trust in parliament	Model with trust in legal system	Model with trust in political party	Model with trust index
Basic analysis				
Total	157 (46)	114 (35)	99 (30)	77 (25)
Western Europe	56 (16)	23 (7)	29 (8)	12 (4)
Eastern Europe	59 (16)	49 (14)	28 (8)	23 (7)
Non-European countries	42 (14)	42 (14)	42 (14)	42 (14)
Multilevel analysis				
Total	607 (110)	530 (110)	493 (92)	433 (88)
Western Europe	204 (28)	175 (29)	165 (29)	139 (28)
Eastern Europe	72 (11)	60 (11)	57 (11)	51 (11)
Non-European countries	331 (71)	295 (70)	271 (52)	243 (49)

[a]Number of countries in parentheses.

institutions on various levels of liberal democracy. The list of countries we analyze is available in the online Supplement B.

To examine whether the effect of the ratio of mean institutional trust of young to mean institutional trust of older adults depends on the size of each age group, we create the *population ratio of young to older.* This variable is measured as the number of young population (ages 15-29 years) divided by the number of older population (ages >30 years).

To control for various properties of countries over time, in analyzing the relation between trust in political institutions and changes in liberal democracy we include the following country-year characteristics in our models at $t - 5$: gross domestic product (GDP) *per capita*, measured as a country's GDP divided by the country's population, is designed to capture the affluence of a country in a given year. *Logged population* is the natural logarithm of the country's population size. In addition, we control for regional and temporal differences in liberal democracy by including regional dummy indicators *Western Europe* and *Eastern Europe*, with *Non-European Countries* (Latin America) as reference, and three dummy variables for years: *2010, 2011*, and *2012* (reference = *2009*).[10]

Analytical Strategy

We use a series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models to examine the effects of youth institutional trust (measured in absolute and relative terms) on change in liberal democracy. In our analysis, for trust measures of individual political institutions (parliament, legal system, and political parties, respectively) and for the measures based on the trust index, we use the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{it} = {} & a + b_0 Y_{i(t-5)} + b_1 X_{i(t-5)} + b_2 V_{i(t-5)} + b_3 Z_{i(t-5)} \\ & + b_4 C_{i(t-5)} + b_5 \boldsymbol{P}_{i(t-5)} + b_6 G_{i(t-5)} + u_i + e_{it} \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

where Y refers to the measure of liberal democracy with subscripts denoting countries ($i = 1, \ldots, N$) and time ($t, t - 5$); X represents the mean value of trust in a given political institution among the young; V denotes the ratio of the mean value of trust in a given political institution for the young to that for the older respondents; Z is the ratio of youth population size to that of the older population; C refers to a weighted ratio of trust, an interaction term of V and Z; P is logged population size; G is GDP per capita; u_i refers to the effect of all time-invariant variables that are not included in the model; and e_{it} refers to the country-year residuals.[11]

It is important to note that the estimates from this model might be biased. The OLS regression assumes that u_i is normally distributed with a mean of 0, constant variance, and does not influence all independent variables. In this model, u_i is related to Y_{it}, so there is no reason to exclude the possibility that it is related to Y_{t-5}. Therefore, this model with the lagged dependent variable violates the assumption of the OLS regression exaggerating the impact of the lagged dependent variable at the expense of other variables on the right side of the equation. To solve this problem, we also estimate the difference model with the dependent variable $Y_{it} - Y_{i(t-5)}$, without the lagged dependent variable on the right side of the equation. To provide appropriate constrains for the difference model, we include additional control variables identifying (a) regions that group countries belonging to Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Non-European Countries (Latin America), and (b) year of measurement for the lagged independent variables. The difference model of liberal democracy can be represented by the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{it} - Y_{i(t-5)} = {} & a + b_1 X_{i(t-5)} + b_2 V_{i(t-5)} + b_3 Z_{i(t-5)} + b_4 C_{i(t-5)} + b_5 P_{i(t-5)} \\ & + b_6 \mathrm{G}_{i(t-5)} + b_7 W_i + b_8 E_i + b_{9,10,11} T_{1,2,3i(t-5)} + u_i + e_{it} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where W represents a binary variable indicating whether country i belongs to Western Europe; E represents a binary variable for Eastern Europe; and $T_{1,2,3}$ represent binary variables for a year of measurement of independent variables (2010, 2011, and 2012) for country i in $t - 5$.

We also use multilevel analysis for the difference model to check the robustness of our results from the OLS regression, using data that cover extended years from 2006 to 2018 and 113 countries. Clustering of country-years within countries violates the assumption of independent errors of OLS regression models. Multilevel models solve the problem by estimating separate unobserved historical variance and time-invariant cross-national variance (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). As noted in Table 1, in our data set, the number of countries is larger than the number of years ($T = 13$). In such situation, multilevel models perform better than the alternatives (Hsiao, 2003).

