

**THE HIGH AND THE LOW IN POLITICS:
A TWO-DIMENSIONAL POLITICAL SPACE FOR COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS AND ELECTORAL STUDIES**

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces an indispensable dimension for the spatial and comparative analysis of party systems, cleavages, and the conduct of political campaigns. It presents the concepts of “high” and “low” in politics and the high-low dimension, which concerns ways of appealing (and thus relating) to people in sociologically differentiated ways. Politicians on the high are “well behaved,” more restrained, and proper, both in manners and institutional procedures. Politicians on the low sublimate less and are more down-to-earth, coarser, earthier, and personalistic, both in manners and institutionally. The high-low dimension is fully neutral, or orthogonal, with regard to the left-right axis, in contrast to Kitschelt’s authoritarian/libertarian divide or Inglehart’s materialist/post-materialist political cleavage. The paper also provides a solid conceptual discussion of the classic and almost universal polarity between left and right, which (like the high-low axis) is in fact comprised of two subdimensions.

Together, the high-low and left-right dimensions make up a two-dimensional space of politics highly useful for characterizing certain political arenas and political strategies. The concept of “low” moreover provides a much-needed, uncontroversial, and highly intuitive definition of populism. It also brings to the fore the neglected phenomenon of anti-populism. Finally, the paper illustrates the relevance of the high-low dimension in Argentina, with its “double political spectrum” divided between Peronism and anti-Peronism, Venezuela with Chavismo and anti-Chavismo, and Ecuador.

RESUMEN

Este artículo introduce una dimensión indispensable para el análisis espacial y comparativo de los sistemas de partidos, ciertos clivajes y la conducción de campañas políticas. Presenta los conceptos de “alto” y “bajo” en la política y la dimensión alto-bajo, que tiene que ver con modos de atraer (y entonces relacionarse) con la gente en modos sociológicamente diferenciados. Los políticos en lo alto son “bien educados,” comedidos y “*proper*” (o “como debe ser”), tanto en modales como en procedimientos institucionales. Los políticos en lo bajo subliman menos y tienen menos inhibiciones, son más crudos, prácticos, terrenales y personalista, tanto en modales como institucionalmente. La dimensión alto-bajo es enteramente neutral o perpendicular en relación al eje izquierda-derecha, en contraste con el eje autoritario/libertario de Kitschelt o el clivaje materialista/post-materialista de Inglehart. El artículo también provee una sólida discusión conceptual de la polaridad clásica y casi universal entre izquierda y derecha, que (como el eje alto-bajo) está compuesto de hecho de dos sub-dimensiones.

Juntas, las dimensiones alto-bajo e izquierda-derecha conforman un espacio bi-dimensional muy útil para caracterizar ciertas arenas políticas y estrategias empleadas por los políticos. El concepto de “bajo” provee además una definición no controvertida y muy intuitiva del populismo. Llama la atención también sobre el descuidado fenómeno del anti-populismo. Finalmente, el artículo ilustra la pertinencia de la dimensión alto-bajo en la Argentina, con su “doble espectro político” dividido entre peronismo y anti-peronismo, en Venezuela con el Chavismo y anti-Chavismo y, históricamente, en Ecuador.

This article identifies and introduces a crucial dimension in political competition and oppositions for the spatial and comparative analysis of party systems, social and political cleavages, and the conduct of political campaigns. This dimension concerns appeals by political actors, but it is equally useful for understanding the social reception of their political appeals and spatial positioning. While intuitively familiar, this key dimension has not previously been named and incorporated in the study of political behavior and the comparative analysis of political divides. Therefore, to characterize an important dimension that structures candidates' political strategies and even certain party systems, this article introduces the concepts of "high" and "low" in politics. Just like the left and right poles, together they form a high-low political dimension, axis, and scale.

In contrast to many other dimensions which have already been introduced in political science, such as the libertarian and authoritarian or the materialist and post-materialist ones, the high-low dimension is fully neutral, or orthogonal, with regard to the classic left-right axis. Left and right undoubtedly order most party systems around the world. Unlike other arguably orthogonal political divides such as separatism/federalism or religion/secularism, the high-low dimension is *also*, like left and right themselves, a manifestation in politics of social and cultural inequality. But it relates to inequality in a very different way than do left and right and in a way normatively disfavored by most scholars. Together, the high-low and left-right axes make up a two-dimensional space of politics which is highly useful for the study of political strategy, the analysis of the social reception of political appeals, and, where political differences evolved into a political cleavage, entire party systems.

The empirical puzzle that furnished the early starting point for this spatial conceptualization of political arenas and actors has been the cleavage between Peronism and anti-Peronism in Argentina, observed firsthand over two decades. However, the concepts of high and low in politics travel remarkably well and are not specific to a particular case. The high-low dimension is a middle-range phenomenon. One challenge is thus to explore the conditions that lead to the emergence of arenas that are politically structured more in terms of high and low than left and right or liberal and conservative.

The degree of relevance of high and low for the politics of different societies varies widely. The high-low dimension seems particularly relevant in "third-wave"

democracies. At its greatest level of relevance, the high-low axis is *the* dimension defining the main political cleavage of a given country, thus structuring its entire party system. In Latin America, this has been the case in Argentina for over half a century and is largely the case in Venezuela. At the simplest and most modest level, high-low political differences can be clearly observable between political candidates, but they do not structure political competition. The electoral impact is then at the margins, for example, among undecided voters or voters with no established political identities. The older, well-established party systems of Western Europe and the US have already been structured around a left-right divide broadly defined. More inchoate party systems, be they recent, the product of collapsed older party systems, or simply a result of lack of institutionalization, are a particularly fertile terrain for the development of the high-low dimension. In Ecuador for example, where no party system has yet become institutionalized but where political competition takes place in fair electoral contests, the high-low dimension has played a historic role in the alignment of political actors and as an axis of electoral competition and political preferences. Comparative political studies of electoral politics and party systems in developing countries and “third-wave” democracies will thus have to reckon seriously with this political axis.

The high-low political categories fill an important gap in political analysis. To mention one instance, Peronism in Argentina was considered at the end of the Second World War to be clearly on the right of the political spectrum; from the 1960s to the 1980s, it was thought to be on the left of the spectrum and to the left of anti-Peronism; in the 1990s, Peronism was once again considered on the right of the political spectrum and to the right of anti-Peronism; in the early part of this decade, Peronism in power was again somewhat to the left of the political spectrum. With the proper analytic tools, it is clear that no perplexing leapfrogging occurred along what is, in fact, the main axis of political competition in that country. To be analytically oblivious of the high-low dimension frequently leads scholars to mischaracterize a party system where personalistic politics is important as an inchoate one, especially in the absence of defined and stable party programs, while political competition may in reality be highly structured: in terms of high and low. Most fundamentally yet, high and/or low appeals in politics allow us to easily account for the electoral success of conservative politicians among a popular-

sector electorate or, inversely, of progressive candidates or parties among upper-middle class and even wealthy voters. The high-low dimension in politics is thus a fundamental tool in the political sociology of electoral behavior and political divides.

