1

Success Contagion and Presidential Campaigns in Latin America

In the campaign for Chile's 2005 presidential election, one of the first policy issues center-left candidate Michelle Bachelet mentioned in her television advertising was the problem of youth unemployment. "What is this craziness of want ads asking for youth with experience?" she asked indignantly. "Dear employers: the only way your youth can get experience is by working." Bachelet did not say much about her proposed solution to the problem, beyond a vague reference to subsidies that might help young people enter the labor market. Rather, her focus was on empathizing with the youth and on underscoring their value to society. "Let's take advantage of the contribution of new perspectives," she continued. "They are a source of energy and creativity that we cannot waste."

In Brazil's 2002 presidential election, center-left candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva took a very different approach to the same policy issue. Like Bachelet, Lula expressed empathy with unemployed youth and their families: "I'm very familiar with this problem. I have 5 children, and I know how much Marisa and I suffered during this phase of our lives." Yet Lula's appeal went much further. After initially framing the problem in human terms, his ad outlined the proposed First Job Program: any business creating a new job for a sixteen- to twenty-one year old with no prior work experience would receive a subsidy equal to the minimum wage, to be paid during the first twelve months of employment. The segment spent nearly a minute explaining how the policy would work, offering examples to help viewers understand the fine details.

Why did Lula's campaign focus on the details of his proposed solution to the problem of youth unemployment, while Bachelet's simply sought to convey how much she cared about the issue? Both candidates *had* proposals for this particular policy area; ironically, Bachelet's government program spelled out her ideas in greater detail than did Lula's (da Silva 2002: 23–24; Bachelet 2005: 21–22). Yet Lula still chose to portray himself as a capable

1

technocrat – in this policy area, as well as many others – whereas Bachelet sought to come across as a "feel-your-pain" empathizer. The difference seems to contradict what we would expect based on common stereotypes about the two countries: Chile is often thought of as the poster child of good governance and economic stability, whereas Brazil has long struggled with clientelism and corruption. It also seems odd when we consider that the audience for each message was much more highly educated in Chile (where the median voter had finished secondary school) than in Brazil (where she had only an incomplete primary education).[1]

This book seeks to explain cross-national differences in the campaign strategies of presidential candidates in new democracies, such as the contrast between Lula and Bachelet's approaches to youth unemployment in 2002 and 2005. I argue that candidates adopt the first victorious electoral strategy that was subsequently legitimated by a successful term in government. In Chile, this was the strategy of the "No" campaign in the 1988 plebiscite, which privileged direct ties to voters, avoided divisive appeals, and stressed empathy with popular concerns rather than specific proposals to solve them. In Brazil, it was the approach of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's campaign in 1994, which also pursued direct ties and eschewed divisive appeals but was heavy on policy details. In subsequent elections, the strategies of these initial campaigns spread more broadly across the ideological spectrum, either because candidates explicitly imitated their predecessors or because they heeded the advice of campaign professionals who recommended such an approach. As a result, left- and right-wing candidates have adopted similar strategies in recent elections in both Chile and Brazil. Between the two countries, however, the dominant approach to electioneering differed.

While major presidential candidates in Brazil and Chile have converged on nationally specific campaign strategies over time, a third country, Peru, illustrates a different pattern. Peruvian candidates have retained a heterogeneous mix of strategies, and those within the same party or political sector have sometimes altered their approaches dramatically over time, even within the course of a single campaign. I argue that in cases like Peru, where victorious campaign strategies are continually delegitimated by the poor governing record of elected presidents, candidates will not converge upon a common approach because they are wary of adopting strategies that voters associate with discredited politicians. Rather, each candidate is likely to choose his or her strategies through an inward-oriented process of reacting to prior errors.