In our multilevel analysis for the difference model, we use the same model specification as in Equation 2 with one exception: we substitute a binary variable for period of measurement at $t - 5$ (0 = 2001-2008, 1 = 2009-2013) for the binary variables for year of measurement for independent variables. By including the interaction of the weighted trust ratio and the binary period variable, we test whether the impact of trust ratio on liberal democracy is limited to the late 2010s or reaches over 2006-2018.

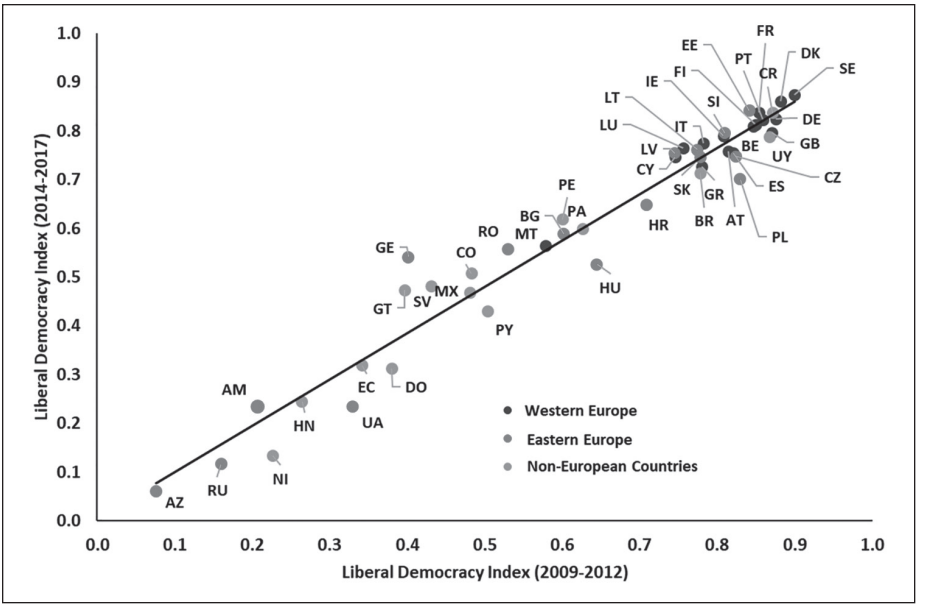

Figure 1. Relationship between locations of countries on the scale of liberal democracy in two periods: 2009-2012 and 2014-2017.

Note. AM = Armenia; AT = Austria; AZ = Azerbaijan; BE = Belgium; BG = Bulgaria; BR = Brazil; CO = Colombia; CR = Costa Rica; CY = Cyprus; CZ = Czech Republic; DE = Germany; DK = Denmark; DO = Dominican Republic; EC = Ecuador; EE = Estonia; ES = Spain; FI = Finland; FR = France; GB = United Kingdom; GE = Georgia; GR = Greece; GT = Guatemala; HN = Honduras; HR = Croatia; HU = Hungary; IE = Ireland; IT = Italy; LT = Lithuania; LU = Luxembourg; LV = Latvia; MT = Malta; MX = Mexico; NI = Nicaragua; PA = Panama; PE = Peru; PL = Poland; PT = Portugal; PY = Paraguay; RO = Romania; RU = Russia; SE = Sweden; SI = Slovenia; SK = Slovakia; SV = El Salvador; UA = Ukraine; UY = Uruguay.

Results

Change in Liberal Democracy From 2009-2012 to 2014-2017

Figure 1 presents changes on the average score of liberal democracy index between 2009-2012 and 2014-2017. Between these two periods, changes in level of liberal democracy are small in most countries but the changes are relatively larger in countries outside Western Europe. Some countries experienced backsliding, but most improved their democracy standing, although by a small margin. Scores for Scandinavian countries—Finland, Denmark, Sweden—are almost the same in both periods. Backsliding in some Eastern European countries—Poland, Hungary, Ukraine—is balanced by improvements of other countries of the region: Georgia, Romania, Latvia.

It is important to note that most countries in Figure 1 are located very close to the straight line indicating no change. We provided this overall picture mainly to note that

our readers should not expect to find large covariation of this measure with any independent variable. The amount of variation in liberal democracy is very limited.

Lagged Dependent Variable Models

Table 2 presents the determinants of liberal democracy index from two sets of OLS regression models—Model 1 and Model 2—with lagged dependent variables.[12] Both models present results of four renditions of equation (1). Model 2 extends Model 1 by controlling for logged population and GDP per capita. The large coefficient for the 5-year lagged variable signifies only small changes in liberal democracy, other variables controlled (in all models).