Already, Inglehart and Klingemann (1976: 264–69) as well as Knutsen (1988: 345–49) have unequivocally de-linked left-right attitudes from class positions, in sharp contrast with earlier work in political sociology, in which class position was even *part of* the definition of left and right (Lipset 1981: 127–130). Recognizing that left and right are appeals, including structured principles and values for many voters, does not necessarily mean that political sociology in general, and class analysis in particular, are moribund undertakings. Social differences—including those regarding social status, income, education, and tastes—may express themselves in manifold ways in politics, with the high-low dimension being a crucial one.

Roadmap. The paper first introduces the concepts of high and low in politics, discussing them theoretically. The political dimension that they form together is thus described and analyzed. Taking stock of the vast literature on the topic, the next section provides a synthetic conceptualization of the essential and classical concepts of “left” and “right” in politics.

The following section of the article dispels some all-too-frequent misunderstandings regarding the present high-low dimension and the two-dimensional political space associated with it. The present framework, it should be emphasized again, is a *political* space, not a social space about social status or other social variables. The relationship between political appeals, policy programs, and political identities must also be clarified. Certainly, the framework attempts to be normatively neutral. We show the attractiveness of each side of the high-low divide, as one should also be able to do with the left-right divide.

The definition of the low in politics actually provides a crisp and intuitive definition of the highly contested concept of populism. In the process, it also highlights the neutrality of populism, often forgotten in the heat of debates, with regard to left and right. Scholars have at times assumed populism to be left-of-center because of its economic policies or social basis or right-of-center because of its top-down authoritarian

nature or the damage it creates to the republican institutions of liberal democracy. While “populism” is generally mentioned in isolation from the countervailing political (and normative) reaction it generates, the low is actually one of two poles of what is a *dimension*, a *scale*.¹

The final section of the article is comparative, showing how high and low apply in a few of the settings where they are clearly at work. This section suggests that the terms travel well, and it illustrates how these concepts can be used by scholars of democracy, parties, and party systems, especially in the study of third-wave democracies.²

THE HIGH AND THE LOW IN POLITICS

High and Low, Left and Right in Politics

This article starts squarely and explicitly with theoretical concepts. In turn, those concepts can be easily operationalized to produce indicators useful for the analysis of political behavior. In contrast to various forms of factor analysis (including principal components analysis) and to multidimensional scaling (MDS)—all of which have their research starting point in the questions of opinion polls—my starting point is embedded in “theory-intensive” categories.³

While fascinating as statistical techniques, the claims of MDS and factor analysis to a pre-theoretical empiricism have two benign shortcomings. First, the survey questions themselves must be somewhat *theoretically* driven; otherwise, statistical work will obviously not provide very meaningful results. Second, in the case of factor analysis, the factors that are found must then be *named*, thus involving conceptually educated and theoretically driven guesses. In the case of MDS, the researcher must find meaningful dimensions in the map obtained; these dimensions must then also be theoretically interpreted and *named*.⁴ Statistic-intensive empirical methods thus cannot escape the need for theoretical grounding at both their beginning and end points.

Spatially, the high-low and left-right axes are neutral or orthogonal with regard to one another. Together they give rise to a two-dimensional political space of appeals.

High and low. The high-low axis is made up, and defined, by two subdimensions or components. Intuitively, what the two components have in common is that they relate to *ways of being* and *acting* in politics.⁵ Both components are, in that sense, “cultural” and very concrete—perhaps more concrete than left and right. High and low have to do with ways of *relating* to people; as such, they go beyond “discourses” as mere words, and they include issues of accents, level of language, body language, gestures, ways of dressing, etc. As a way of relating to people, they also encompass the *way* of making decisions. These different aspects may be more difficult to change in a *credible* way than are left-right positioning. As importantly, when social-cultural identities already exist in a society, high and low political appeals and positions allow the voter to recognize a politician as credibly “*one of ours*.” High and low are thus not superficially or faddishly about style, but link deeply with a society’s history, existing group differences, identities, and resentments. They even involve different criteria for judging what is likeable and morally acceptable in a candidate.

Theoretically and conceptually, the high-low axis consists of two closely related subdimensions or components: the *social-cultural* and the *political-cultural*. These subdimensions, like those constitutive of left and right, stand at an angle, but a much sharper angle (as we shall see) than that between the two subdimensions of the left-right schema. Although the two constitutive subdimensions are not reducible to one another, high and low therefore appear much more unequivocally unidimensional, in a Downsian way, than left and right in fact are.

The first component of the high-low axis is the *social-cultural* appeal in politics. This component encompasses manners, demeanors, ways of speaking and dressing, vocabulary, and tastes displayed in public. On the high, people publicly present themselves as well behaved, proper, composed, and perhaps even bookish. Moreover, politicians on the high are often “well-mannered,”⁶ perhaps even polished, in public self-presentation and tend to use either a rationalist (at times replete with jargon) or ethically oriented discourse. Negatively, they can appear as stiff, rigid, serious, colorless, somewhat distant, and boring.⁷ On the low, people frequently use a language that includes slang or folksy expressions and metaphors, are more demonstrative in their

bodily or facial expressions as well as in their demeanor, and display more raw, culturally popular tastes.⁸ Politicians on the low are capable of being more uninhibited in public and are also more apt to use coarse or popular language. They appear—to the observer on the high—as more “colorful” and, in the very extreme cases, somewhat grotesque.⁹ While we may wish to call this subdimension class-cultural, I have found that it is empirically most closely correlated, though not synonymous, with education level. For example, in the US, Al Gore was certainly to the high of Ross Perot, even though Perot is much wealthier and clearly a part of the “bourgeoisie.”

