

VARIETIES OF ELECTIONEERING

Success Contagion and Presidential Campaigns in Latin America

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THE types of appeals candidates present to voters and the means by which they mobilize support carry great import for the quality of new democracies around the world. Electoral strategies matter for whether citizens exercise real influence over the political agenda or whether they respond in a plebiscitarian fashion to options presented by politicians. Campaign styles affect whether people participate enthusiastically in democratic politics or whether apathy and abstention remain high. Approaches to campaigning help determine whether elected officials can be held accountable for their promises or whether instead they claim a right to govern at will based on a vague mandate for “change.”

Despite the substantive importance of campaign strategies in new democracies, political scientists have not offered a satisfactory explanation for how and why these strategies evolve over time. Existing arguments often draw upon studies of the United States and Western Europe, which have decades or even centuries of democratic experience. Such studies typically posit a process of cross-national convergence, variously described as modernization, professionalization, Americanization, or the rise of political marketing.¹ Scholars of Latin America who have addressed this topic have generally adopted these existing theoretical perspectives, rather than positing that campaign strategies in the region’s new democracies should follow a different path.²

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¹ Farrell 1996; Mancini and Swanson 1996; Blumler and Kavaugh 1999; Mancini 1999; Scammell 1999; Norris 2000.

² Angell, Kinzo, and Urbaneja 1992; Mayobre 1996; Waisbord 1996; Silva 2001; Tironi 2002; Rottinghaus and Alberro 2005.

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I argue that the evolution of presidential election campaign strategies in three new democracies—Chile, Brazil, and Peru—contradicts the claims of cross-national convergence in the existing literature. In the first two countries major candidates across the political spectrum have converged upon nationally unique styles of electioneering. In Chile both left- and right-wing candidates privilege direct ties to voters, avoid divisive appeals, and stress their empathy with popular concerns rather than specific proposals to solve them. Brazilian candidates also pursue direct ties and eschew divisive appeals, but they place much more emphasis on policy than do their Chilean counterparts. Meanwhile, Peru differs from both Chile and Brazil because candidates across the ideological spectrum have failed to adopt a common model of campaign strategy. Some Peruvian candidates emphasize policy, while others avoid doing so; some seek to exacerbate societal divisions, while others make appeals to unity; and some pursue exclusively direct ties to voters, while others also rely on organized intermediaries.

In this article I draw upon the experiences of Chile, Brazil, and Peru to build a theory of *success contagion* that can explain the evolution of campaign strategies in third-wave presidential democracies. I argue that the first presidential candidate to combine a victorious electoral strategy with a successful term in office establishes a model that other major candidates across the ideological spectrum will adopt in the future. As illustrated by Chile and Brazil, this process of within-country convergence can be sustained in two distinct ways: a direct mechanism whereby politicians imitate each others' strategies and an indirect mechanism whereby independent campaign professionals play a crucial intermediary role. By contrast, when victorious campaign strategies are continually delegitimated by the disastrous 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, they are likely to choose their approaches through an inward-oriented process of reacting to prior errors—a pattern exemplified by Peru. Initial testing of the theory, reported in the conclusion, suggests that it is generalizable to other new presidential democracies in Latin America and Africa that have at least moderate organizational continuity across elections.

This article develops its argument by drawing upon two original sources of data: quantitative content analysis of television advertising and interviews with key campaign actors. For the content analysis I coded advertisements for nearly all major presidential candidates in Chile, Brazil, and Peru since their transitions to democracy—a total

of over fifty hours of video. Details on the nature of this content and the procedure for analysis are contained in the appendix. In addition, I conducted more than 170 semistructured interviews with key participants in these various campaigns, including party leaders, campaign managers, and political consultants.

In the sections that follow I lay out the theory of success contagion and then illustrate its key mechanisms by examining specific electoral campaigns in Chile, Brazil, and Peru. Space considerations do not allow for a discussion of every campaign that was included in the content analysis and interview components of the research project. Rather, I focus on those in which key events occurred, such as the first clear evidence of contagion across the ideological spectrum.

DIMENSIONS OF CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

The distinct patterns of electioneering that have developed in Chile, Brazil, and Peru can be characterized in terms of three dimensions of campaign strategy—cleavage priming, linkage, and policy focus—which jointly constitute the dependent variable of this study. I define cleavages as the fundamental lines of division in society that generate distinct group identities and can potentially structure competition among parties and candidates. 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.³ “The people” may be an amorphous rhetorical category, but neopopulists effectively seek to unite specific sociological groups—primarily the urban informal sector and the 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. I also consider that cleavages can be formed around long-standing partisan divides not grounded in sociological distinctions—such as the APRA/anti-APRA divide in Peru⁴—as long as these generate a cultural sense of belonging or exclusion that leaves little room for societal indifference.

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 these cleavages by priming them during electoral

³ Weyland 1996.

⁴ Graham 1992, 13–14, 26–27, 36.

campaigns. To measure cleavage priming, I draw on both content analysis of television advertising and interviews with campaign strategists to assess whether a candidate explicitly emphasizes one or more of the above-mentioned societal divides.

A second dimension of campaign strategy—linkage—can be defined as the channels 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. Direct linkages connect politicians to citizens as individuals; examples include television advertising and candidates' personal interaction with voters during visits to public markets. Intermediated linkages connect politicians to voters via an organization that plays a key role in mobilizing its members and aggregating individual preferences into group demands. Examples of intermediated linkage include unions, churches, social movements, and political party structures themselves.

To operationalize the linkage dimension of campaign strategy, I rely on interviews with campaign strategists, as well as on coverage of the campaign in the print media. When these sources characterize a candidate as seeking to circumvent existing party structures and connect with voters on a personal level, it is evidence that direct linkages are being employed. By contrast, the following are all indicators of an intermediated linkage strategy: drawing heavily on ties to labor unions, working with party operatives, placing less emphasis on the mass media, and subordinating the image of the individual candidate.

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. The most basic measure of this dimension is the share of a candidate's total television advertising time devoted to policy versus time devoted to other categories such as personal image or partisan affiliation. Within the range of policy-relevant appeals, I also consider distinctions such as specific versus general, acclaims versus criticism, and future-oriented versus retrospective statements. The first category in each of these dichotomies is considered more policy focused than the second. 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 a programmatic stance or a position on a left-right ideological continuum. A candidate whose campaign centered on 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.

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. 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 this section I begin by examining existing arguments in the literature and then document the distinct paths these three countries have taken over time. 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 argued that middle-class parties were imitating the electorally successful techniques of mass parties, particularly the use of party branches as a form of intermediated linkage.⁵ Epstein countered this “contagion from the left” thesis with a claim of “contagion from the right,” maintaining that parties in Western democracies were adopting the successful mediacentric campaign techniques initially implemented by conservative parties.⁶ Arguments about the rise of catchall and electoral-professional parties similarly predict a broad transformation toward less emphasis on cleavage and more use of direct linkages.⁷

More recent theories of change in the nature of electoral campaigns also advance claims of convergence or parallel evolution across countries. Scholars embracing the notion of campaign modernization have described a series of stages, such as premodern, modern, and postmod-

⁵ Duverger 1959, 25.

⁶ Epstein 1967, 257–60.

⁷ Kirchheimer 1966; Panebianco 1988.

ern, through which all Western democracies are thought to pass.⁸ This process involves declining emphasis on cleavage and a shift from intermediated to direct linkages. Arguments about the professionalization of electioneering draw upon Panebianco's notion of the electoral-professional party and similarly emphasize a broad, cross-national transformation.⁹ Likewise, recent work on the rise of political marketing argues that opinion polls and focus groups allow candidates to map the preferences of the electorate and craft a broadly resonant political appeal—generally, deemphasizing cleavages.¹⁰

The evolution of presidential campaign strategies in Chile, Brazil, and Peru tells a different story from the predictions of the existing literature. Figure 1 illustrates how campaigns in the first two countries have evolved since the 1980s in terms of policy focus. In the 2005–6 elections Brazilian presidential candidates on both sides of the political spectrum devoted a similar proportion of their television advertising to policy content, as did Chilean candidates. In each case, left and right differed by no more than a few percentage points. However, there was a 38 percentage point spread between the average policy focus of Chilean candidates in 2005 and of Brazilian candidates in 2006. Rather than converging cross-nationally, presidential candidates from Chile and Brazil devoted a similar proportion of their advertising to policy content in the late 1980s and have diverged in subsequent years.

Strategic contagion has also come from opposite sides of the ideological spectrum in Chile and Brazil. Table 1 scores five presidential campaigns in each country with respect to all three dimensions of campaign strategy. In Chile the left was the first to avoid cleavage priming, emphasize direct linkages, and campaign with a limited policy focus. It has consistently adhered to this approach over time, except in the first round of the 1999 election. The right, however, fully embraced this strategy only in 1999 and 2005. In Brazil, by contrast, strategic contagion has gone from right to left. In 1994 the right was the first to utilize direct linkages, avoid cleavage priming, and focus heavily on policy. Right-wing candidates continued with this strategy in subsequent elections, while the campaigns of Workers' Party (PT) leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva steadily gravitated toward it.