In the four renditions of Model 1, for individual political institutions and the summary index, the mean value of youth trust has a positive and significant effect on liberal democracy, with exception of the coefficient for legal system. In this exceptional case, the coefficient does not attain the significance level of $p < .05$ for one-tail test but is close to it ($p = .06$). Taking into account all these results, we claim that the data are compatible with Hypothesis 1.

The effects of the relative measures of youth institutional trust, that is, of the ratios of trust of young to that of older persons, are straightforwardly interpretable for $Z = 0$. In Model 1, with exception of the coefficient for political parties (0.243), other coefficients of the ratio variables are very small ($0.018 \leq b \leq 0.120$). Their value increases in the variants of Model 2, that is, after controlling for logged population and GDP per capita, and effects are significant with exception of the effect for legal system. In this particular regression model for trust in legal system, the effect of mean trust of the young is positive and significant, but the effect of the trust ratio is nonsignificant. Noting this exception and the positive and significant coefficient of the relative youth trust measure built on the trust index ($b = 0.023$, last column in Table 2), we claim that the evidence is largely compatible with Hypothesis 2.

For results presented under Model 1, the coefficients of the absolute and relative measures of youth trust are lowest for the legal system (0.014, 0.019) and highest for political parties (0.027, 0.243). Given the ranges that the measures take for trust in the legal system (from 2.8 to 7.2, and from −0.2 to 0.3) and for political parties (from 2.2 to 4.8, and from −0.1 to 0.2), these findings suggest that the combined effects of the absolute and relative measures of youth trust are between 0.035 ($= 0.014 \times 2.8 + 0.019 \times -0.2$) and 0.106 ($=0.014 \times 0.10 + 0.019 \times 0.3$) for legal system and between 0.027 ($= 0.027 \times 0.06 + 0.243 \times -0.03$) and 0.166 ($= 0.027 \times 0.13 + 0.243 \times 0.04$) for political parties. The lower value is smaller than 0.05, which is our threshold for representing an important change (Lührmann et al., 2019).[13] However, the higher value exceeds this threshold.

When youth institutional trust is measured as the combination of their trust in the three political institutions (last two columns of Table 2), the coefficients of both the absolute and the relative measures confirm our expected linear significant effects on liberal democracy. Both prior to (Model 1) and after controlling for logged population and GDP/capita (Model 2), low value of these indexes is associated with backsliding

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models of Trust in Political Institutions on Liberal Democracy, Country-Year-Level Analysis, 2014-2017.[a]

	Dependent variable: Liberal democracy Y_t							
	Trust in parliament		Trust in legal system		Trust in political parties		Trust index	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Liberal democracy, Yt_{-5}	0.936*** (0.026)	0.942*** (0.027)	0.924*** (0.034)	0.941*** (0.036)	0.955 *** (0.035)	0.945*** (0.040)	0.940*** (0.042)	0.973*** (0.047)
Trust of the young, X_{t-5}	0.018** (0.006)	0.019** (0.006)	0.014 (0.009)	0.023* (0.011)	0.027* (0.012)	0.026* (0.012)	0.020* (0.008)	0.027** (0.008)
Trust ratio of young to older, V_{t-5}[b]	0.120 (0.079)	0.177* (0.078)	0.019 (0.095)	0.035 (0.091)	0.243* (0.097)	0.275** (0.097)	0.018* (0.007)	0.023** (0.008)
Population ratio of young to older, Z_{t-5}[b]	−0.037 (0.036)	−0.062 (0.039)	0.015 (0.044)	−0.040 (0.053)	0.012 (0.040)	−0.013 (0.045)	−0.022 (0.046)	−.105† (0.056)
Weighted trust ratio, C_{t-5} $(V_{t-5} \times Z_{t-5})$	1.115* (0.527)	1.200* (0.513)	0.058 (0.564)	0.249 (0.551)	1.059* (0.476)	1.114* (0.473)	0.072† (0.041)	0.075† (0.039)
Logged population, P_{t-5}		0.013*** (0.003)		0.012* (0.005)		0.010* (0.005)		0.005 (0.006)
GDP per capita, G_{t-5}[c]		0.006 (0.004)		0.018 (0.011)		0.005 (0.008)		0.026* (0.012)
Constant	0.061* (0.029)	0.028 (0.031)	0.046 (0.044)	0.034 (0.049)	0.096* (0.041)	0.052 (0.047)	0.008 (0.026)	0.046 (0.032)
Adjusted R^2	.935	.940	.927	.934	.932	.935	.928	.933
N	157	157	114	114	99	99	77	77

[a]Unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). [b]Trust ratio of young to older and population ratio of young to older are grand-mean centered. [c]GDP per capita is multiplied by 10,000 to facilitate interpretation of a coefficient.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). †$p < .05$ (one-tailed tests).