This first, social-cultural, component is in fact a politicization of the social markers emphasized in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu in his classic work of social theory on taste and aesthetics (1979). From a different theoretical perspective, it is a politicization of the—in fact, empirically quite similar—differences in concrete manners at the core of Norbert Elias’ seminal work (1982 [1939], also 1986). Bourdieu emphasizes cultural capital as a “legitimate” form of distinction or, as I would call it for present purposes, a credential and a mark of respectability. Elias’ historical sociology, on the other hand, was more concerned about a gradual, irregular, and long-term process of “civilization” in manners.¹⁰ In both social theorists’ works, however, one pole of the spectrum—whether long-term historical or class related—is a certain kind of propriety (and even distinction or refinement) that is legitimate by prevailing international standards, especially in the more developed countries. From that peculiar standpoint, the popular classes’ *and* certain “third-world” practices often appear as more “backward,” less “slick.” It is indifferent to my purpose that Bourdieu views in a very negative light the function and effects of class habitus, while Elias very much approved of the “civilizing process” at work in Western-European culture over the long term. What is of interest here is the concrete spectrum of practices. In the local instance of Argentina, for example, there were perhaps no greater political extremes on the high-low spectrum than those that existed in 1988 between Argentina’s two main contenders for the presidency: Carlos Menem, known locally as the “Tiger of Anillaco,” with his huge sideburns, flaunting his raw sexual tastes, riding on top of a garbage truck in the slums or galloping on horseback dressed in a poncho, versus the rather stiff, “proper,” and “respectable” Civic Radical Union *Radicales* Eduardo Angeloz or Fernando De la Rúa.

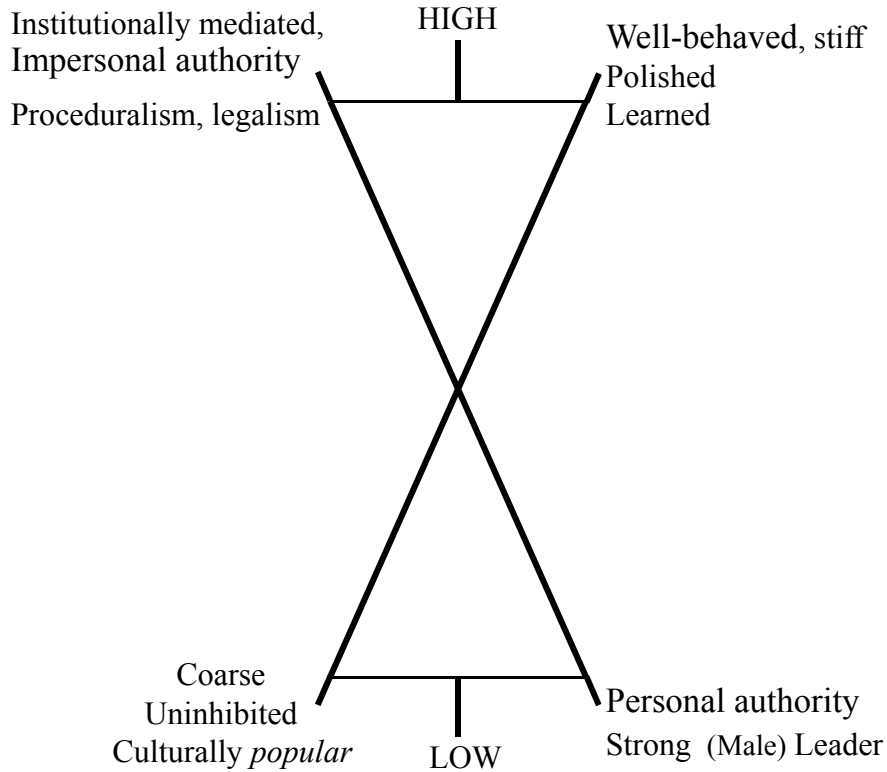
Figure 1

The Constitutive Dimensions of the High-Low and Left-Right Axes

Constitutive Dimensions of High-Low Appeals in Politics

Political-cultural

Social-cultural



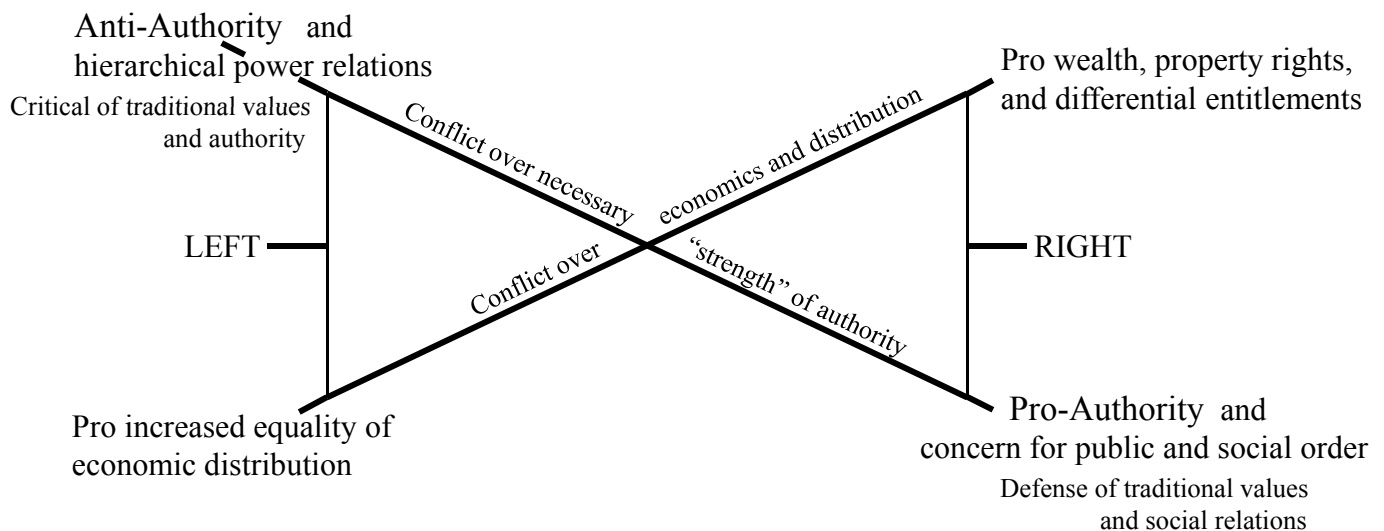
Social-cultural

Political-cultural

Constitutive Dimensions of Left-Right Appeals in Politics

Political

Socioeconomic



Socioeconomic

Political

Although sociocultural differences are present in all societies, and are even at times very sharp and meaningful, these differences are usually not *constitutive* of given political identities. For example, although sharp class-cultural differences existed in England throughout the twentieth century, they did not define in politics different party alternatives or what Labour and the Tories are about. Rather, the Labour Party appealed to working-class voters largely in socioeconomic terms. Sociocultural differences remained largely outside the political arena. One is hard-pressed to find a Labour leader speaking with a cockney accent; and while heavy drinking and loud singing at the pub is part of British working-class identity, it is not specifically associated with the Labour Party or its leaders. In some cases, however, sociocultural differences *do* become politicized. That is, manners, publicized tastes, language, and mode of behavior in public do become associated with, and even defining of, political identities. In such cases, *social* identities with their many cultural attributes interact with *political* identities. They do so through different ways of appealing to (or “relating” with) supporters and, inversely, through different criteria for finding a given candidate more likable or trustworthy, i.e., the two directions embedded in political representation. These appeals are not only differences in style, although they certainly are that. They are public manifestations of recognizably social aspects of the self in society (as well as the self’s desires) that contribute to creating a social sense of trust based on an assumption of sameness, or coded understanding. In that regard, one can speak not only of politicians but also of parties being on the high or on the low.