In contrast to Chilean and Brazilian candidates' convergence on unique national models of campaign strategy, presidential candidates in Peru have continued to employ very different approaches from one

⁸ Blumler and Kavenaugh 1999; Norris 2000.

⁹ Farrell 1996; Mancini 1999.

¹⁰ Scammell 1999.

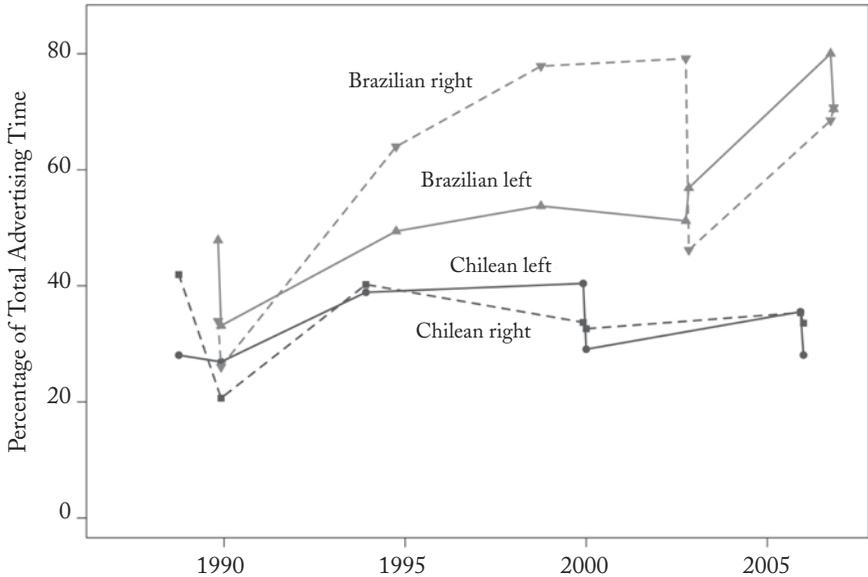


FIGURE 1
 PERCENTAGE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING DEVOTED TO POLICY:
 OVER-TIME VARIATION IN CHILE AND BRAZIL^a

^aSeparate points represent the first and second round of a single election. Lines connecting points are to facilitate interpretability and are not meant to suggest intermediate values. In Chile's December 2005 election, data for two right-wing candidates are combined.

another. Figure 2 shows the policy focus of major candidates in Peru's 1985, 1990, 2001, and 2006 elections.¹¹ Candidates from different political sectors have not converged over time on either high or low policy focus. The range of this variable, from 0 to 70 percent, is much larger than in Chile or Brazil. None of these parties or political sectors illustrates anything resembling a stable trend over time. On the contrary, candidates have tended to implement major changes in campaign strategy vis-à-vis their predecessors and even vis-à-vis the previous rounds of their own campaigns.

Table 2, which scores Peruvian candidates' strategies on all three dimensions, shows that there has also been no convergence over time

¹¹ I was unable to obtain television advertisements from the 1980 election and from one major candidate in the 1985 election (Barrantes). I also excluded the 1995 and 2000 elections from the content analysis portion of the study, since they occurred under Alberto Fujimori's semiauthoritarian regime and involved widespread fraud and corruption (Conaghan 2005). However, the preceding analysis of Peru does discuss each of these elections based on secondary literature.

TABLE 1
CONTAGION FROM THE LEFT IN CHILE AND THE RIGHT IN BRAZIL^a

<i>Chile</i>		<i>1988</i>	<i>1989</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2005</i>
Left	cleavage	no	no	no	yes/no	no
	linkage	direct	direct	direct	direct	direct
	policy	low	low	low	high/low	low
Right	cleavage	yes	yes	no	no	no
	linkage	direct	direct	direct	direct	direct
	policy	medium	low	high	low	low

<i>Brazil</i>		<i>1989</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2006</i>
Left	cleavage	yes	some	no	no	no
	linkage	intermediated	intermediated	both	both	direct
	policy	medium	medium	high/low	high	high
Right	cleavage	yes	no	no	some	no
	linkage	direct	direct	direct	direct	direct
	policy	low	high	high	high	high

^aScore1/Score2 represents a major strategic shift within a single campaign. Dark shading indicates a strategy fully consistent with the national model; light shading indicates one that is partially consistent. Scoring of policy focus is based on the data presented in Figure 1, as well as other indicators.

with respect to linkage and cleavage.¹² The shifting back and forth between alternate strategic extremes has affected not only the policy dimension but also cleavage priming (on the center-left between 1980 and 1990 and on the right during the 1990 campaign) and linkage (on the right, particularly during the 2006 election).

Institutional and structural differences across Chile, Brazil, and Peru cannot easily account for these patterns of campaigning. All three countries have compulsory voting and use the majority runoff formula in presidential elections. They have also generally held concurrent legislative contests. Brazil differs from the other two in that it has allowed presidential reelection for most of the period; incumbents might naturally focus on their prior accomplishments and thus run more policy-focused campaigns. However, similarly policycentric appeals prevailed in 1994 and 2002, when no one was running for a second term. In terms of structural variables, Chile has much higher average levels of education than Brazil, so it is somewhat counterintuitive that Chilean candidates should focus much less on the details of proposed policies.

¹² There were no major outsiders prior to 1990, and there was no major right-wing candidate in 1985.

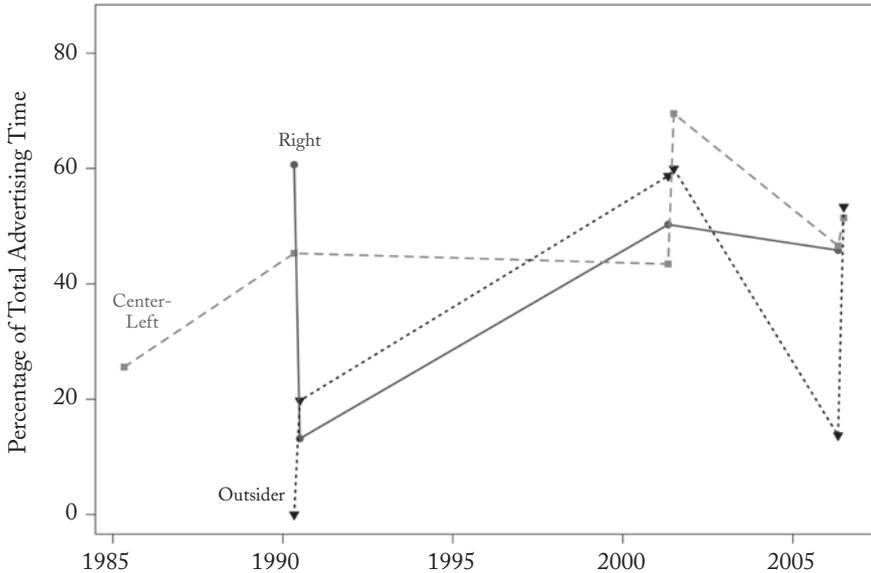


FIGURE 2
 PERCENTAGE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING DEVOTED TO POLICY:
 OVER-TIME VARIATION IN PERU^a

^aSeparate points represent the first and second rounds of a single election. Lines connecting points are to facilitate interpretability and are not intended to suggest intermediate values. Data for the 1995 and 2000 elections under the Fujimori regime are not shown.

Likewise, despite substantial inequalities among different social classes and ethnicities in both Brazil and Peru, cleavage priming remains common only in the latter.

Potential explanations for within-country convergence in electoral strategies also cannot distinguish between the very different forms that this process has taken in Chile and Brazil. One might be tempted to invoke structural explanations for the moderation of the left—the end of the cold war, economic globalization, and changes in the composition of the workforce—to explain contagion from right to left in Brazil. But such arguments cannot account for convergence in the opposite direction in Chile. Nor can the spatial tradition associated with Downs differentiate between these outcomes.¹³ Changes in electoral strategies in both Brazil and Chile have certainly involved shifts to the center;

¹³ Downs 1957.

TABLE 2
CONTINUED HETEROGENEITY IN PERU^a

<i>Peru</i>		1980	1985	1990	2001	2006
Center-	cleavage	yes	no	yes	no	no
Left	linkage	intermediated	both	intermediated	both	both
	policy	high	low	high	high	high
Right	cleavage	no		no/yes	no	no
	linkage	(direct)		direct	(intermediated)	direct/interm.
	policy	(low)		high/low	high	low/high
Out-	cleavage			yes	yes	yes
sider	linkage			direct	direct	direct
	policy			low	high	low/high

^aScore1/Score2 represents a major strategic shift within a single campaign. Parentheses indicate a higher degree of uncertainty because of limited data. Blank cells mean there was no major candidate from that sector. Scoring of policy focus is based on the data presented in Figure 2, as well as other indicators.

major left- and right-wing candidates in each country are now quite similar in their programmatic stances. But a theory predicting convergence on the policy preferences of the median voter does not explain why Brazilian candidates should campaign by emphasizing their essentially identical policy proposals while Chilean candidates should campaign with a low policy focus.