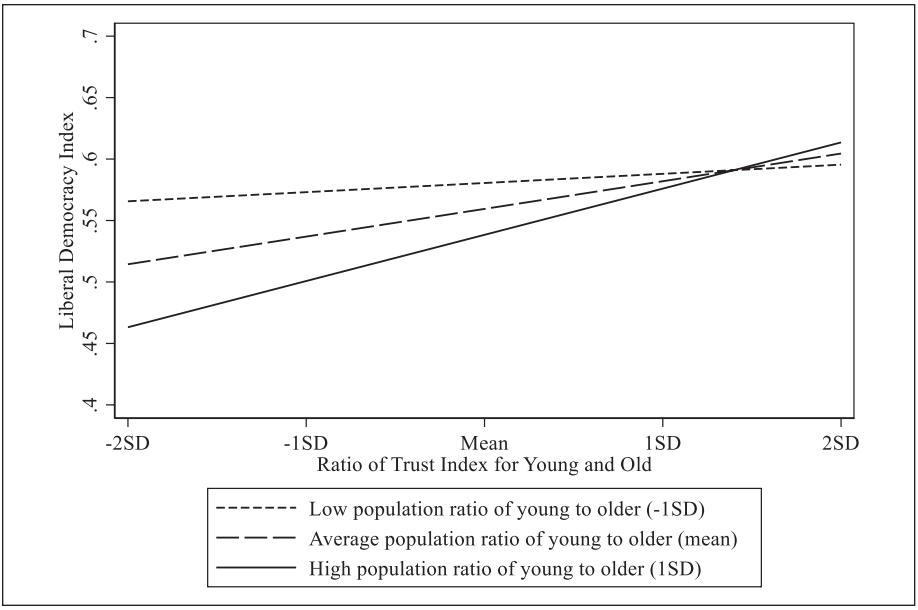

Figure 2. Interaction effect between trust index and population ratios for the young and the older on liberal democracy (Model 2 for trust index in Table 2).

of democracy, while high values of these indexes are associated with consolidating democracy.

Consistently, the effects of the weighted trust ratio, which is the interaction of the trust ratio and the population ratio (see Equation 1), are positively associated with liberal democracy at least at $p < .05$ in all cases, except for trust in legal system. This finding suggests that if the population of young is relatively high in comparison with older people, then the increase in liberal democracy is steeper for the ratio of mean youth trust to mean trust of the older. Figure 2 illustrates this: as the value of the ratio of trust index of young to older increases, a higher population ratio of young to older has more sharply upward sloping effect on liberal democracy.

Despite the strong impact of the lagged dependent variable (which leads to underestimation of results for other covariates), the positive impact of trust ratio and weighted trust ratio support Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3. Controlling for population and GDP per capita does not change the results.

Difference Models

Table 3 presents the difference models for the 5-year change in liberal democracy after including additional control variables for regions and year of measurement of independent covariates. These models confirmed the results from Table 2, because the three main independent variables—trust for the young (X), trust ratio for young to older (V),

Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models of Trust in Political Institutions on Change in Liberal Democracy, Country-Year-Level Analysis, 2014-2017.[a]

	Dependent variable: Change in liberal democracy, $Y_t - Y_{t-5}$			
	Trust in parliament	Trust in legal system	Trust in political parties	Trust index
Trust of the young, X_{t-5}	0.021** (0.007)	0.020† (0.011)	0.042** (0.014)	0.039*** (0.010)
Trust ratio of young to older, V_{t-5}[b]	0.168* (0.081)	0.018 (0.099)	0.219* (0.100)	0.019* (0.008)
Population ratio of young to older, Z_{t-5}[b]	−0.014 (0.056)	−0.002 (0.071)	0.080 (0.061)	−0.016 (0.081)
Weighted trust ratio, C_{t-5} ($V_{t-5} \times Z_{t-5}$)	1.409** (0.533)	0.016 (0.571)	1.366** (0.488)	0.095* (0.041)
Logged population, P_{t-5}	−0.012** (0.004)	−0.011* (0.005)	−0.005 (0.005)	−0.000 (0.006)
GDP per capita, G_{t-5}[c]	−0.009† (0.005)	−0.038** (0.013)	−0.023* (0.011)	−0.031* (0.015)
Region (reference = non-European countries)				
Western Europe	0.012 (0.024)	0.066† (0.040)	0.074* (0.032)	0.035 (0.043)
Eastern Europe	0.012 (0.020)	0.021 (0.025)	0.054* (0.027)	0.050 (0.032)
$Year_{t-5}$ (reference = 2009)				
2010	−0.003 (0.013)	−0.011 (0.016)	−0.007 (0.015)	−0.016 (0.017)
2011	−0.005 (0.015)	−0.010 (0.019)	−0.003 (0.021)	−0.001 (0.028)
2012	−0.026* (0.013)	−0.023 (0.017)	−0.030† (0.015)	−0.040* (0.019)
Constant	−0.067* (0.034)	−0.031 (0.053)	−0.144* (0.058)	0.023 (0.032)
Adjusted R^2	.161	.126	.219	.198
N	157	114	99	77