The second component of the high-low axis of appeals in politics is *political-cultural*. This component is about forms of political leadership and preferred (or advocated) modes of decision-making in the polity. On the high, political appeals consist of claims¹¹ to favor formal, impersonal, legalistic, institutionally mediated models of authority. On the low, political appeals emphasize very personalistic, strong (generally male) leadership.¹² Personal versus impersonal authority is perhaps a good synthesis of this polarity. The pole arguing for impersonal authority generally claims to represent “procedural normalcy” (at least as a goal to be achieved) in the conduct of public life, along with formal and generalizable¹³ procedures in public administration. The

personalist pole generally claims to be much closer to “the people” and to represent them better than the pole claiming (or arguing) for a more impersonal, procedural, proper¹⁴ model of authority.

This particular subdimension has acquired particular relevance in the contemporary study of Latin American politics. In various countries of the continent, it moved to the political front stage in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Political science scholars have also recently devoted a fair amount of energy to issues pertaining to this dimension¹⁵ and it has also been a central element of the 1990s debate on neo-populism initiated by Kurt Weyland (e.g., 1996) and Ken Roberts (1995).

In the field, one finds, on the low—using the language of some of these actors—the appeals of leaders “*con pelotas*” (“with balls”) who know how to lead the people. These leaders often also claim that they “don’t talk, but get things done.” To quote a retired Argentine colonel on the low, Aldo Rico, they “doubt” less, as “doubt is the bragging of intellectuals.”¹⁶ In a classic statement on Adhemar de Barros in Brazil, it was said without shame that: “*Rouba, mas faz!*”—that is, “He steals, but he gets things done!”¹⁷ The low entails a preference for decisive action, often at the expense of some “formalities,” while the high values the “niceties” that accompany the rule of law. Despite the high’s claim to greater propriety, however, it is *not* clear which pole most respects *electoral rules*, as of the legitimate mode of determining political power.¹⁸

What do these two components of the high-low axis have in common? In practice, and as unusual as it may sound, it is clearly the *level of sublimation* and of suppression¹⁹ that is judged ideal in the exercise of leadership and authority. The high is definitely more *abstract* and *restrained*, claiming to be more proper, whether in manners or in procedure. It is also colder, including (comparatively) in the reaction it triggers among supporters. The low is more concrete and into immediacy. Perceptions of immediacy have important implications with respect to establishing relations with *la gente* (“regular” people) or *el pueblo* (“the people”). Personalism can also be seen as warmer and easier to relate to. The low generally does not worry overly much about appearing improper in the eyes of the international community and also at times apparently seems to enjoy it.

These characteristics are important not only or mainly as cultural markers of social differences, but as cultural modes, or ways of being, that play a large part in the “economy of affection and dislikes” in social relations—whether direct or imagined.²⁰ This phenomenon comes to the fore in common utterances such as: “I don’t want to associate with *ese tipo de gente*” (“that kind of people”) or “I don’t want people *like that* in government,” or even more simply: “Yes, I can relate to [name of politician]!”

A similar way of stating the same point from an institutionalist perspective, now focusing solely on the political-cultural component, is that political authority on the low is less *mediated*.²¹ Mediation undoubtedly involves a more sublimated type of practice, whereas behavior on the low, in terms of both dimensions, is certainly more “crass”²² and direct. To use a vivid metaphor, one could speak, in Levi Strauss’ famous terms, of “raw” and “cooked.” “Cruder” and “more refined,” are also, from the standpoint of the high, a correct approximation on the social-cultural subdimension of high and low. Undoubtedly, most intellectuals have preferred—and are located—on the high.²³ On the other hand, poorer and less educated people have often enjoyed and preferred the *less sublimated* cultural expressions and discourse of politicians on the low, as well as the *personalization* of power and social services that have often gone with it, as under Evita and Juan Perón or Hugo Chávez. Low movements on the right are always personalistic.

As a last observation, it should be noted that the “immediate” is more concrete, “immanent,” earthy, and culturally localist (“from here”), while the reverse is true of abstracting mediation. The high tends to justify its concerns in more abstract terms and to convey them through more “universalizing,” less culturally localized language. This high-low contrast is thus logically related to the polarity between “nativism” and “cosmopolitanism,” the “guts from within” and the “*mirada desde afuera*” (the gaze from the outside). On the culturally *popular* low pole, specific expressions and practices can only be taken from a particular, culturally bounded repertoire, even though the general themes may be common to those on the high. In contrast, in “cosmopolitanism” there is something that, by definition, must allow its beholder to “travel” and have an acceptable behavior.²⁴ This secondary aspect, i.e., “cultural nativism” and “cosmopolitanism,” is about localist traits²⁵ and cultural practices; it does not entail policies, such as anti-immigration policies, nationalization of foreign-owned industries, anti-imperialist

measures, and so forth. Forms of appeal are modes in which politicians and leaders express themselves and relate to their electorate, to a certain desired clientele. In Argentina for example, where the high has always been much more culturally cosmopolitan than the low, the “from here” versus “from there” polarity sets a peculiar form of rhetorical nationalism against an idealized and abstract view of “institutional” processes and “ways of being,” allegedly copied from developed countries. This situation is arguably widespread in semi-peripheral, “third-world,” or late developing societies.

The “universal” left-right axis in politics. The left-right axis is the political axis that orders most party systems and party competitions in democracies around the world.²⁶ In terms of definition, conceptually, there are also two dimensions constituting the left-right axis or scale (Figure 1), a finding supported by both survey analysis about that scale²⁷ and by political history.