Admittedly, there are some commonalities in terms of how presidential campaigns have evolved in Chile, Brazil, and Peru. True mass party campaigns relying exclusively on intermediated linkages have largely disappeared. Even candidates like Peru's Alan García, who make use of party machinery in their electoral efforts, utilize direct linkages as well. Though cleavage-priming campaigns still exist, they may be less prevalent today than in the era of mass politics. But even accounting for these common trends, there is still substantial evidence that nationally distinct patterns of electioneering have emerged in Chile, Brazil, and Peru since their transitions to democracy.

What might explain the diversity of campaign strategies in Chile, Brazil, and Peru, especially when there has been so much convergence in public policy across these and other Latin American countries?¹⁴ Campaigns often touch upon policy, but the process of policy-making in Latin America is very different from the way candidates choose their strategies. Examining these differences can explain why cross-national strategic convergence is less likely than is commonly predicted.

¹⁴ Weyland 2006.

First, campaign strategies employed by another candidate within one's own country are much more proximate than strategies utilized abroad and thus more likely to serve as models. The cross-national diffusion of policy innovations tends to cluster geographically, as well as within groups of countries that have similar history, cultural background, political regimes, and socioeconomic conditions. Weyland attributes this pattern to the "availability heuristic": some innovations have disproportionate influence on the decisions of foreign policymakers because they constitute such obvious examples.¹⁵ A given country can have only one national policy for pensions or health care, so the most available model for emulation will always be found abroad.

In contrast to national policymakers, presidential candidates have multiple examples of alternative strategies in their own country, drawn from current or recent elections. These domestic models are more "available" than foreign ones by every possible metric: they are closer geographically and have been employed in the exact same historical, cultural, political, and socioeconomic context. Strategies that debuted during dramatic political moments such as the founding election of a new democracy are even more likely to be influential in this regard.

Second, political campaigning lacks several features that have facilitated international convergence in the policy realm. Policy models that diffuse internationally tend to coincide with a dominant global policy paradigm, such as economic nationalism in the 1930s–60s or neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁶ Many policymakers are directly socialized into these paradigms through academic training abroad, where they also learn a methodology that encourages evaluating and adopting innovations from other countries. In addition, foreign training establishes professional networks, so that the architects of antipoverty programs in two developing countries may know each other personally from graduate school.

These facilitating conditions—a dominant global paradigm, foreign academic training, and international professional networks—are largely lacking when it comes to campaign strategy. There are no global paradigms of electioneering, much less a dominant one; numerous approaches are consistent with liberal democracy. In terms of training, politicians always gain their campaign experience at home. And while a few academic programs for political consultants exist in the United States, attending one is not the typical career path for campaign professionals in new democracies.

¹⁵ Weyland 2004; Weyland 2005a; Weyland 2005b; Weyland 2006a.

¹⁶ Weyland 2004.

Many arguments about cross-national convergence in campaign strategies mention foreign political consultants' direct participation in campaigns abroad. There have certainly been cases of consultants from advanced democracies advising candidates in Latin America and elsewhere.¹⁷ But it is much more common for candidates to receive no foreign advice. Even where international consultants are involved, their visits are typically sporadic and brief; local campaign managers implement strategies on the ground, and they may not follow recommendations based on a model of campaigning that they deem ill suited to local conditions.¹⁸

To summarize the argument of this section, Chile, Brazil, and Peru exhibit no cross-national convergence in campaign strategies, contradicting the claims of existing theories. Structural and institutional differences among countries do not readily correspond to the distinct patterns of electioneering that have emerged, and potential explanations for within-country convergence cannot distinguish between the different forms this process has taken in Chile and Brazil. Moreover, an examination of the factors that have facilitated international policy diffusion suggests that cross-national convergence in campaign strategies should be much less common. Hence, a new theory is necessary to explain why Chile, Brazil, and Peru have adopted such distinct varieties of electioneering in the decades since democratization.

THE THEORY OF SUCCESS CONTAGION

In this section I develop a theory of *success contagion* that can account for distinct national patterns of electioneering in new democracies. The theory of success contagion is inspired by the literature on institutional isomorphism, particularly as it is applied to competition among firms. As a theory derived inductively from case knowledge, it also draws substantially upon the history of campaigns in Chile, Brazil, and Peru. After presenting the theory, I illustrate its key elements with specific examples from these three countries.

The theory of success contagion holds that major candidates, regardless of ideological orientation, are likely to adopt the first victorious campaign strategy subsequently legitimated by a successful term in office for the elected president. The contagion of this model can occur

¹⁷ For example, Séguéla 2000; Harding 2008; and Greenberg 2009.

¹⁸ A few Latin American consultants have begun working in other countries of the region (for example, Mendonça 2001), presumably proposing models that are more "available" than those from the U.S. or Europe. This phenomenon has been limited so far, but might prompt some future cross-national convergence if it expands.

through two distinct mechanisms: a *direct* mechanism, whereby politicians explicitly imitate the strategies of previous candidates, and an *indirect* mechanism, whereby a national community of campaign professionals plays a key mediating role. Success contagion also implies a corollary: failure avoidance. Strategies that lead to electoral victory may be delegitimated by ensuing failure in office, prompting future candidates to avoid them. And when one president after another proves to be highly unpopular, candidates are likely to choose strategies through an inward-oriented process of reacting to previous errors within their own political camp.

In cases of success contagion, candidates' convergence on national models of campaign strategy creates isomorphic outcomes, just as organizations often converge upon forms and procedures that are similar to those of their peers.¹⁹ A central claim of the isomorphism literature is that actors are motivated to seek legitimacy, particularly when faced with uncertainty about the consequences of their actions. Legitimate strategies and behaviors are those that are most common among one's organizational field or that are employed by the most prestigious or successful organizations. Nonprofit organizations and government bureaucracies are often motivated by legitimacy concerns, but such behavior has also been identified in studies of competing firms, where straying from established norms may have a negative impact upon a company's performance.²⁰ Even when there are competitive pressures to deviate from an industry's standard operating procedure, the space in which firms choose to do so may be bounded by legitimacy concerns.²¹

I argue that legitimacy is likely to play at least as large a role in presidential elections as in competition among firms. As with firms worried about customers' reactions to their behavior, performance and legitimacy can be intimately connected in the political realm if candidates perceive that voters' decisions are influenced by concerns about legitimacy. During the compressed time frame of a campaign, with heightened media attention and a smaller number of relevant actors than in most competitive markets, the appropriateness of candidates' actions is likely to be more highly scrutinized. If voters disapprove of candidates' deviation from the informal rules of the game, the punishment they exact will be much more immediate than the similar effect of public opinion on a firm's sales. While pursuit of legitimacy is often seen as

¹⁹ DiMaggio and Powell 1983.

²⁰ Lieberman and Asaba 2006.

²¹ Deephouse 1999.

inimical to the pursuit of interests, in the present theoretical perspective they are linked by candidates' expectations of voter behavior.

Like firms entering a new marketplace, presidential candidates in a new democracy face uncertainty about the unwritten rules of the game and the strategies that might bring electoral victory. When taking part in a "founding election," many political actors have no prior campaign experience, while others are competing in a context far removed from that of previous democratic episodes. All candidates are confronted with new technologies that have scarcely been used in the past, such as television advertising and opinion polls in the 1980s. Given this uncertainty, initial campaign strategies are likely to be heterogeneous, responding to the whims of candidates, the long-buried instincts of older democratic actors, and existing endowments such as a large volunteer labor force. Strategic diversity is likely to decline, however, once the strategy of a particular candidate is demonstrated to be effective at winning elections and also gains legitimacy among relevant campaign actors.

Of the three sources of institutional isomorphism identified by DiMaggio and Powell, mimetic and normative mechanisms are most relevant to a theory of candidates' strategic behavior.²² Mimicry involves actors voluntarily modeling themselves on their peers. In the management literature mimetic isomorphism plays a central role in theories of bandwagons, managerial fads, follow-the-leader strategies, and the existence of strategic groups, whose business models resemble one another.²³ Often the targets of mimicry, or those that set the pattern in motion, are the largest, most visible, most successful, or most prestigious firms.²⁴

Mimetic isomorphism is related to what I term the *direct* mechanism of success contagion. Direct success contagion involves presidential candidates and their close political advisers imitating the strategies of peers who have been most successful and prestigious—namely, the winners of prior presidential elections who then maintained a positive public image while in office. This combination of electoral and governing success confers legitimacy on a previous candidate's political strategy. Thus, for instance, if the current president had been elected on a pledge of national reconciliation and then maintained popularity for uniting a fractious country around a common national project, future

²² DiMaggio and Powell 1983. The third source of isomorphism, coercion, involves pressure from an external actor and is thus less relevant to candidates' choices of electoral strategies.

²³ Abrahamson and Rosenkopf 1993; Abrahamson 1991; Haveman 1993; Deephouse 1999.

²⁴ Haveman 1993; Haunschild and Miner 1997; Henisz and Delios 2001.

candidates are likely to emulate these unity appeals not only because they helped win an election but also because they are associated with a prestigious incumbent.