[a]Unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). [b]Trust ratio of young to older and population ratio of young to older are grand-mean centered. [c]GDP per capita is multiplied by 10,000 to facilitate interpretation of a coefficient.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). †$p < .05$ (one-tailed tests).

and weighted trust ratio (*C*)—are linearly related to the change in the index of liberal democracy, as stipulated by Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. In particular, the lower the values of mean youth trust, of the trust ratio, and of the weighted trust ratio, the lower liberal democracy 5 years down the line; higher values of the same independent variables are associated with increase of liberal democracy in the same time frame.

The notable exception is trust in legal system, for which the assumed relationships do not hold. The simplest explanation is that the operational functioning of legal systems is subject to less change through time than the operational functioning of parliament and political parties. It is likely that for this reason the confidence in legal system is relatively stable and little differentiated along generational lines.

Among the control variables, GDP per capita and year provided interesting and consistent results across models. The negative effect of GDP per capita reflects that economically developed countries experienced declining liberal democracy in 5 years. This result is consistent with the recent research on democratic backsliding in well-established affluent democracies. In addition, the negative effect for the year of 2012 with reference year of 2009 suggests that the extent of democratic backsliding grows over time.

Multilevel Models

Table 4 presents multilevel models with the same key variables as in Table 3. We substitute a period indicator for 2009-2013 (1 = yes, 0 = 2001 through 2008) for the dummy variables corresponding to years 2010, 2011 and 2012 (2009 was the reference), and interact it with the weighted trust ratio. We do so to check whether changes in liberal democracy occurred after the 2008 global crisis. We find that the absolute measure of youth trust in each political institution, and the corresponding measure built on the trust index are positively associated with change in liberal democracy, in line with Hypothesis 1. However, the effects of the relative measures of youth trust are neither in the expected direction nor statistically significant. They do not support Hypothesis 2.

To examine the effect of the weighted trust ratio, we need to take into consideration its interaction with the Period 2009-2013 dummy. We find that the interaction term is positively associated with change in liberal democracy in the models with trust in parliament, political parties, and trust index, but the interaction for weighted trust in legal system is nonsignificant. Results indicate that, as the weighted ratios of trust in parliament, political parties, and trust index increase in 2009-2013, so does the level of liberal democracy in the period of 2014-2018.

The effect of this interaction for the weighed ratio of trust index is shown graphically in Figure 3. Panels A, C, and D show that, when the weighted trust ratio is low, much less change in liberal democracy occurs in the 2009-2013 period than for 2001-2008. However, 2009-2013 has an upward sloping effect, so the gap narrows as the weighted trust ratio increases. This reflects that the weighted trust ratio in parliament, political parties, and trust index in 2009-2013 is positively associated with liberal democracy in 2014-2018. In contrast, Panel B for trust in legal system shows a

Table 4. Multilevel Regression Models of Trust in Political Institutions on Change in Liberal Democracy, 2006-2018.[a]

	Dependent variable: Change in liberal democracy, $Y_t - Y_{t-5}$			
	Trust in parliament	Trust in legal system	Trust in political parties	Trust index
Trust of the young, X_{t-5}	0.010* (0.004)	0.008† (0.005)	0.017** (0.005)	0.013** (0.004)
Trust ratio of young to older V_{t-5}[b]	−0.053 (0.051)	−0.011 (0.051)	−0.007 (0.050)	0.001 (0.003)
Population ratio of young to older, Z_{t-5}[b]	−0.062* (0.030)	−0.061† (0.031)	−0.046 (0.038)	−0.077† (0.041)
Weighted trust ratio, C_{t-5} ($V_{t-5} \times Z_{t-5}$)	−0.406† (0.237)	−0.345 (0.243)	−0.398 (0.276)	−0.024 (0.019)
Logged population, P_{t-5}	−0.005† (0.003)	−0.005 (0.003)	−0.008* (0.003)	−0.008* (0.004)
GDP per capita, G_{t-5}[c]	−0.004 (0.004)	−0.004 (0.004)	−0.005 (0.004)	−0.007 (0.004)
Region (reference = non-European countries)				
Western Europe	−0.018 (0.015)	−0.021 (0.015)	−0.018 (0.016)	−0.024 (0.017)
Eastern Europe	−0.028 (0.017)	−0.034† (0.018)	−0.026 (0.017)	−0.032† (0.019)
Period_{t-5} (2009-2013)	−0.029*** (0.004)	−0.026*** (0.005)	−0.029*** (0.005)	−0.028*** (0.005)
$C_{t-5} \times \text{Period}_{t-5}$ (2009-2013)	0.699† (0.394)	0.233 (0.362)	0.893* (0.395)	0.055† (0.029)
Constant	−0.013 (0.021)	−0.009 (0.024)	−0.022 (0.023)	0.043* (0.017)
Variance components				
Country level	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.002
Country-year level	0.002	0.002	0.003	0.003
Model fit statistics				
Akaike's information criterion	−1775.2	−1521.9	−1401.8	−1224.5
Bayesian information criterion	−1717.9	−1466.3	−1347.1	−1171.6
−2logliklihood	−1801.2	−1547.9	−1427.8	−1250.5
Country, *N*	110	110	92	88
Country-year, *N*	607	530	493	433