The theory developed in this book, success contagion, argues that candidates' electoral strategies often converge within countries, but that cross-nationally,

[1] Data are drawn from Brazil's Superior Electoral Court (profile of the electorate in September 2002, at www.tse.jus.br/eleicoes/estatisticas/estatistica-do-eleitorado-por-sexo-e-grau-de-instrucao, visited March 3, 2015) and from the Centro de Estudios Público's October–November 2005 survey of Chileans.

significant differences tend to persist. This claim runs counter to most existing arguments about the evolution of campaign strategies, which tend to emphasize cross-national convergence. Theories of campaign modernization, Americanization, professionalization, or the rise of political marketing all draw primarily on the experiences of the United States and Western Europe, but scholars of Latin America have tended to adopt these existing perspectives with little modification. I argue that the development of campaign strategies in third-wave democracies should follow a different path, one that allows for much greater cross-national diversity.

Candidates' electoral strategies carry great import for the quality of democracy in cases of recent transition from authoritarian rule. Campaigns are crucial moments in which citizens are asked to take part in democracy, by casting a vote and often by participating more actively. The nature of this participatory experience – heavily influenced by the strategies of competing candidates – can have implications for popular satisfaction with democracy itself, as well as the degree to which people support authoritarian alternatives. Campaigns are also a chance for citizens to ponder the important decision of who will best represent their interests once elected to office. In this regard, candidates' electioneering styles influence whether clear proposals are placed on the table for voters to consider before choosing their representatives. Finally, campaign strategies matter for the quality of democracy because of their implications for a particular politician's approach to governing once in office. The intense several months prior to an election often inaugurate a political style that is maintained throughout the ensuing presidential term.

Democracy promoters around the world explicitly recognize these ways in which electoral strategies matter for important substantive outcomes, and training politicians in campaign strategies and techniques has been a key element of aid to new democracies in Latin America and elsewhere (Carothers 1999, 2006). Scholars have been slower to appreciate the real-world importance of campaign strategies. Electoral campaigns have received little attention in the academic literature on the quality of democracy, apart from a few mentions of the rules by which they are conducted or the origin of the funds that finance them (Lijphart 1999; Altman and Pérez-Liñán 2002; O'Donnell 2004; Diamond and Morlino 2005). This book aims to contribute to filling this gap.

DIMENSIONS OF CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

When Bachelet and Lula appealed to their respective electorates about the issue of youth unemployment, not everything about their approaches differed. Neither candidate dwelled on something that is a basic fact of life in highly unequal societies like Brazil's and Chile's: lower- and even middle-class youth are far more likely to struggle on the job market than those whose class background gives them access to quality education and whose social connections give them a

foot in the door. In general, Bachelet and Lula both chose not to campaign in the divisive manner that has become common in some other Latin American countries, where politicians routinely seek votes by mobilizing resentment between haves and have-nots. Moreover, both candidates made a personal appeal on the issue of youth unemployment, rather than emphasizing their parties' plans to tackle this issue in Congress or conveying the endorsement of relevant interest groups such as student confederations. And both relied heavily on television – the candidate-centered medium *par excellence* – to communicate their message.

In this book, I argue that the crucial similarities and differences among presidential campaign strategies in Latin America since the 1980s, including those of Bachelet and Lula, can be characterized in terms of three separate dimensions of campaign strategy: cleavage, linkage, and policy focus. In this section, I introduce these concepts and discuss how my definitions relate to those offered by other scholars. I also examine how cleavage, linkage, and policy focus matter for a country's quality of democracy via their implications for several of its component parts: participation, representation, and patterns of future governance (O'Donnell 2004; Diamond and Morlino 2005). I then go on to explain how different types of campaign strategy can be characterized in terms of these three dimensions.

Cleavage

I define cleavages as the fundamental lines of division in society that form the bases of political identity and have historically structured competition among parties and candidates. Candidates may choose to emphasize or "prime" particular cleavages during campaigns to gain strategic advantage over opponents or appeal to a particular segment of the electorate (Johnston et al. 1992). Alternatively, candidates may avoid emphasis on any cleavage, focusing instead on national unity and reaching out to the electorate as a whole. Unlike some scholars, I do not limit the category of cleavage to societal divides that are "active" in the sense of structuring voting behavior or political mobilization. Rather, I am concerned with politicians' *attempts* to activate or reinforce cleavages by priming them during electoral campaigns.