For its part, the normative mechanism of isomorphism focuses on standard operating procedures that develop within professional communities and come to influence the behavior of organizations throughout a particular field. Normative isomorphism is distinct from outright mimicry because of the intermediary role played by these professional communities. Though applications of mimetic isomorphism have been most common in the management literature, normative mechanisms have also been used to explain the behavior of competing firms.²⁵

In the *indirect* mechanism of contagion, akin to normative isomorphism, a national community of campaign professionals plays a key mediating role in the spread of particular campaign strategies. Political consultants in new democracies often sponsor training seminars and annual conferences or publish how-to books conveying the wisdom of their craft to colleagues and potential clients. As a result, strategies that were successful and became associated with prestigious politicians are likely to become institutionalized as standard operating procedures within the professional community. Such strategies can then readily spread across the political spectrum as these professionals are employed by candidates of varying ideological stripes. When indirect success contagion is at play, candidates do not explicitly copy the tactics of a predecessor. Rather, they adhere to the recommendations of professionals whose standard approach incorporates a strategy initially introduced by the other side.

The theory of success contagion does not require that all major candidates converge upon the appropriate national model at the first opportunity but rather requires that their strategies more closely adhere to this model over time. Change should be slower among certain types of candidates, such as those from parties with highly institutionalized internal rules and procedures.²⁶ In such organizations candidates and their close confidants may favor strategic changes but confront internal obstacles, such as rules that prevent a candidate from handpicking the campaign team. Some institutionalized parties also have greater sunk costs, which can slow the pace of change, such as cadres of militants whose available volunteer labor predisposes candidates toward the use of intermediated linkages.

²⁵ For example, Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings 2002.

²⁶ Panebianco 1988.

Parties and party systems not only affect the speed with which strategic change can occur; they may also influence how much change is possible. Candidates without well-organized parties or ties to established interest groups will probably not be able to construct such linkages in the course of a single campaign. Yet they may be able to build campaign-specific networks of volunteers or establish intermediated linkages via alternative organizations, such as churches, that have not previously been active in national politics. Likewise, cleavage-priming strategies may be more viable in multiparty systems, where one can profit from appealing to a minority of the electorate, than in two-party systems. Under majority runoff rules, however, these incentives also vary across rounds of the election; cleavage priming may work in a first round even if it is less advisable in the runoff. In general, there will be room for candidates to move in the *direction* of a dominant national model even if they never fully embrace it.

Success contagion does not imply that candidates adhere mechanically to a single model of campaigning without trying to compensate for their own weaknesses, attack an opponent's vulnerabilities, or take advantage of opportunities arising during the campaign. In some instances, responding to these sorts of candidate-specific or conjunctural incentives may constitute partial deviations from the predominant national model of campaign strategy. Such deviations, however, are almost always small in magnitude when compared to differences across countries or to differences within a single country before and after convergence. The "anchoring heuristic" is likely to discourage actors from significantly altering models of campaign strategy, just as it does with policy models.²⁷ Moreover, the causes of such deviations tend to be candidate- or election-specific factors that are unlikely to recur systematically over time.

Nor does success contagion mean that candidates do not seek to distinguish themselves from their opponents. Within a given model of campaign strategy, there is plenty of room for differentiation: one cleavage-priming candidate may emphasize ethnicity while another focuses on religion, or one policy-focused candidate may stress social protection while another says more about public works. Competition, even bitter competition, will surely take place even when the range of strategies on the table has been limited.

In cases where success contagion has led major candidates to converge on a standard approach to electioneering, it is important to con-

²⁷ Weyland 2006.

sider how long into the future this model should remain in place. Short of another prolonged episode of authoritarian rule, strategic convergence is most likely to be dislodged by a significant change in a country's party system, such as realignment or collapse, that affects the organizational continuity of the major actors competing in presidential elections.²⁸ Outsiders often have little prior experience in politics and may enter the race with entirely new ideas, rather than taking their cues from previous patterns of success and failure. With the demise of one or more established parties, one loses a group of political leaders who have internalized the lessons of prior political campaigns and have often formed durable relationships with the national community of campaign professionals.

If a country's electoral dynamics are not interrupted by authoritarian rule or severely altered by party system realignment or collapse, the processes set in motion by success contagion should continue, despite the occasional failed presidential term in the future. Once politicians have converged upon a single approach to electioneering and numerous successful presidencies have become associated with that strategy, candidates' uncertainty is greatly reduced. It is unlikely that one unsuccessful presidency would lead them to deviate from an established approach, unless that failure also contributed to significant party system change. One can think of the process as involving Bayesian updating, where multiple prior successes weigh more heavily than a single recent failure.

If presidential candidates are likely to adopt campaign strategies associated with prestigious incumbents, they will also tend to avoid strategies that were subsequently delegitimized by a president's abysmal record in office. For instance, if the current president had been elected based on specific policy proposals and then failed miserably to deliver, the next round of candidates will be wary of appearing as "politicians who promise too much." Conversely, a governing failure following a campaign that was imagecentric rather than policycentric will encourage future candidates to be specific about their policy intentions. What matters is the perception of how the electorate will respond to a new candidate whose tactics are reminiscent of a disgraced incumbent. As explained by Peruvian political consultant José Ventura Egoávil, "voters' evaluation of the previous government's performance and the situation of the country has an important influence on the decision to vote for or against the government *or a candidate who has similar characteristics.*"²⁹

²⁸ Party system change is thus akin to the paradigm shifts that can prompt a new round of policy diffusion; Weyland 2004.

²⁹ Egoávil 2002, 10, emphasis added.

Why might a candidate's advisers expect voters to remember the prior campaign strategy of an unpopular president? In the new democracies to which the theory of success contagion applies, the first several elections after a political transition tend to be dramatic, foundational moments in which major issues are at stake, including economic stabilization, human rights abuses under military regimes, or even the durability of democracy itself. The relevant electorate is quite distinct from the unengaged citizens of advanced democracies where "politics is boring." And even if public memories of the last campaign have grown fuzzy, a candidate who seeks to woo voters with the playbook of a disgraced incumbent is likely to find his opponents more than willing to point out the similarities.

Presidents in new democracies also frequently govern in a manner that is consistent with their campaign styles, so public memories of an incumbent's electoral strategy may be much fresher than the previous campaign itself. Reasons for this congruence between campaigning and governing strategies include habit, the elevation of campaign advisers to cabinet positions, and the constraints that a particular campaign strategy places upon the president's strategic maneuverability. For instance, one who campaigns as an antiestablishment outsider cannot easily change course once in office and make deals with the organized interests alienated during the election.

In countries where one president after another is unsuccessful in office, candidates are unlikely to converge upon a single campaign strategy. Lacking an attractive external model, they will instead tend to choose their strategies through an inward-oriented process of reacting to prior errors within their own party or political camp, rather than the outward-oriented search that generates contagion across the ideological spectrum. Drawing different lessons from these previous efforts, the candidates of different political tendencies may move in opposite directions from one campaign to the next, even leapfrogging each other in successive elections. Over time, these reactions and counterreactions can generate a zigzag trajectory in which candidates alternate between distinct strategies, even within the course of a single campaign.³⁰

As governing failures accumulate in a new democracy, it becomes increasingly unlikely that a successful presidency will generate strategic convergence in the future. Uncertainty decreases as successive candidates learn to choose their strategies by reacting against the perceived errors of their predecessors. Looking across the ideological spectrum

³⁰ This pattern resembles the "swing of the pendulum" between alternative policy approaches that Weyland (2002, 253) has identified in cases where successive leaders fail to solve economic crises.

for an example of how to campaign is more natural in the second election after democratization than in the seventh. Thus, there is probably a limited window of time in which success contagion can occur in any country before a pattern of inward-oriented reactions is set in place.

In the remainder of the article I draw upon specific electoral campaigns in Chile, Brazil, and Peru to illustrate the theory of success contagion in greater detail. In Chile and Brazil, where convergence has occurred, I examine the campaign in which the dominant national strategy debuted, as well as the first time it was decisively employed on the opposite side of the political spectrum. In both cases contagion occurred in the second rather than the first election after a successful presidency, indicating that strategic adaptation may be slower among institutionalized parties but is still possible. The campaigns examined in Chile and Brazil also illustrate the direct and indirect mechanisms of success contagion, respectively. In Peru I discuss why a limited form of success contagion was ultimately contained in scope after Alberto Fujimori's downfall in 2000 and why the longer-term evolution of campaign strategies of the center-left APRA has involved inward-oriented reactions to prior errors. Because the campaigns examined here are intended to be illustrative of the mechanisms involved in success contagion and failure avoidance, I focus on the specific dimensions of campaign strategy that are most relevant to each case.

CHILE: DIRECT CONTAGION FROM THE LEFT

The strategy that has come to dominate presidential election campaigns in Chile was initially employed by the campaign for the "No" option in the 1988 plebiscite that brought an end to the Pinochet dictatorship. A first key feature of this campaign, organized by the Concertación de Partidos por el No (Coalition of Parties for the No), was its effort to circumvent existing intermediary organizations and establish direct linkages to individual citizens. In the lead-up to the 1988 plebiscite, opposition leaders made a decision to bypass the various institutions—from labor unions to political party structures themselves—that had acquired a radical image by supporting an earlier wave of protest against the military regime.³¹ Instead, the No campaign established an alternative and functionally separate network of municipal campaign headquarters, which "replaced the previous system of political leadership of the masses."³² It also brought politicians as close as possible to

³¹ Oxhorn 1994; Roberts 1998.