These two constitutive dimensions of left and right are, however, at an angle in relation to one another, as illustrated in Figure 1. This angle can be measured statistically, through factor analysis or principal component analysis. According to Shafer and Claggett, in the US the angle is very small at the elite level but approaches perpendicularity at the mass public level (1995: 23–24). Most quantitative analyses of Western European politics show a high level of correlation (i.e., a small angle) between the two dimensions of left and right, even among the mass public.²⁸ In the absence of another relevant political axis (such as high and low, or separatist and federalist, etc.), it is actually possible to have a political space constituted of four quadrants defined by these two oblique dimensions of left and right (Figure 1). Since the angles are clearly not orthogonal, however, it is not surprising that, in the US, both poles on the left-hand side have been called “liberal” and both poles on the right-hand side “conservative”—even though they differ from one another and alliances across the obtuse angles are not impossible.

The first and perhaps most well-known dimension defining the left-right axis is the *socioeconomic* policy one between, on one pole, appeals for more equal economic distribution and, on the other, appeals that favor established property rights and entitlements.²⁹ Calls for nationalization and for a greater governmental role in the

economy, half a century ago, were rightly understood as an attack on dominant economic interests and, by the left, as policies that would increase the welfare of the majority (at the expense of the previous owners).³⁰ The same logic and polarities held true for the debates on the expansion and financing of the welfare state, which, according to the left, also implied greater protection for the destitute. Tax debates also belong to this dimension of left and right. Efforts to reduce income inequality, even at the expense of established entitlements, are still very much at the core of this dimension of left and right. At the global level, a similar debate and polarity now also exists, and not even mainly in reference to the extent of aid to the “third world.” Calls to protect the patents and rights of, for example, the pharmaceutical industry against generic drug production (e.g., against AIDS) in the third world and the appeal of third-world countries against such calls also follow that polarity. Youth and grass roots movements for greater regulation of world trade and investment is perhaps the newest form of the left. In other words, the left pole of this dimension favors a greater role for *politics* in producing *more equal* economic distribution, whether this is through state intervention, self-management, regulations, or any other devices.³¹ Left or right appeals, in this dimension, generally refer to public measures that are perceived to have differential socioeconomic effects (especially for the very rich or for the have-nots/laborers/popular sectors/”people”). Some authors have referred to this dimension as the “old left” versus what should logically be called the “old right,” although it is very far from certain that it is passé. The policies advocated may have changed, as well as the arena of conflict, which is now more global, but this dimension of the left-right axis remains definitionally and conceptually the same.

The second dimension of left and right is the *political* dimension of *attitudes toward order and authority* or, more precisely, toward the necessary exertion of hierarchical authority required by social life. This dimension, certainly as important politically and theoretically as the first one, can be said in a more recognizable way to be about attitudes toward hierarchical power relations and the desirability of public and social order.³²

This subdimension is, in a sense, about attitudes toward “the Father”: God, the patriarch, or the one who gives order. The left, on this dimension, is anti-God, anti-patriarchal, against the boss, i.e., somewhat “parricidal” and “horizontalizing” in terms of

social structure and hierarchy. The most extreme examples are certainly the anarchists, but radical feminism, many countercultural movements throughout the ages, or student movements are all good political examples. The other pole of this dimension, on the right, is pro-law-and-order, pro-paterfamilias, pro-authority. Pro-law-and-order conservatives and—in difficult, disorderly, and anomic times—support for military dictators or fascist leaders who reestablish public order are examples close to one end of that spectrum.

To a certain extent, some authors have preferred to refer to this dimension as a conflict between the new right and the new left. Although this dimension of left and right is highly relevant in politics, I remain skeptical about the extent to which it is in fact conceptually “new.” The overall polarity is ancient, and that second dimension of left and right is also, in reality, probably more important than the socioeconomic one in the origins of the left-right semantic itself at the time of the French Revolution. Certainly, the severe conflict in Spain between the anarchists and the Franco forces ran mostly, although not only, along this second dimension. *Some* of the issue-appeals used in survey research as indicators to measure positions that to a large extent fall on this dimension are, however, new.³³ For example, the Eurobarometer has been using indicators such as support for military defense, more severe penalties for acts of terrorism, the right to choose abortion, and stronger measures to protect the environment from human exploitation.³⁴ In a similar vein, the post-materialist/materialist divide taps, to a large extent, into what is basically a critical attitude toward traditional values and authority and also toward rigid imposition of modern bureaucratic “system” authority—in both cases in the name of self-expression and self-determination. “Materialism”, to be sure, is a much broader category than “post-materialism,” as it explicitly includes the *two* types of right (capital accumulation; security and order) as well as, at least theoretically, the *economic left!* The concern for public and social order is equivalent to Kitschelt’s emphasis on law and order, public morality (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 67, 70, 140, 269–73, 418–19), and hierarchical modes of collective decision-making (1992: 13), on one pole of what he has formally called a “social-cultural” divide (67), but has now recently (and to us, more appropriately) also called “political-cultural” (referring to “political governance”).³⁵

These two dimensions of the left-right axis are observable in many, if not most, countries, including the US itself. One hears of the New Deal old left versus a right that fights big government and welfare, wants lower taxes, and, more generally, defends property rights. This dimension is often associated, socially, with labor versus capital, unions versus big business. As Knutsen (1988) has forcefully argued, however, one should *not* confuse the left-right “Materialist” *ideological* cleavage with the class or social status *structural* cleavage, as the two have empirically become increasingly independent, without the former losing its political relevance.³⁶ Certainly, attitudes towards property rights, social inequality, and, in our capitalist societies, the free operation of market forces are key litmus tests of socioeconomic left-right positioning.

One has equally witnessed, again including in the US, youth countercultural movements in politics, or has heard criticisms by conservatives of liberals’ undermining of “family values,” the public role of religion (e.g., at school), police law enforcement, and, in the US, the people’s rights to bear arms. On the left, those on that pole of this second left-right dimension have typically been the student movement (whether in its May 68 or Californian form), culturally “experimental” people in the arts (e.g., in music and painting), or adepts of alternative religions or utopian politics.³⁷ Sociologically, those at the other pole are often more rural, family-production oriented people—with the older males being more vocal. In Latin America, the right pole of this dimension has been typically located, historically, in sectors of the armed forces³⁸ and, not infrequently, of the church (e.g., Opus Dei), as well as, in extreme forms, among paramilitary leaders.