The most restrictive definitions of cleavage, all arising out of the study of Europe, specify that they must be based on social differentiation, provide distinct identity to those on alternate sides of the cleavage, and have institutional expression via a party, union, church, or other organization (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 1992; Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995; Whitefield 2002). Less stringent definitions drop one or more of these components, applying the term to sociological distinctions that make little difference for political identity or organization (Di Palma 1972; Baloyra and Martz 1979) or to groups defined by their support of a particular set of issues (Inglehart 1984).

I situate myself between the most restrictive and the least stringent defini-tions, applying the term "cleavage" to societal divides that serve as a distinct source of group identity and generally have a sociological basis but do not nec-essarily have institutional expression. Common cleavages include traditional social divides such as class, language, ethnicity, and religion, as well as the division between "the people" and "the political class" that is the subject of neopopulist appeals (Roberts 1995; Weyland 1996). "The people" may be an amorphous rhetorical category, but neopopulists effectively seek to unite spe-cific sociological groups – primarily the urban informal sector and rural poor – against a ruling oligarchy that includes not only those in power but also the interests they serve and the system that perpetuates their rule (Collier 2001). The "political class" that neopopulists demonize is much broader and more per-manent than current officeholders, and neopopulist discourse is clearly distinct from mere anti-incumbent language. Populism may seek to unify, but it also divides; without a clear group that can be cast as the enemy of "the people," populist appeals have little resonance (Hawkins 2003).

I also consider that cleavages can be formed around long-standing parti-san divides not grounded in sociological distinctions as long as these generate a cultural sense of belonging or exclusion that leaves little room for societal indifference. As argued by Duverger (1959: 390), particularly sectarian par-ties tend to "introduce into public opinion irreducible cleavages which are not to be found in real life." Such parties socialize multiple generations of mili-tants into unique partisan subcultures through membership in youth leagues, women's clubs, and other ancillary organizations, creating a political identity that may cut across class or other sociological categories (Ostiguy 1997). They also often convey a "for us or against us" discourse that profoundly alienates those on the outside. For these reasons, partisan cleavages are deeper and more durable than position with respect to particular issues or loyalty to a certain individual.

Cleavage priming during presidential campaigns can matter long after the election has been decided because of its implications for future governability and the terms of political debate. Politics is inherently about both conflict and compromise, but too much of either during a campaign can create problems in the future. A politician who wins an election with divisive rhetoric may encounter difficulties when it comes time to establish a majority governing coalition and pass legislation. On the other hand, candidates who inflame the public with cleavage-priming appeals may see fervent supporters become vehe-ment opponents if they proceed to govern in a more conciliatory fashion and quash base-level expectations of radical change. Unity-oriented appeals may be a safer electoral strategy than cleavage priming, but ignoring the fundamen-tally divergent interests of societal groups may mean that important substan-tive issues remain absent from political debate. Addressing social and economic inequality through redistributive policies is difficult when political discourse denies the validity or even existence of basic divides among social classes.

Linkage

A second dimension of campaign strategy – linkage – can be defined as the chan-
nels between citizens and political elites that allow for mobilization and vote
seeking during campaigns. The key feature of linkages that concerns me is their
degree of organizational mediation (Eulau and Prewitt 1973: 365–366; Pogun-
tke 2002). Intermediated linkages, which include unions, churches, and social
movements, connect politicians and citizens via an organization that plays a
key role in mobilizing its members and aggregating individual preferences into
a set of group demands. Direct linkages, which include television advertising
and candidates' personal interaction with voters during visits to public places,
connect politicians to citizens as individuals with individual interests and con-
cerns. Several forms of linkage, such as networks of campaign volunteers or
candidate-centered support groups like Women with Bachelet in Chile's 2005
election, occupy a middle position with respect to organizational mediation;
they constitute intermediary groups but have no *raison d'être* apart from the
candidate's campaign.