[a]Unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). [b]Trust ratio of young to older and population ratio of young to older are grand-mean centered. [c]GDP per capita is multiplied by 10,000 to facilitate interpretation of a coefficient.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). †$p < .05$ (one-tailed tests).

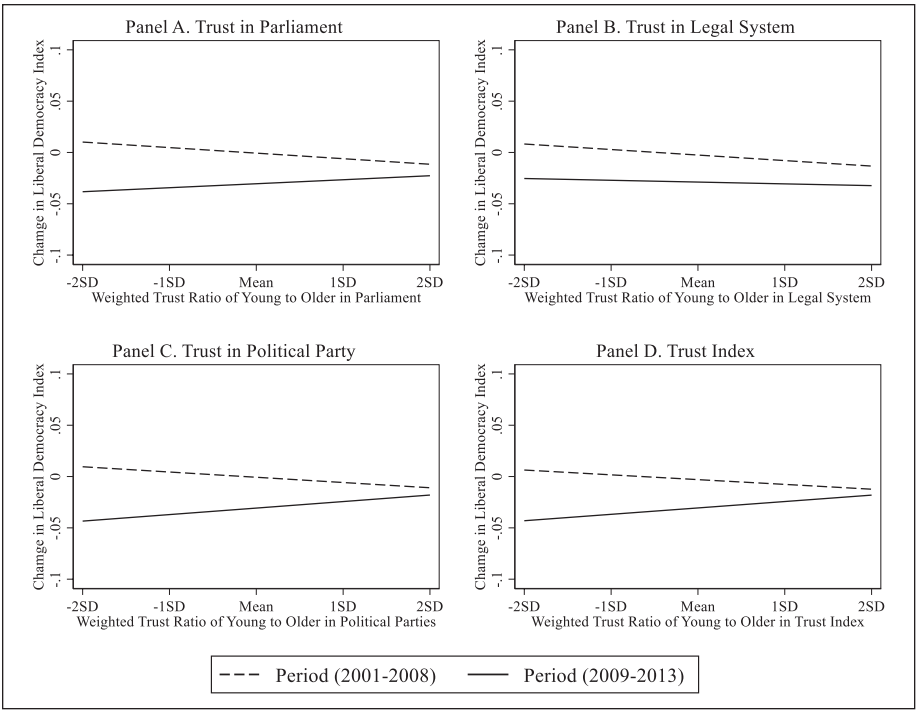

Figure 3. Interaction effects of the weighted ratio of trust in political institutions for the young to the older and period (2009-2013) on change in liberal democracy.

virtually flat slope for the period of 2009-2013, which suggests that weighted ratio of trust in legal system in 2019-2013 does not affect 5-year change in liberal democracy. These findings corroborate the results on Table 3, while suggesting that the contribution of the relative trust of the young to the old to future liberal democracy is limited to the period of the post-2008 crisis.

From Figure 3 we draw three conclusions related to Hypothesis 3. The first is that we see no effect of the weighted trust ratio on liberal democracy index prior to the 2008 global crisis. The second conclusion pertains to youth's trust in legal system: neither prior to, nor after 2008 do we find a linear relationship between weighted trust ratio and liberal democracy index. Third, for the period from 2009 to 2013 we observe an increase in liberal democracy 5 years later, but the change scores are relatively small.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we examined the impact of young people's trust in political institutions—parliament, legal systems, and political parties—on change in liberal democracy. We used an unbalanced panel data set that combines a country-year indicator of

liberal democracy and aggregate measures of absolute and relative trust of the young in political institutions for more than 45 countries from 2009 to 2017. We formulated three hypotheses dealing with three independent variables—an absolute measure of youth institutional trust, a relative measure that considers youth's trust in comparison with older peoples' trust, and a weighted ratio of trust that accounts for the size of the young population in relation to the size of older population segments. We summarize the results as follows.