³² Montes 1989, 42.

unorganized individuals and facilitated a relatively new activity—door-to-door campaigning.

A second key characteristic of the No campaign strategy was that it placed very little emphasis on policy. In the lead-up to the plebiscite, a group of Chilean social scientists affiliated with the research consortium CIS recommended that the No campaign convey only minimal policy content and that whenever politicians did discuss policy, they should do so primarily in a diagnostic sense.³³ This strategy responded both to the difficulties of achieving programmatic consensus among the disparate political forces in the opposition and to a desire to avoid threatening the interests of the economic elite. Rather than advancing a program of government—the initial instinct of most Concertación leaders—the No campaign ultimately sought to communicate politicians' understanding of people's everyday problems and an empathy with their concerns.³⁴ Of the 28.1 percent of the No campaign's television advertising that was devoted to policy, simple diagnostic content accounted for more than half (15.1 percentage points). Policy acclaims, including proposals, took up a comparative minuscule amount of time (2.1 percentage points).

The No campaign achieved a 55–45 percent victory in the 1988 plebiscite, ushering in open presidential elections the following year. The Concertación won this election as well, with a campaign that was in many ways the “second round” of the plebiscite effort. The appeals of its candidate, Patricio Aylwin, focused largely on intangible values such as dignity and justice, prompting political analyst Tironi to argue that “the Aylwin government will be evaluated for its *style*, not for the literal content of a program.”³⁵ Aylwin went on to serve four years as a highly regarded president; at the end of his term, 51 percent approved of his performance and only 18 percent disapproved.³⁶ Given his prestige while in office, the Concertación's approach to campaigning gained broader legitimacy and was established as an attractive model for future presidential candidates.

The Chilean right's first wholehearted embrace of the Concertación's model of campaigning occurred in the 1999 campaign of Joaquín Lavín, an example of success contagion through the direct mechanism of imitation. The primary objective of Lavín's campaign was to communicate closeness to the common people and an empathy with their problems, as the Concertación had consistently done in previous elections.

³³ Puryear 1994.

³⁴ CIS 1988a; CIS 1988b.

³⁵ Tironi 1990, 108.

³⁶ CEP 1993.

Lavín's strategy implied, first and foremost, an effort to circumvent existing intermediary organizations in favor of direct contact with the people. Lavín's party, the Unión Democrática Independiente (UDI), was largely hidden from public view during the campaign, with party flags prohibited at his rallies.³⁷ Circumventing the party was partially an effort to move to the ideological center, but it also was inspired by an explicit direct linkage strategy. During the campaign Lavín sought out frequent personal contact with individuals and then ensured that images of these connections were broadcast directly to the nation on the evening news. One common technique involved Lavín spending the night in the house of a shantytown dweller—always with the media present. Such visits were carefully orchestrated by the campaign's production specialist, who was also in charge of megaevents such as the closing rally.³⁸

Lavín also sought to communicate closeness to the common people through his television advertising, which privileged "man in the street" testimonials and diagnosis of problems rather than specific proposals for solving them. During Lavín's travels around the country, campaign staff filmed thousands of short comments from people who attended his events. Over two hundred of these clips were ultimately used in Lavín's television advertising, taking up a fifth of the total time. Although these testimonials often mentioned policy issues, they rarely discussed Lavín's proposals; rather, a testimonial might bemoan the terrible state of crime and express confidence that Lavín would somehow solve the problem. Overall, Lavín's advertising privileged general over specific policy discussion (16.1 percent versus 5.2 percent), and it devoted a large share of time to the diagnosis of current problems (12.1 percent).

In addition, Lavín's television advertising sought to convey closeness to the common people through empathy appeals, arguing that he intimately understood their challenges and what it was like to live life in their shoes. In one such message, Lavín argued:

After traveling thousands of kilometers, embracing and sharing the feelings of thousands of people, I truly have Chile under my skin. Today I *know* what a miner or a fisherman feels. Today I *know* what it is like to have no job or nothing to eat.

Empathy appeals of this sort were also conveyed through testimonials, such as a university student opining that Lavín understands the problems of today's youth.

³⁷ Juan Pablo Moreno. 2004. Interviewed by author. Santiago, Chile, December 14.

³⁸ Jorge Mackenna. 2006. Interviewed by author. Santiago, Chile, January 23.

Lavín's 1999 campaign is an example of direct success contagion because his strategy of conveying closeness and empathy with the common people involved imitating the prior efforts of the left. As Lavín's campaign manager explained, taking the campaign to the streets to establish direct contact and empathy with the common people was something that only the Concertación had done previously. "In 1999, we copied them in that regard," he asserted. "The closeness [strategy] originated on the left."³⁹

BRAZIL: INDIRECT CONTAGION FROM THE RIGHT

In contrast to Chile, the first direct presidential election after Brazil's transition to democracy did not establish a model of campaign strategy for future candidates. The winner of Brazil's 1989 election, Fernando Collor, represents the country's first and only neopopulist president.⁴⁰ Like all neopopulists, Collor sought to circumvent existing intermediary organizations, establish direct contact with the people, and prime a cleavage between "the people" whom he claimed to represent and the economic and political elite he blamed for Brazil's crisis. Collor's campaign was also vague with respect to policy; his advisers were much more concerned with conveying a style and image that would most broadly appeal to voters.⁴¹ Collor won the election, but his political success was short-lived, and his name ultimately became synonymous with governing disaster. After failing to control hyperinflation, he was removed from the presidency when a congressional inquiry implicated him in a corruption scheme. By the time he left office in 1992, his approval rating stood at 9 percent.⁴²

Collor's miserable governing experience had an impact on public opinion in the lead-up to the 1994 election, leaving potential voters wary of any candidate who appeared similar to the disgraced former president. Brazilian campaign professionals detected this shift in public opinion and recommended against any approach that would remind people of Collor. Based on a series of surveys and focus groups, a report prepared in November 1993 maintained that "the ideal candidate should not . . . have a profile that is reminiscent of the ex-president."⁴³ Consultant Ney Lima Figueiredo argued before the election that the

³⁹ Francisco de la Maza 2005. Interviewed by author. Santiago, Chile, November 16.

⁴⁰ Weyland 1996; Boas 2005.

⁴¹ Marcos Coimbra. 2006. Interviewed by author. Belo Horizonte, Brazil, October 31; Belisa Ribeiro. 2006. Interviewed by author. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. October 9.

⁴² http://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/po/ver_po.php?session=23.

⁴³ Figueiredo 2002 [1994], 187.

best presidential candidate would be one with “the capacity to bind people together, in contrast to the strategy used by Collor in ’89.”⁴⁴

In accordance with the theory of success contagion, therefore, the negative feedback effect of Collor’s disastrous presidency took neopopulism off the table as a viable campaign strategy in 1994. Prior to even contemplating the candidates involved in the 1994 election and the circumstances in which they found themselves at the start of the campaign, we can say that no major candidate would be likely to adopt a strategy of neopopulism.

The specific strategy that would come to dominate electoral campaigns in Brazil was introduced not by Collor but rather by Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the Party of Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB). Cardoso won the 1994 election and went on to serve a positively evaluated first term in office. Cardoso had been appointed finance minister in 1993 by interim president Itamar Franco, with a primary mission of solving the country’s inflation problem. Unlike his predecessors, Cardoso succeeded at this task; inflation dropped dramatically and remained low after his Real Plan went into effect on July 1, 1994. Building upon the success of this program, which debuted at the start of the electoral campaign, Cardoso’s strategy was to emphasize the competence that he would bring to numerous other policy areas and his ability to unify Brazilians around a common national project.

In contrast to the pattern commonly seen in Chile, Cardoso’s campaign focused heavily on policy. His television advertising devoted 30.5 percent of its time to proposals or current policies that would be continued under a Cardoso presidency; his opponent Lula engaged in such discussion much less frequently (14.1 percent). On television and in his stump speeches, Cardoso often contrasted his own detailed policy platform with Lula’s resort to criticism and failure to offer clear alternatives.⁴⁵

A second key feature of Cardoso’s campaign was its message of national unity rather than cleavage priming. Cardoso’s choice of an open hand as a campaign symbol was intended as a symbolic contrast with the clenched fist of radicalism and cleavage politics. Unlike Lula, Cardoso did not resort to any divisive appeals in his television advertising. Rather, he often contrasted his call for national unity with a cleavage-priming approach that he considered illegitimate.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Figueiredo 2002 [1994], 187.

⁴⁵ For example, Graziano 1995, 33.

⁴⁶ Miguel 2000, 187–92.

It was Cardoso's model of electioneering, not Collor's, that major Brazilian candidates would adopt in future elections. The presidential term to which Cardoso was elected in 1994 ranks as a clear example of governing success. Cardoso's approval rating remained steady throughout his first term, always higher than his disapproval rating, and it ended only slightly lower than when he took office.⁴⁷ Cardoso's strategy was thus legitimized in a way that Collor's was not, creating an incentive for future candidates to adopt a similar approach.