Parties themselves also constitute a form of linkage that candidates may uti-
lize to a greater or lesser extent during a campaign. All candidates formally
belong to parties, but these parties vary greatly in their age, permanence, mem-
bership, national presence, and degree of organization. Some are potentially
useful tools for reaching the electorate during the campaign, while others barely
have any presence beyond a national office and a handful of leaders. Even
those candidates who do belong to well-organized parties with militants and a
national structure may choose to circumvent their party during a campaign in
favor of direct linkages, either to gain a non-partisan or anti-party image or to
handle the logistics of campaigning in a more independent fashion.

The definition of linkage I employ is most similar to that developed in clas-
sic as well as contemporary research on American politics (Key 1961; Luttbeg
1968; Eulau and Prewitt 1973; Oppenheimer 1996; Hill and Hurley 1999;
Maggiotto and Wekkin 2000; Hurley and Hill 2003). However, it differs in
important ways from the conceptualization of linkage in many recent works
of comparative and Latin American politics. Following Lawson (1980, 1988),
a number of scholars have defined linkages not as the form of interconnection
between political elites and society but rather as the nature of the political bar-
gain or exchange relationship between the two – what citizens get in return
for their support of a particular politician or party, such as clientelistic pay-
offs or programmatic policy commitments (Posner 1999, 2004; Kitschelt 2000;
Hawkins 2003, 2010; Mainwaring et al. 2006; Kitschelt et al. 2010; Morgan
2011; Luna 2014; Roberts 2014).

Conceptually separating the form of interconnection and the type of bargain
between citizens and elites allows for examining the effect of the former on the
latter, which has important implications for the quality of democracy. Link-
ages affect the degree to which citizens have bottom-up input into the political

agenda, versus being asked to decide among two or three options presented to them in a top-down, plebiscitarian fashion. Intermediated linkages through labor unions, churches, or social movements allow for collective action and pressure politics to ensure politicians' compliance with their part of the bargain. Programmatic modes of political exchange are thus more feasible when intermediated linkages prevail. In contrast, when politicians make exclusively direct appeals to voters, campaigns do not empower citizens in the same fashion, and clientelism becomes more likely.

Patterns of campaign linkage are also important because of their potential influence on the future governing style of politicians elected to office. Direct linkage strategies often involve distancing oneself from established intermediaries, including political party structures. They can thus leave a president bereft of allies once in office and dependent upon fickle public opinion for support. On the other hand, a heavy campaign debt to organized intermediary groups can limit a president's strategic maneuverability, potentially contributing to governing stalemate.

Policy Focus

A third dimension of campaign strategy is the degree to which a candidate's appeals focus on policy. A campaign message can be seen as policy focused to the extent that it provides insight into what the candidate intends to do in office. When not focusing on policy, candidates may appeal to voters on the basis of their image, personality, partisan affiliation, or numerous other criteria. Emphasizing one's own proposals scores highest in terms of policy focus, but other types of appeals, such as listing prior achievements or criticizing an opponent's platform, can also give insight into what type of policies a candidate would implement if elected. Within the range of policy-relevant appeals, I consider those that are future-oriented to constitute greater policy focus than those that look to the past, and those making acclaims about the candidate to be more policy-focused than those criticizing an opponent. The least policy-focused way of discussing substantive issues involves diagnosis – identifying problems or stating the importance of an issue without mentioning plans, describing prior achievements, or placing blame for others' failures.

It is important to distinguish policy focus from position on a left–right ideological continuum. By some measures, a candidate whose campaign emphasized a series of detailed yet centrist policy proposals might be thought of as less "programmatic" than one who was clearly leftist, but who denounced class inequalities without proposing solutions. Yet in the present measurement scheme, the leftist candidate would receive a high score only on the cleavage-priming dimension; the centrist candidate would be considered to have greater policy focus.