First, our analyses showed that the absolute measure of youth trust in political institutions has a noticeable effect on liberal democracy; this result is robust, confirmed by the analysis with lagged dependent variable, the difference model, and the multilevel analysis. The lower trust in political institutions among young people, the larger the decrease in level of democracy Y in the future, implying larger negative values of the difference $Y_t - Y_{t-n}$.

Second, we found that the relative measure of youth institutional trust has a substantial effect on changes in liberal democracy. The results from OLS regression analyses showed that the lower trust ratios of young people to older people in political institutions except legal system, the larger the decline in level of democracy in the future.

Third, we found support for the expected role of the weighted trust ratio. With exception of trust in the legal system, the effect of the relative measure of youth institutional trust on liberal democracy index is moderated by the size of the young population relative to the size of the older population. These findings are corroborated by multilevel analysis with a larger number of countries and time points. We interpret the outcome regarding youth's trust in legal system in light of the relative stability and little intergenerational differentiation of public attitudes toward legal systems. In addition, we should point out that the contribution of relative trust of young to older people is significant only in the period of the post-2008 economic crisis.

These findings have theoretical and substantive implications. Theoretically, we developed a new concept—the ratio of trust in political institutions for the young to institutional trust for older persons. In past research, scholars focused only on the level of trust among the young without considering any relation to their counterparts. Our ratio measure of trust captures the relative effect of institutional trust by age segments of a society. Moreover, according to our theoretical schema, the effect of this ratio measure differs depending on the size of the young population relative to the size of the older population. The weighted trust ratio measure, which is an interaction of the trust and population-size ratios, is a complex construct that contributes to research on the relationship between institutional trust among different generations and political change and stability. This article provides arguments for the usefulness of this theoretical approach.

Substantively, our results are consistent with Foa and Mounk's (2016) expectation that values and attitudes of the young generation signal the direction in which the political system may go. Although classic literature on the condition of democracy treated young people's values and attitudes as determinants of democratic regime, very few studies examined the strength of these postulated effects. The results align with previous research on signs of democratic deconsolidation by showing that young people's distrust in political institutions tends to decrease the

level of liberal democracy in the future. This finding emphasizes the role of regime delegitimation in promoting democratic backsliding.

There are several limitations in the current study that point to directions for future research. First, our unbalanced panel data structure only allows us to use the independent variables with a lag of a fixed year. We are unable to test how the effect of institutional trust changes by lags of varying years because the countries in the unbalanced data set do not have observations in every time point. It would be valuable to examine how long the impact of withdrawal of legitimization on democratic backsliding is delayed for. Future research could examine the impact of lags with varying years using restricted sample countries that have observations in every given year at the expense of cross-national variation.

Second, we evaluated change in liberal democracy in a short period—2014-2017 for the main analysis and 2006-2018 for the robustness check. The level of liberal democracy does not change quickly, so it is important to explore a long-term trend of the impact of institutional trust on liberal democracy. In particular, the third wave of democratization that took off in the mid-1970s could be a valuable baseline for the analysis of the long-term trend (Huntington, 1991). The SDR database offers harmonized survey items for institutional trust from 1981, so researchers could investigate how the impact of institutional trust of the young on liberal democracy has changed over a longer time period.

Finally, the framework of political opportunity structures for citizens on the one hand, and political elites on the other, could be a promising theoretical approach to improve our understanding of the relationship between aggregated individual opinions and properties of the political system. Foa and Mounk (also Mounk, 2018) argue that the young increasingly vote for antisystem parties, whether the parties are radical left or radical right. Given widespread decline in electoral participation, the youth's votes may "push" antisystem parties from the electoral into the parliamentary field. Generally, when antiestablishment parties enter parliament, "cabinet doors remain closed to most of them" (Bértoa & Weber, 2019). When the opportunity arises—often via coalition building to secure parliamentary majority—and doors do open to government, such coalitions could seek to secure their hold on power by constraining the civil liberties and the political rights to diminish the strength of political opposition. We invite future researchers to further examine the ways in which young people's attitudes toward political institutions shape the features of political systems.