In contrast to Chile, where contagion across the ideological spectrum involved a right-wing candidate directly imitating the tactics of the left, success contagion in Brazil has occurred indirectly, through the mediating influence of campaign professionals. Because of Brazil's size and federal system of government, the country holds numerous elections and has developed a particularly strong community of campaign professionals who advise candidates on both sides of the political spectrum. In the years since Cardoso's 1994 victory, his policycentric and unity-oriented strategy has become the preferred approach among Brazilian political consultants. Rather than explicitly imitating Cardoso, Lula converged on this model of campaigning in a more indirect fashion, as he gave greater weight to the advice of outside professionals.

Since 1994 Brazilian campaign professionals have clearly come to prefer policycentric strategies. All the recent how-to books written by Brazilian consultants characterize policy content as an essential component of campaigning.⁴⁸ Consultants also frequently highlight specific proposals that their candidates emphasized during prior campaigns.⁴⁹ Reflecting on the state of the industry, consultant Malfitani says that "today what I see everywhere is a standardization . . . of campaigns—you just create the School Fund, the Work Fund, Let's Begin Again, Project Singapore, the Health Care Plan—give this thing a name, expand that [program] over there, and the people eat it up."⁵⁰

Lula's first decisive embrace of the recommendations of a campaign professional occurred in 2002, when the PT hired Brazil's most celebrated marketing expert, Duda Mendonça. As with the advice that consultants were offering to other candidates, Mendonça recommended a policycentric approach:

⁴⁷ http://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/po/ver_po.php?session=21.

⁴⁸ Mendonça 2001, 114; Santa Rita 2001, 32–33; Iten and Koyabashi 2002, 19; Ferraz 2003, 60, 64; Oliveira 2006, 50, 61.

⁴⁹ Santa Rita 2001, 32–33; Iten and Koyabashi 2002, 195–207.

⁵⁰ Malfitani 2001, 9.

It's necessary to talk about dreams, but also about reality. Instead of saying "together we will change Brazil," start to speak more objectively about what will be done to change Brazil. . . . The PT needs to alter its discourse a little, communicating more clearly with the population, presenting concrete proposals for Brazil's problems, so that society can understand and trust in its project.⁵¹

Consistent with Mendonça's recommendations, Lula's 2002 campaign placed substantial emphasis on his proposals and ability to implement them. Acclaims about future or present policies took up 19.6 percent of Lula's television advertising, much more than in his previous campaigns, and the technical qualifications of his advisers were prominently featured. Many of the episodes began with images of experts poring over charts and computer screens, followed by an announcement of the issue of the day and a summary of the relevant experience of several advisers. Criticism also virtually disappeared from Lula's campaign; blaming the government for its policy failures took up only 3 percent of his advertising time.

Another of Mendonça's recommendations implemented in 2002 was to present Lula as a unity candidate, in contrast to the cleavage-priming image he had conveyed in prior campaigns. This conciliatory stance was reflected in the former union leader's choice of a well-known industrialist as his running mate. Similarly, Lula's television advertising emphasized his desire to bring together disparate parties in pursuit of common national goals. One episode reported on Lula's recent meeting with businessmen, bankers, union leaders, and NGO representatives to discuss a proposed economic and social development council. In an excerpt from a speech at the event, one of the participants argued that "we need to set aside our individual interests—not forgetting them, but aligning them with a greater project."

The finding that Lula's campaigns became more policycentric over time might seem to contrast with the common view that he went from clear leftist in 1989 to wishy-washy centrist in 2002. But Lula was clearly identifiable as a leftist in his early campaigns largely because of his cleavage-priming denunciations of the "dominant class," not because of his specific proposals. His campaign in 2002 was certainly less ideologically coherent than in the past; it also conveyed a positive, upbeat image of the candidate that contrasted with his prior reputation for anger and intransigence. But the campaign, while sometimes viewed as "Lula lite" for these reasons, was as heavy hitting as Cardoso's 1994 effort when it came to policy detail.

⁵¹ Mendonça 2001, 43.

In sum, the process of success contagion in Brazil differs from that in Chile in several ways. A left-wing candidate converged on the strategy of a right-wing predecessor, rather than the other way around. The strategy adopted also involved much more emphasis on policy. Finally, the mechanism of contagion was distinct. Rather than Lula directly copying Cardoso's prior strategy, success contagion occurred indirectly, as Lula gave greater weight to campaign professionals whose standard operating procedure was to recommend such an approach.

PERU: LIMITED CONTAGION AND INWARD-ORIENTED REACTIONS

The evolution of presidential campaign strategies in Peru contrasts with that of Chile and Brazil in that there has been no long-term convergence among candidates of different political tendencies. During the 1990s, when Alberto Fujimori enjoyed high levels of public approval, Peru experienced a form of success contagion, with other presidential candidates of varying stripes emulating his linkage strategy. This phenomenon was ultimately contained, however, after Fujimori's downfall in 2000 and an ensuing change in Peru's party system; use of similar strategies has been limited to a single candidate in both 2001 and 2006. The broader pattern in Peruvian politics, dating back to the 1980 transition to democracy, has been repeated governing failures, which has prompted a different form of strategic innovation. Every modern Peruvian president—including Fujimori, if one examines his final month in office—has had approval ratings below 25 percent at the start of the campaign that would replace him.⁵² Lacking a clear model of electoral as well as governing success, candidates have tended to choose strategies via an inward-oriented process of reacting to prior errors within their own camp.

The argument that Peruvian candidates have failed to converge upon a single dominant campaign strategy stands in contrast to recent arguments emphasizing the recurrence of neopopulism. Alberto Fujimori introduced neopopulism to Peru with his 1990 presidential campaign and ensuing presidency.⁵³ Subsequently, scholars have pointed to the continuity of Fujimori's tactics during his 1995 and 2000 reelection bids,⁵⁴ the imitation of his organizational strategy by other candidates during the 1990s,⁵⁵ and even the prevalence of Fujimori-style campaigns after his fall from power in 2000.⁵⁶

⁵² Kenney 2003, 1235; Carrión 2006, 129; Apoyo Opinión y Mercado 2006.

⁵³ Roberts 1995; Weyland 1996.

⁵⁴ Roberts and Arcé 1998; Schmidt 2000; Conaghan 2005.

⁵⁵ Levitsky and Cameron 2003.

⁵⁶ Roberts 2006; Weyland 2006b.

Existing arguments tell an important part of the story of how Peruvian presidential campaign strategies have evolved since 1990. Following his surprise victory in that year's election, Fujimori was able to maintain generally high levels of popularity throughout the decade, in part due to having tamed hyperinflation and defeated the Shining Path terrorist insurgency early in his presidency.⁵⁷ Thanks to this governing success, Peru experienced a limited form of success contagion in the 1990s, as candidates challenging Fujimori's reelection imitated his strategy of circumventing established intermediary organizations.⁵⁸ The major opposition candidates in 1995 (Javier Pérez de Cuéllar) and 2000 (Alberto Andrade, Luís Castañeda, and Alejandro Toledo) were all supported by personal electoral vehicles similar to those Fujimori had created during his political career.⁵⁹

Recourse to Fujimori-style strategies has continued on a limited scale after his fall from power in 2000, but "serial populism"⁶⁰ has effectively been confined to the antiestablishment portion of the political spectrum, occupied by a single major candidate in each of the 2001 and 2006 elections. Both Alejandro Toledo and Ollanta Humala relied on direct linkages and primed cleavages in their respective campaigns in 2001 and 2006, just as Fujimori had done in 1990. In contrast to several recent studies, however, I argue that the presidential bids of APRA's Alan García and right-wing candidate Lourdes Flores in 2001 and 2006 do *not* represent a generalization of the phenomenon of neopopulism, even with respect to the linkage dimension.⁶¹ Fujimori's maneuverings in the 1990s temporarily removed APRA and the partisan right from the ranks of serious contenders for the presidency, but his political demise in 2000 returned Peru's party system to a configuration that was much closer to that of the 1980s.⁶²

⁵⁷ Carrión 2006.

⁵⁸ Peruvian political analyst Rospigliosi 1994 specifically links the rise of independent candidates in the 1995 campaign to Fujimori's high approval ratings at the time.

⁵⁹ Sanborn and Panfichi 1996; Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Conaghan 2005.

⁶⁰ Roberts 2006.

⁶¹ Much of the debate hinges on whether Flores and García should be considered independent candidates or candidates of established parties in these two elections. Roberts's (2006) typology of independent politicians places Flores in the category of "defector" from an established party because she ran for office on the ticket of the newly created National Unity (UN) alliance. However, Flores never resigned her membership in a traditional party as did Andrade and Castañeda, the other major occupants of this category. Rather, she remains a major figure in the Popular Christian Party (PPC) and was elected to consecutive terms as party president in 2003 and 2007. The PPC also serves as the backbone of the UN alliance. Meanwhile, arguments that the resurgence of APRA is nothing more than García's personal comeback (for example, Weyland 2002, 195, 199; Levitsky and Cameron 2003; and Roberts 2006) ignore the extent to which García's 1985 campaign was also highly personalistic, as well as the degree to which APRA historically revolved around the figure of its charismatic leader Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre.

⁶² Kenney 2003.

Over the long term the evolution of Peruvian electoral strategies has been characterized by a very different pattern than the limited strategic contagion that took place during the 1990s. Given the repeated governing failures of elected presidents, candidates from traditional parties on the right and center-left have not chosen their strategies by imitating prior campaigns or adopting any standardized approach recommended by Peruvian campaign consultants. Rather, their innovations in campaigning both before and after the Fujimori interregnum have resulted from an inward-oriented process of reacting negatively to prior errors within their own camp.