The degree to which candidates emphasize policy in their electoral appeals matters greatly for their accountability in office, an important component of
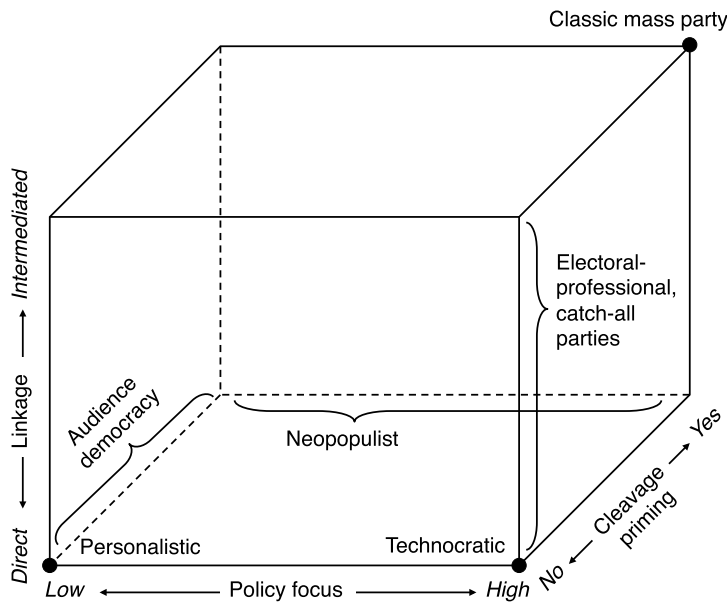
FIGURE 1.1. Dimensions of Campaigning: Linkage, Cleavage, and Policy Focus.

democratic representation. Politicians routinely depart from their campaign promises, sometimes for justifiable reasons (Stokes 2001). However, the costs to deviating from voters' expectations are lower if a candidate makes only vague statements about future policy and can argue that he or she was elected with a mandate of "change" rather than a specific and detailed platform. Campaigns that adopt a low policy focus, therefore, heighten the risk of unpleasant surprises under an ensuing government. Moreover, policy-vague campaigns facilitate the problem of delegative democracy. As described by O'Donnell (1994: 59), "delegative democracies rest on the premise that whoever wins election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office." Maintaining this style of governance is much easier when citizens, media, and public opinion leaders have no basis for taking a president to task over a clear mandate violation.

Characterizing Campaign Strategies

By arraying cleavage, linkage, and policy focus along a continuum and treating each as separate dimensions of electoral campaigning, one can characterize a variety of distinct political strategies. The reference point for this discussion is Figure 1.1, a cube in which the height corresponds to direct versus intermediated linkage, the width represents the degree of policy focus in a

candidate's appeals, and the depth describes the presence or absence of cleavage priming.[2]

Several types of parties identified in the study of European politics occupy the right-hand face of the cube in Figure 1.1. The upper-right rear corner represents the type of electoral campaign conducted by the classic mass party, which embodied one side of a social cleavage and devoted substantial effort – both inside and outside of campaigns – to priming that cleavage through the political education of its members (Duverger 1959: 63, 378). Electoral campaigns run by classic mass parties also had high policy content and drew heavily upon party militants to mobilize voters (Duverger 1959: 109–110, 378; Epstein 1967: 111–122, 261–262). In contrast, the campaigns of catch-all or electoral-professional parties, located at the right front edge, de-emphasize cleavages and seek to appeal to a large cross-section of voters by proposing policies that resonate broadly (Kirchheimer 1966; Panebianco 1988). Such parties connect with voters in a variety of ways, including interest groups and television, though the party itself, with a smaller membership, is not so crucial a form of linkage during campaigns.