These two (sub)dimensions of left and right are quite inescapable; they are also not theoretically reducible to one another. In the absence of another relevant axis, these *oblique* dimensions could even form the basis of four political quadrants, as is arguably perhaps the case in the US. A winning political strategy, in this case, is to attempt to combine three quadrants (downplaying the opposition between the two opposite poles included) against the fourth one. Such was arguably the strategy of Bill Clinton, combining the value liberal pole with both the trade-union basis and the owners of the new economy (see Figure 1), or of Ronald Reagan, clearly on the value right and appealing at the same time to capital owners and to nonunionized, white, working-class “Reagan democrats.” Combining the poles across the obtuse angles is not impossible: the

influential *New York Times* combined value liberal and pro-free-market economics in the 1990s; similarly, it is often argued that the forgotten non-unionized white working-class American majority is receptive to both of the poles shown at the lower end of Figure 1.³⁹ That is, class-educational differences are in fact more noticeable *across* the divide defined “vertically” by the two *obtuse* angles, than across the usual liberal-conservative, left-right divide defined by the more closely correlated sharp angles (Figure 1).

In his “smallest space analysis,” Inglehart observed how in Europe “although a broad left-right dimension is visible..., closer examination reveals how this dimension actually subsumes two distinct components: the traditional left-right polarization and a New Politics dimension” (1990: 275); he then also draw four quadrants defined by these oblique dimensions. In practice, however, these two dimensions have generally merged, tactically, and even in terms of “common sense,” along a unidimensional political scale. In many countries, the left-right axis is in fact the only one that significantly orders parties, issues, politicians, or voters in the party system. In the US, the two distinct dimensions merged decades ago under the labels “liberals” and “conservatives.”

At the most generic level, we partake of the consensual conclusions arrived at separately by Inglehart, Laponce, or Bobbio, that is, that “the core meaning of the Left-Right dimension...is whether one supports or opposes social change in an *egalitarian* direction” (Inglehart 1990: 293) or, almost identically, that it is “the attitude of real people in society to the ideal of equality” (Bobbio 1996: 60). The left, to follow Laponce’s imagery, is certainly—and not only with regard to income or class—”horizontalizing” (1981).

While equality has been at the core of this unabashedly *left-centered* definition of the axis, perhaps a less skewed perspective would more accurately underline tensions between appeals to economic growth (*per se*) and social justice (*per se*)⁴⁰ on the socioeconomic dimension, and between appeals for public order and security versus “entropic” emancipation on the public-political dimension. “*Left*” should be conceptualized, overall, as political projects and actors who aim to transform the *structure* of social power, socioeconomic or otherwise, in an egalitarian direction. The “*right*” are political projects and actors aiming to protect a societal (i.e., socioeconomic or other) structure of power against attacks searching to erode or destroy it. The right also

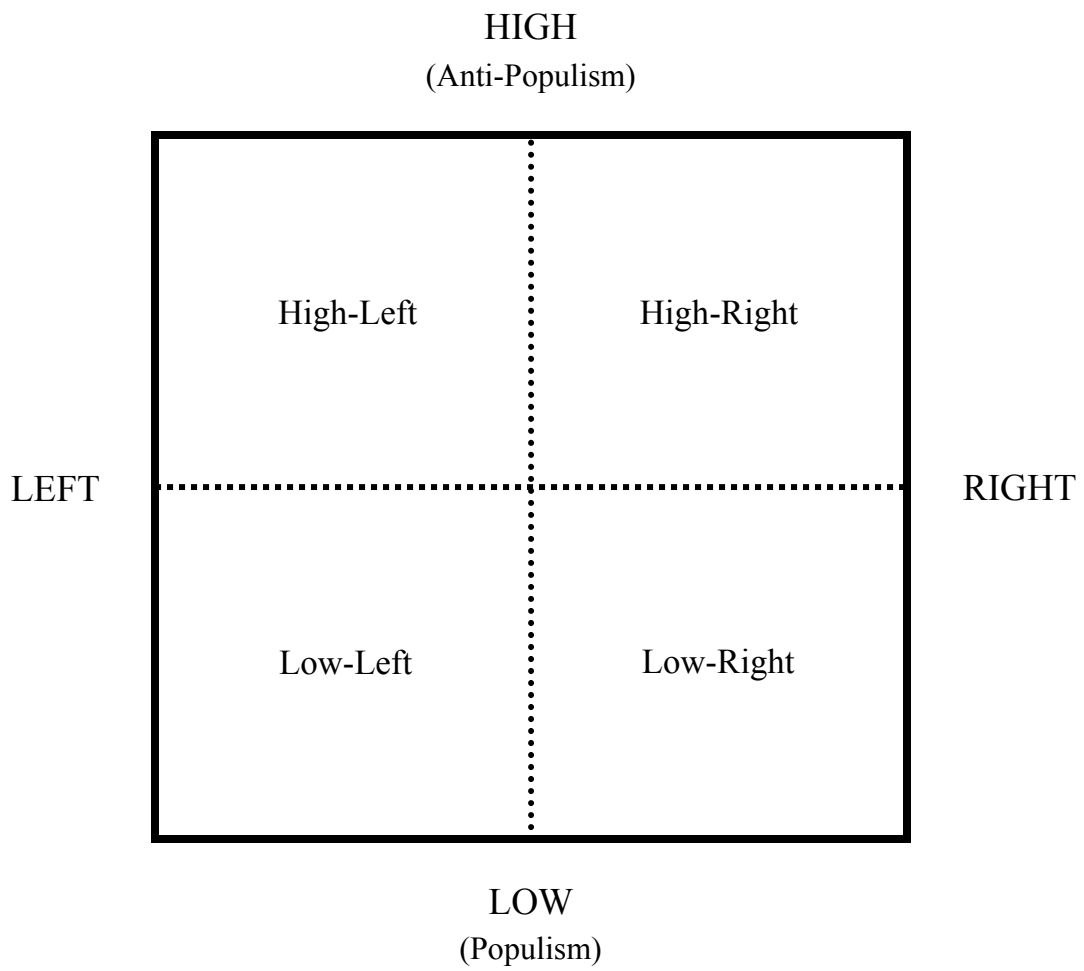
includes projects and actors aiming to achieve political transformation in order to strengthen such structures or even to restore them to an earlier state. A structuring order is always clothed as a moral order (in what is often *doxa* for the actor), and the right indeed usually takes the public defense of this—psychologically structuring—given moral order quite to heart.

It should be noted that when it comes to situating political actors, whether it is in terms of the left-right or the high-low scale, one of the two subdimensions appears to be cognitively dominant. For placement on the left-right scale, analysts often put greater weight, cognitively, on the socioeconomic distribution subdimension. Similarly, scholars who have been introduced to the high-low spectrum often appear to put greater weight, cognitively, on the social-cultural dimension.⁴¹ This tendency is perhaps due to the still dominant position of the social over the political (including questions of authority and order) in our minds when it comes to “verticality” in society, since the social tends to be more concrete.