Inward-oriented reactions are crucial for explaining why long-term convergence in campaign strategies has not occurred in Peru as it has in Chile and Brazil. Because they are not responding to the same external stimulus, but rather to entirely different, internal ones, the strategies of candidates from APRA and the right have neither become more similar to one another over time nor come to approximate the strategies of neopopulist outsiders like Toledo and Humala.

In the case of APRA, the oldest and most significant political party in Peru, inward-oriented reactions have produced something of a zigzag pattern, with presidential candidates alternating between distinct campaign strategies in five successive elections. In Peru's 1980 election the appeals of APRA presidential candidate Armando Villanueva were confrontational and sectarian, seeking to prime Peru's long-standing APRA/anti-APRA cleavage with phrases such as "APRA or anarchy" and "APRA or civil war."⁶³ The campaign also relied heavily on intermediated linkages: party machinery played a prominent role, and APRA also sought to make inroads into unions and shantytown organizations that were tied to Peru's left parties.⁶⁴ Finally, Villanueva's television advertising conveyed a number of specific proposals, particularly with respect to social policy.⁶⁵ While this campaign succeeded in mobilizing the historical APRA vote, Villanueva lost by a wide margin to center-right candidate Fernando Belaúnde, a disappointing performance.

In the lead-up to the next presidential election in 1985, APRA candidate Alan García employed a strategy that was nearly opposite that of Villanueva in 1980: inclusive and nonconfrontational, vague in terms of policy, and seeking direct, personal connections to voters. As a participant in the 1980 campaign, García had embraced Villanueva's

⁶³ Oviedo 1981, 111.

⁶⁴ Sanborn 1991, 223.

⁶⁵ Oviedo 1981, 103.

cleavage-priming stance,⁶⁶ but as a presidential candidate in 1985, he sought to convey an image of openness with slogans such as “APRA extends its hand to you” and “my commitment is to all Peruvians.” The campaign was characterized by a “studied ambiguity on policy details”:⁶⁷ APRA’s government program was not released until after the election, and García’s television advertising said nothing about proposals beyond such vague assertions as “I raise my voice to defend the jobs of Peruvians.” And while the APRA party machinery continued to play an important intermediary role in the campaign, García also actively reached out to independents with a campaign-specific, personalistic linkage structure known as Independents with Alan.⁶⁸

APRA’s strategic about-face between 1980 and 1985 was the first of several shifts that are best understood as reactions to perceived errors of the past. García’s 1985 strategy was not inspired by Belaúnde’s victorious campaign in 1980. Rather, the change resulted from an inward-oriented reaction: García and his chief strategist, Hugo Otero, had both participated in the unsuccessful 1980 campaign and deliberately sought to employ a radically different strategy in 1985.⁶⁹ Similarly, in 1990 the presidential campaign of APRA candidate Luís Alva Castro was largely a counterreaction to García’s 1985 effort and a return to the sort of strategy Villanueva had employed in 1980.⁷⁰ In particular, Alva Castro cast himself as a defender of the poor against a wealthy elite represented by his opponent Mario Vargas Llosa; his signature line from the campaign was “if the rich don’t vote for the poor, are the poor going to vote for the rich?”

After the fall of Fujimori, Alan García’s repeat presidential bids in 2001 and 2006 involved a crucial reorientation with respect to his 1985 strategy. In place of the policy-vague approach he had employed in his first contest, García’s 2001 and 2006 campaigns conveyed a series of tangible, center-left proposals that sought to scale back Fujimori’s more radical market reforms and reaffirm some of the policy achievements of the prior APRA government. Examples include requiring employers to respect the eight-hour workday and pay workers for overtime or the Sierra Exportadora initiative that sought to stimulate export agriculture in the Peruvian highlands. While the sample of García’s 1985 television advertising analyzed for this project barely discussed policy

⁶⁶ Oviedo 1981, 99, 111.

⁶⁷ Sanborn 1991, 336.

⁶⁸ Augusto LaNatta. 2006. Interviewed by author. Lima, Peru, April 19.

⁶⁹ Hugo Otero. 2006. Interviewed by author. Lima, Peru, March 9.

⁷⁰ Alfonso Salcedo. 2006. Interviewed by author. Lima, Peru, March 22.

at all, the portion devoted to policy in the first and second rounds of 2001 and 2006 ranged from 43 to 70 percent.⁷¹

The decision to emphasize policy in 2001 and 2006 makes sense only as an inward-oriented reaction to García's prior strategy, not as contagion across the ideological spectrum. Other policy-oriented Peruvian presidential campaigns, such as that of Vargas Llosa in 1990, had always fared poorly in the past and should not have prompted emulation.

In sum, the evolution of campaign strategies among presidential candidates from Peru's APRA does not show any evidence of strategic contagion. Given the repeated governing failures of Peruvian presidents, APRA's natural response was to look inward for inspiration on how to approach the next election, rather than adopting a model previously employed by another party's candidate.

CONCLUSION

Existing theories of change in the nature of electoral campaigns predict cross-national convergence, driven by the diffusion of specific models of campaigning or contagion from one side of the ideological spectrum. Contrary to these predictions, the prevailing national patterns of campaign strategy in Chile, Brazil, and Peru have actually diverged from one another during the past two decades. The process of transformation in each country also differs: major presidential candidates in Chile have converged upon a strategy initially employed by the left, Brazilian candidates have adopted a model first introduced by the right, and Peruvian candidates have retained a heterogeneous mix of strategies. Not only do these outcomes differ from the predictions of the comparative literature on electoral campaigns; they also cannot be accounted for by structural and institutional differences across countries or alternative explanations for within-country strategic convergence.

In this article I have developed a theory of success contagion that can explain these cross-national differences in campaign strategy. I argue that the first politician to combine a victorious campaign with a positively evaluated term as president establishes a model of electioneering that candidates across the ideological spectrum are likely to adopt in the future. The political context of the election in which this model is established is likely to vary across countries, such that candidates ulti-

⁷¹ Other aspects of García's prior strategy, such as the unity-oriented message and simultaneous use of direct and intermediated linkages, were carried over from 1985 to 2001 and 2006, so these most recent campaigns do not represent a complete about-face.

mately converge upon a nationally distinct set of campaign practices. Success contagion is driven by candidates' desires to adopt strategies that are viewed as legitimate in the eyes of voters. Campaign strategies are likely to be delegitimized if they help elect presidents who go on to govern disastrously, and major candidates in the next election will avoid them because of their association with an unpopular incumbent. If such governing failures occur on a repeated basis, strategic convergence is much less likely because there will be no single model that candidates across the ideological spectrum are driven to adopt.

The Chilean, Brazilian, and Peruvian campaigns examined in this article illustrate the different varieties of electioneering prevailing in these countries, as well as three distinct mechanisms of strategic change associated with the theory of success contagion. In Chile the strategy of the center-left Concertación in the 1988 plebiscite relied on direct linkages and placed little emphasis on policy. In 1999 right-wing candidate Joaquín Lavín adopted a similar strategy through outright imitation of the Concertación's prior tactics. In Brazil, Collor's neopopulist approach to the 1989 election did not generate success contagion because it was delegitimized by his disastrous presidency. Rather, it was Cardoso's 1994 campaign that established the prevailing model of electioneering in Brazil—one that avoids cleavage priming and emphasizes specific proposals. Left-wing candidate Lula adopted a similar approach in 2002, largely by accepting what had become the standard operating procedure in Brazil's community of campaign professionals.

Peru illustrates a different pattern of strategic evolution—a pattern in which candidates have failed to converge over the long term. During the 1990s, when neopopulist president Alberto Fujimori enjoyed high approval ratings, candidates challenging his reelection also sought to circumvent established intermediary organizations and promote direct linkages to the people. But this imitation of Fujimori's strategy ended with his downfall in 2000. The broader pattern in Peruvian politics has involved recurrent governing failures. Lacking an attractive external model, candidates have tended to choose strategies in successive elections through an inward-oriented approach of reacting to prior errors. In the case of the center-left APRA, this process has produced strategic zigzags over the course of five elections from 1980 to 2006.

The theory of success contagion was developed inductively based on the experiences of Chile, Brazil, and Peru, but this theory should be applicable to presidential election campaigns in other cases of third-wave transition from authoritarian rule. Elsewhere, I have drawn on secondary literature to test the theory in ten additional new democracies:

Argentina, Benin, Ecuador, Ghana, Honduras, Mali, Nicaragua, the Philippines, South Korea, and Uruguay.⁷² As summarized in Table 3, the theory's predictions are supported in seven out of ten countries, and partially supported in an eighth. Major presidential candidates in Benin, Mali, Ghana, and Nicaragua converged upon national unity strategies and have avoided priming cleavages in their electoral campaigns. Strategic convergence in each of these countries can be linked to the legitimating role of either the successful transition government or first successful elected government. Three additional cases—Argentina, Uruguay, and Honduras—show evidence of back-and-forth shifts in campaign strategy that suggest inward-oriented reactions. As predicted by the theory of success contagion, we see this particular zigzag pattern in countries where there have been repeated governing failures. Like Peru, Argentina also illustrates limited strategic convergence during the 1990s, following Menem's successful first term in office. Finally, Ecuadorian candidates converged on a strategy of high policy focus in the 1980s, an outcome that is consistent with success contagion. Only after the collapse of Ecuador's party system does the theory become less useful for explaining campaign dynamics.