While not identified in the literature as a separate form of party organization, it is useful to assign the label *technocratic* to the campaign strategy that combines high policy focus, direct linkages, and an avoidance of cleavage priming. The concept of technocracy is generally used to describe a governing elite whose qualifications include their technical skills and specialized academic training, as well as a policy-making style emphasizing efficient, rationalist decisions based on a single paradigm (Centeno 1993, 1994). Technocrats are obsessed with policy making and reject the idea that zero-sum social conflict is inherent in politics, so a technocratic campaign is policy-focused and avoids cleavage priming. Technocracy also implies a belief that the maximum social benefit can be achieved when the relationship between government and citizens does not pass through intermediary organizations that represent particular interests. Candidates adopting a technocratic approach may not actually have traditional technocratic backgrounds, but their appeals stress their policy-making qualifications, prior successes, and plans for the future, and they offer broad-based solutions for society in general rather than specific social groups.

Neopopulism, a particularly prominent electoral strategy in several Latin American countries, can be located at the lower rear edge of the cube. Neopopulism involves priming cleavages (typically the cleavage between the people at the political class) and also circumventing existing forms of intermediated linkage to appeal directly to voters (Roberts 1995; Weyland 2001; Boas 2005).

---

[2]   The geometric metaphor is somewhat inexact, in that these separate dimensions of campaigning are not necessarily orthogonal. The use of intermediated linkages, for instance, is likely to imply a cleavage-priming campaign. As a result, the cube contains distinct clusters of campaign strategies as well as "empty space" with fewer empirical referents.

A particular level of policy focus is not inherent in the definition of neopopulism, though most instances of neopopulists coming to power in Latin America involved campaigns that were vague with respect to policy.

Neopopulism has received much attention in recent studies of Latin American politics, but I argue that the lower-left front corner of the cube – combining low policy focus, direct linkages, and minimal cleavage priming – is equally important. Candidates adopting this strategy, which I describe as *personalistic*, tend to portray themselves as likable individuals rather than results-oriented executives (a common technocratic appeal) or charismatic leaders engaged in a struggle against established interests (as with neopopulists). Often, their campaigns are heavy on empathy appeals, arguing that they understand the problems of various social groups and are prepared to implement largely unspecified policies once in office. If a neopopulist promises that "I will fight for you," and a technocrat says "I will solve your problems," a personalistic politician claims to "feel your pain." Personalistic strategies fall within the range of "audience democracy" as described by Manin (1997) – a phenomenon that is defined by low policy focus and the use of direct linkages.

The term "personalistic" is often used in a more general sense – for example, to describe party systems that center around individual politicians or parties that are invented for a particular candidate's campaign. In this book I use alternative terms, such as "personality-centered party system" or "personal electoral vehicle," to refer to concepts such as these, reserving "personalistic" for the campaign strategy outlined above.

THEORIES OF CONVERGENCE, EVIDENCE OF DIVERSITY

Existing arguments about the evolution of campaign strategies tend to posit that countries either move in parallel along one or more dimensions of campaigning or converge upon common scores on all three dimensions. Contrary to such predictions, the evolution of campaign strategies has followed very different trajectories in Chile, Brazil, and Peru since their transitions from authoritarian rule. In Chile and Brazil, candidates of Left and Right have converged on distinct national models that differ from one another with respect to policy focus. And in Peru, strategic heterogeneity has persisted over several decades; candidates' strategies were no more similar in 2006 than in 1980.

Classic theories of change in parties' electoral strategies predict either cross-national convergence on particular values of linkage, cleavage, and policy focus or a process of parallel evolution along one or more of these dimensions. Duverger (1959: 25) argued that conservative and middle-class parties were imitating the electorally successful structure and techniques of mass parties, in particular the use of party branches as a form of intermediated linkage. Epstein (1967: 257–260) countered this "contagion from the left" thesis with a claim of "contagion from the right," arguing that parties in Western democracies were adopting the successful media-centric (i.e., direct linkage) campaign