A two-dimensional political space. The orthogonal left-right and high-low axes, *together*, form a two-dimensional political space of appeals, in which we can locate actors, parties, and politicians. This basic political space is illustrated in Figure 2 and is used throughout this work. As we will see in the conclusion, it also travels very well to several, but not most, other political arenas in Latin America and the rest of the world. Its relevance lies not only in its characterizing possibilities and in being a theoretically solid schema: location along each of those two axes also has fundamental consequences in the societal reception of political appeals and in the *sociology of the vote*. Furthermore, as the space is two-dimensional instead of unidimensional, it allows for a variety of possible *combinations* of political alliances, as well as, crucially, a variety of very dissimilar political strategies for appealing to similar social sectors in the electorate. For example, it is quite possible as a right-wing politician to appeal to the popular sectors by being on the low, while the task of left-wing politicians seeking to maintain support among those same popular sectors may become more difficult if they are on the high-left, as is often the case.

Figure 2

A Two-Dimensional Political Space
of Positions and Appeals



A clear analytical advantage of the political space of appeal delineated in Figure 2 is that the left-right axis (scale, dimension) and the high-low axis are fully *neutral*, or orthogonal in relation to one another. That is, *any* combination is not only possible, as is commonly the case in spaces configured by non-orthogonal axes,⁴² but equally possible.

The same is not true of Kitschelt's (1992; 1994) initial political space, in which the libertarian pole is, by definition, decidedly tilted to the left. Indeed, Kitschelt (1992: 13) states that his "use of the of the concept of 'libertarian' is rooted in the European...convention that associates the term with anarchist and syndicalist theories of direct democracy, sympathetic to the self-organization of autonomous individuals and voluntary association in collective decision-making processes." It is difficult to conceive of anarchists or anarcho-syndicalists as being on the right (in fact, there is nothing to the left of anarcho-syndicalism!). Indeed, much of this libertarian-authoritarian axis corresponds to the specific political subdimension of left and right outlined above.⁴³ Those on the opposite authoritarian pole favor hierarchical, "stratified ordering," are fearful of societal change (1994: 10), and "invoke social hierarchy" (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 67). In his excellent recent book on Eastern Europe, Kitschelt (1999) himself admits that his social libertarian-authoritarian axis corresponds precisely to the second dimension of the left-right scale (1999: 73–74).⁴⁴ Moreover, Kitschelt's libertarians' "preferences for social reciprocity and individual creativeness over monetary earnings" (1994: 16) and their valuing of "creative self-fulfillment, self-determination, and participatory decision-making" (1994: 17) make them strikingly similar, if not entirely identical, to Inglehart's post-materialists. Inglehart (1990) was perhaps initially more upfront in acknowledging that his post-materialism category is tilted toward the left; his main question was therefore whether parties *on the left* will adapt to this "cultural shift" in public opinion, or whether it is new parties such as the Greens that will do so.

The political space I propose, in contrast, is defined by two dimensions that are fully orthogonal, both in theory and in practice. In other words, it is no more theoretically "improbable" or contradictory for politicians to be located in some quadrants than in others; all are equally real political possibilities (though some may predominate in a particular place or at particular times). And indeed, in Argentina, political actors have settled the entire two-dimensional political space. Furthermore, this specific space is

defined by axes *both* of which result from different ways of *translating* a *single* domain, i.e., societal inequality, in politics. It thus multiplies the strategies of possible political appeal because it allows for equally possible ways of translating *similar* social contrasts into politics and thus of appealing to similarly situated voters. Each of these ways is then equally combinable with any position on the orthogonal dimension.

Possible Misconceptions

One must dispel four fundamental broad misconceptions about the present framework. Such misconceptions are all too frequent and should be discarded at the outset.

A political space. First, and by far foremost, what I am introducing here is a *political space*, not a social one. The high and the low are not the rich people versus the poor people, the working class versus the bourgeoisie, the educated versus the uneducated, or “those above” in contrast to “those below” socially or in terms of social stratification. All of the above are *social* actors or characteristics. There may certainly be very interesting statistical relations and political effects between high and low in politics and any of these social categories, but these remain to be determined empirically. A different way to make a very similar point is that there are various ways in which social cleavages may be translated into the political arena and party system. Left and right is one of them, high and low is another, and these two possibilities do not exhaust the whole gamut.

What I am interested in are *political appeals*. Now, these appeals may most certainly be *directed* at particular social classes. Appeals, however, may or may not prove effective electorally or politically. Taking the familiar US political arena, Ross Perot, for example, is to the low of Gore or Walter Mondale; but this does not mean that he is poorer than either of them, on the contrary. In Argentina, Menem is to the low of Raúl Alfonsín or the socialist Alfredo Bravo; this does not mean that he is poorer than they, much on the contrary. Similarly, certainly not all low income people are (or have preferences) on the low, as clearly illustrated by the case of graduate students in the humanities. Nor, certainly, may all rich people be assumed to be on the high, as in the possible case of (to take a quite random illustration) a crass, self-made successful businessman specializing in the distribution of pork chops. In fact, assumptions on this

front can only be regarded as plausible hypotheses until there is empirical observation, whether of a direct experiential, qualitative indirect, or quantitative type. High and low, in short, are political appeals, and perhaps even identities, but not social classes or social groups.

Political appeals, the notion of “rationality,” and political identities. The political space I am interested in is thus a political space of appeals. Economic policy programs *are* one possible type of electoral appeal, and are clearly and effectively used as political appeals. It would make little sense to consider economic policy orientation as not being an appeal, somehow strangely reserving that term for the cultural realm! There are many ways to *appeal* to voters. Promising to privatize the telephone company or to raise wages are examples of one sort of appeals. Other sorts are equally possible. One subdimension of the left-right scale, as we saw, is precisely about appeals through public measures that are perceived as having differential socioeconomic effects. It is, however, unfortunate that a minority of rational choice theorists have, contrary to other rational choice theorists’ definition of *self-interest* as being “subjectively determined by the voter” (Enelow and Hinich 1984: 3), imputed to actors intentions and beliefs that are limited a priori (and somewhat “metaphysically”) because they seem plausible (or logical) to the author. For example, at times voters are *assumed* to narrowly seek to maximize economic or personal monetary gain.⁴⁵ Amartya Sen, quoting Albert Hirschman, has written that such a conception “involves taking, inter alia, a very restricted view of the motives and passions of human beings” (1986: 344), and not a very worldly one. Jon Elster, a founder of rational choice theory, has also criticized the use of rational choice theory by several comparativists, who *assume* actors are “motivated by their material interest” (2000: 692). Moreover, he underscores that “even when expanded to include broader goals, rational choice theory is often inadequate because people may not conform to the canons of [*maximizing*] instrumental rationality” (692). In line with spatial rational choice analysis, but contrary to rational choice institutionalism, it does not seem possible to accept a functionalist *derivation of preferences*, i.e., of “the content of self-interest from the incentives and constraints set by the established context” (Weyland 2002: 59).⁴⁶ But the theory of rational choice associated with spatial analysis may be promising for the type of