Authors' Note

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Researchers in the V-dem team define the phenomenon in the same way, under the term "autocratization," which they use interchangeably with democratic backsliding (e.g., Lührmann et al., 2019; Lührmann, Mechkova, Dahlum, et al., 2018; Lührmann, Mechkova, & Lindberg, 2018).
2. For an insightful discussion of conceptualizing democracy as binary, or as a continuum, see Lueders and Lust (2018).
3. "Originally, the term 'democratic consolidation' was meant to describe the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against eventual "reverse waves" (O'Donnell, 1996; Schedler, 1998, p. 91; see also Schedler, 2001).
4. Geographic coverage differs between these studies. Foa and Mounk also analyze data on Romania and Poland, Alexander and Welzel study Japan, South Korea and Argentina in addition to Germany, Spain, Sweden, and the United States; Norris's (2017) article has the broadest country coverage.
5. Foa and Monk find that, next to age, economic resources matter: over time, young, economically well-off respondents (i.e., learning in the three upper-most income deciles) express greater support for ruling by the army and for authoritarian leaders who do not abide by the rules of democratic governance than do their low and middle-income counterparts (Foa & Mounk, 2016). Alexander and Welzel (2017) make the argument for class differences, too. On structural determinants of institutional trust, see Slomczynski and Janicka (2009).
6. The literature presents two competing profiles of youth participation (cf. Garcia-Albacete, 2014). The first is of cynical, apathetic youth who withdraws from any political engagement, voting included, thus raising the risk of backsliding or deconsolidation. Second is that the youth are civically engaged but preferring other forms of political activism than voting or formal politics. If so, democracy is not in trouble, but the means by which it is upheld are hanging.
7. We note Lueders and Lust's (2018) finding that indicators of regime type (e.g., Freedom House, Polity IV, V-dem) are highly correlated, but agreement between indicators of regime change, backsliding especially, is very low.

8. Thus, we compare the values of the liberal democracy index for 2009-2014, 2010-2015, 2011-2016, and 2012-2017. We treat 5-year interval as a minimum for studying substantive changes on the continuum of this index.
9. The SDR database v1.1 and its documentation are freely available through Harvard Dataverse (dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/VWGF5Q).
10. The category of Western Europe contains all countries of Europe that became full democracies before 1989; Eastern Europe is equated with post-Communist countries of Europe, including Russia and Caucasian countries; Non-European countries are limited to Latin America.
11. Coefficients for variables *X, V, Z, C, P*, and *G* are interpretable as coefficients of change in dependent variable, $Y_{it} - b_0 Y_{i(t-5)}$ since $b_0 Y_{i(t-5)}$ could be moved to the left side of equation. However, these coefficients are different from the coefficients of the equation for the difference $Y_{it} - \quad Y_{i(t-5)}$ that we also consider.
12. The bivariate correlation coefficients between the different aggregate measures of institutional trust of the young are provided in the online Supplement C.
13. Changes by 0.05 on the scale from 0 to 1 during 10-year period are considered to be substantially important (Lührmann et al., 2019) because of the internal properties of the index. Moreover, the index stability over time is also related to its strong correlation with other time-stable indexes of democracy (Lührmann, Mechkova, & Lindberg, 2018).

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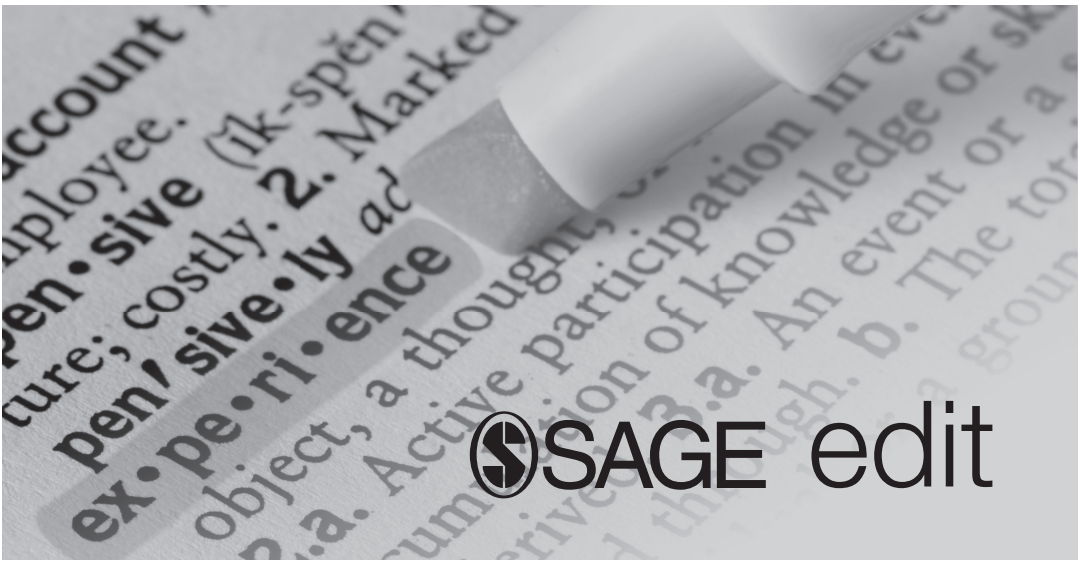

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