The evolution of presidential campaign strategies in the Philippines, South Korea, and post-1990 Ecuador contradicts the predictions of success contagion in important ways. In both Ecuador and Philippines a series of outsiders have employed neopopulist strategies in recent elections even though no prior neopopulist president has governed successfully. In both countries the rise of neopopulism occurred after successful presidencies that should have prompted convergence on a distinct campaign strategy (and that, in the case of Ecuador, did generate convergence in the 1980s). For their part, South Korean presidential candidates have largely converged on a strategy of direct linkage, low policy focus, and minimal cleavage priming. However, prior presidents always ended their terms highly unpopular, so success contagion would predict inward-oriented reactions and a zigzag trajectory rather than strategic continuity.

These disconfirming cases underscore certain situations in which the theory of success contagion has less explanatory power. All three countries have highly personalistic party systems, where existing parties are largely the fiefdoms of a few powerful individuals and dissent-

⁷² Boas 2009, chap. 5. I selected cases meeting the following criteria: (1) a Freedom House political rights score no higher than 3 for any year between 2000 and 2006; (2) a presidential system of government; (3) a transition from authoritarian rule after 1974; (4) four or more peacetime democratic presidential elections (given that convergence in Chile and Brazil did not occur until the fourth democratic election). I eliminated the Seychelles for lack of secondary literature.

TABLE 3
TESTING THE GENERALITY OF SUCCESS CONTAGION

<i>Country</i>	<i>Theory Supported</i>	<i>Candidates Converge</i>
Benin	yes	yes
Mali	yes	yes
Ghana	yes	yes
Nicaragua	yes	yes
Argentina	yes	yes: '90s; no: '80s, '00s
Uruguay	yes	no
Honduras	yes	no
Ecuador	partially	yes
Philippines	no	no
South Korea	no	yes

ing elites routinely craft personal electoral vehicles when they cannot secure the nomination of established parties.⁷³ This characteristic has meant that there is relatively little organizational continuity in each country's electoral politics; that, in turn, limits the potential for lessons to be transmitted from one campaign to the next. Moreover, both Ecuador and the Philippines have seen significant political space opened up within their party systems, either by the reluctance of the left to embrace electoral competition⁷⁴ or by the withering of traditional parties on both sides of the ideological spectrum after repeated failures in office. As in Peru, the partial or total collapse of a country's traditional party system may create unoccupied space that neopopulist candidates are able to fill on a repeated basis, regardless of whether this strategy was ever legitimated by a successful governing experience.

Though cases of party system collapse have often attracted scholars' attention, they appear to be the exception rather than the rule among new democracies. Moreover, where only part of a country's party system has suffered long-term demise, as in Peru, the theory should be useful for explaining campaign dynamics among the surviving political sectors. And among new democracies with at least moderate organizational continuity from one election to the next—a more common scenario, judging from the cases examined here—success contagion offers a generalizable explanation for why candidates of left and right tend to converge on nationally unique styles of campaigning over time.

⁷³ Heo and Stockton 2005; Brownlee 2007, 196–201; Sánchez 2008.

⁷⁴ Quimpo 2005.

APPENDIX

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING

TELEVISION ADVERTISING FORMATS

Chile, Brazil, and Peru differ somewhat in the form of television advertising allowed during electoral campaigns. In Chile and Brazil candidates are not allowed to purchase ads; instead, they receive blocks of government-sponsored airtime that run simultaneously on all broadcast television channels during the thirty to sixty days before the first-round vote and two to three weeks before the second-round vote. Individual programs are typically between two and ten minutes long, depending on the number of contenders and, in Brazil, the size of each candidate's congressional delegation.⁷⁵ In recent elections Peru has also allocated free time to presidential candidates, but it also permits paid advertising, which is far more prominent. The typical campaign ad in Peru, therefore, is a thirty-second spot interspersed among commercial advertisements.

In Chile and Brazil the same presidential advertisements are broadcast nationally. In Peru candidates may buy ads in local media markets, though such targeting is rare in presidential elections. Campaign advertising programs in Brazil are aired both at midday and during prime time, though broadcasts in these time slots are often quite similar, and campaigns always treat the prime-time slot as more important. In Chile presidential campaign advertising typically alternates between a midday and a prime-time slot on successive days.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In Brazil I analyzed only the evening electoral broadcasts, following existing studies.⁷⁶ I was able to obtain most of the evening broadcasts for every major candidate since 1989; in no case was I missing more than 25 percent of episodes, and in most cases, the figure was closer to 5 percent. For candidates who had broadcast more than four hours of advertising in any one election, I analyzed a systematic random sample (that is, distributed evenly throughout the period of advertising) of half of the episodes from that campaign. In other cases, I analyzed all episodes.

In Chile I obtained all broadcasts (daytime and prime time) for major candidates except for the first four days of Büchi's advertising in

⁷⁵ Since 1996 Brazil has also allowed campaign spots of fifteen, thirty, and sixty seconds to be aired for free at various times throughout the day. I did not examine these spots.

⁷⁶ For example, Porto and Guazina 1999; Porto 2007.

1989. I analyzed all of this material, except for the 1988 plebiscite, in which I analyzed a systematic random sample of half of the episodes.

In Peru I analyzed all spots I was able to obtain, including those available to the candidates as free time. Because of the nature of campaign advertising in Peru—broadcast at various times throughout the day and on different channels—it is more difficult to assess the completeness of this collection. During the 2006 campaign I was able to record all advertisements except for a handful of spots aired only two to four times. From a variety of archival sources, I was also able to acquire what I consider to be the vast majority of spots broadcast in the 1990, 2001, and 2006 elections, as well as a handful of spots from Alan García's campaign in 1985. While unavoidably a sample of convenience, this collection of Peruvian advertising is more complete than any other that I am aware of.

UNITIZING AND CODING

Following Porto's approach for Brazil, I used a combination of the appeal and the segment as the recording unit.⁷⁷ Segments typically change with a change in speaker, but within individual segments there may be multiple distinct appeals. For example, a candidate might criticize the incumbent government for its failure to control inflation (one appeal) and then discuss his own policy proposals in that area (a second appeal). Spots, because they are shorter than free electoral broadcasts, contain fewer distinct segments or appeals. Across all content analyzed, the average length of a unit was twenty-five seconds.

A common coding scheme was used for the analysis of all three countries. The principal categories relevant to the present article include whether the segment was devoted to policy (versus image, ideology, values, partisan affiliation, jingles, or the conduct of the campaign itself) and whether it engaged in cleavage priming. Among segments devoted to policy, relevant subcategories include whether the appeal conveyed criticism, an acclaim, or diagnosis; whether it concerned the future, present, or past; and whether the policy discussion was specific or general.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The summary statistics presented in this article concern the percentage of a candidate's total advertising time that falls into the categories and subcategories listed above. In calculating these figures, I weight each coded unit according to its elapsed time, as well as according to the frequency (or estimated frequency) with which the corresponding

⁷⁷ Porto and Guazina 1999; Porto 2007.

spot or episode was broadcast. In Brazil and Chile data on broadcast frequency can be readily obtained because broadcasts occur at a specific time of day on all channels. In Peru such data are more difficult to come by since spots air at different times on different channels. For the 2006 election I use data from the tracking firm MediaCheck, which gives broadcast frequency for all campaign spots on all over-the-air television stations in Lima. For the 2001 election I use the frequency with which each spot appeared in an archival collection of daily recordings of morning and evening news broadcasts during the campaign, housed at the Instituto Prensa y Sociedad in Lima. For earlier elections I assume that broadcast frequency is inversely proportional to length; a thirty-second spot is broadcast twice as often as a sixty-second spot.

INTERCODER RELIABILITY

Reliability was assessed by having undergraduate research assistants recode a sample of advertising from each country using written coding instructions. One coder worked on Brazil, and another on Chile and Peru; each was a proficient but nonnative speaker of the relevant language. After an initial training round for each country, I randomly sampled one video for each candidate and election year in Chile and Brazil, and two videos in Peru, from among those that the coders had not yet seen. In terms of elapsed time, these videos amounted to 4.2 percent of the material analyzed for Brazil, 4.9 percent for Chile, and 10.4 percent for Peru.

For most countries and coding categories, reliability ranged from acceptable (agreement with 79 percent of my coding decisions for specific versus general policy in Chile and Peru) to excellent (better than 95 percent agreement on cleavage priming in each country). For the distinction between policy and nonpolicy, agreement was 82 percent for Brazil, 88 percent for Chile, and 92 percent for Peru. Coders also reliably identified past policy versus present or future (82–89 percent agreement) but had difficulty distinguishing between the latter two categories, so I collapse them when presenting summary statistics. Unsatisfactory results were obtained only for specific versus general policy in Brazil (59 percent); I refrain from citing figures in this category in the corresponding section.

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