analysis presented here, with the proviso that one make explicit that preference structures are not linked only to issues, narrowly defined. A “rational choice” in voting, as spatial analysis argues, has more to do with the logic of proximity, or closeness, than with the kind of hyper-rationalist thinking and reasoning associated with, for instance, “nested games of backward induction, complete with discounting over an infinite horizon” (Elster 2000: 692).

It is well known amongst scholars of political behavior that identities, including party identities, play a large role in electoral behavior. The Michigan school has indeed been largely predominant in the field during several decades, even if it unfortunately focused on socialization as the main causal mechanism of political identity formation. We certainly emphasize the—increasingly unacknowledged—importance of *expressive* behavior, in line with Weber’s four types of social action, which in addition often also has a *normative* component, at the time of casting one’s vote. Expressive identity voting is coupled in normal times with a certain instrumental logic, but I remain skeptical that (at the micro level) the type of utility calculations being made by developing countries’ lower-sector voters are amenable to complex, reliable, and precise mathematical formulations.

Political appeals and political identities are clearly different concepts. Political identities, furthermore, are sometimes reduced, particularly in the study of US political behavior, to party ID, such as “*being* Democrat.” But a political identity may be that of being a leftist (as in “*I am* a leftist”), of a nationalist cause (“*I am* a ___ nationalist”), or even of a politicized religion. Identities can of course be combined. Identity and “self,” psychologically, are very much intertwined. Indeed an identity defines a self, usually in relation to other people, groups, or identities. Second, identities involve a *temporal dimension of endurance*. It is much easier to “adopt” or “drop” an opinion than it is to acquire or lose an identity.

Competing politicians make political appeals to a public, along many possible dimensions.⁴⁷ As—individual—actions reaching others, appeals also involve a much briefer duration in time than political identities and cleavages, although appeals can be repeated (and thus “sustained”) over time. Appeals may reinforce an identity or may

undercut it. The notion of “priming,” in political behavior, constitutes a very significant development in that regard (Johnston, Blais, Brady, Crete 1992). For these two reasons, political identities, including party IDs, are usually linked to an *established* political cleavage. This cleavage may, moreover, structure the party system as a whole. In fact, the crystallization of a political cleavage involves, by definition, the creation of political identities on each side of the divide. Political appeals may be made along that cleavage in order to reinforce it, to appeal to loyal voters, or to provide electoral cues, but they may also be made orthogonally, precisely in order to dilute a pattern and/or to win votes from the other camp.

Political regimes and “democratic-ness.” The two-dimensional political space I am introducing has little to do with political regimes, although it generally reveals itself in electoral politics (as the logic of guns is quite a different one). More importantly, it has little to do with assessing actors as more or less democratic. Certainly, in Argentina anti-Peronists on the high have been highly antidemocratic in the past. There is a lot of truth in Argentina to the Peronist account that most interruptions of democratic (and even of semi-democratic) rule were triggered by right-wing anti-Peronist sectors. Guillermo O’Donnell (1979a) has highlighted the consequences of the ban on Peronism for the electoral game and democracy. On the other hand, the Peronists themselves have not been overly liberal-democratic historically either. The character of the state under Perón was quite authoritarian (which, it should be emphasized, is not synonymous with antidemocratic) and partisan, and actors such as López Rega, Herminio Iglesias, the Montonero guerrillas, and even Menem have often shown little regard for division of powers and constitutional limits. In a similar vein, it seems that one could engage in an endless debate as to which side in Venezuela nowadays is less (or more) democratic: the anti-Chavista “democratic forces” who marched to La Carlota and appealed to the armed forces to oust the elected leader, or the not too procedural Chavistas supported by the popular sectors. In short, high and low, just like left and right, are not about democracy or “democratic-ness.” However, as with left and right, the effect of political dynamics involving high-low polarization often does have a very real impact on democracy.

The difficult normative neutrality. Finally, an important challenge analytically is to be as normatively neutral as possible in the description of the two political categories, even though, just as for left and right, one may have a personal preference for one or the other. In the literature on political behavior, axes orthogonal to the left-right scale have often been normatively biased in a quite heavy-handed way (e.g., in Kitschelt or Inglehart), praising one pole and by extension the voters who also prefer that particular pole. Also, and at times explicitly, the “other” axis has often not been orthogonal, or neutral, with regard to the left-right dimension. To be clear, the low is not necessarily “bad,” as it is often quite “fun,” warm, and exciting, although it is scary or appalling for many intellectuals, and the high is not necessarily “good,” as it can be perceived as cold and uncaring, if not simply boring. In the same vein, practices of clientelism are possible on both sides, although it seems that in the general public discourse and popular perception they are more commonly associated with the low.

POPULISM AND THE REACTION TO IT

The above definition of the low in politics in fact constitutes a particularly solid, intuitive, minimal, and—something now rare—not overly polemical definition of populism. The low is, at the very least, an essential *and* noncontroversial defining feature of populism. To the extent that cleavages involve antagonisms, the low therefore also involves antagonism. I suggest that populism as a concept can in fact be condensed into our definition and description of the low presented above, and that the high synthesizes what anti-populism is about.

The understanding of populism as low—something additionally quite intuitive—is an attractive advantage in light of the difficulties surrounding the definition of populism.⁴⁸ More importantly, what I have called (accurately or not) the “political-cultural” component of high and low, described above, fully incorporates the *lack of institutionalization* (more on this below) so dear to most political scientists in defining populism (e.g., Weyland 2001). But here, *at the very same time*, high and low can legitimately be understood as political styles, the rival approach convincingly used to define populism (e.g., De la Torre 1992 and 2000; Knight 1998). And indeed, populist

appeals are generally made on the low. The “low” more readily brings to mind, as well, its opposite: the historically important notion of *anti-populism*, which has never really been studied or thematized as such.⁴⁹

While the above definition and characterization of the low in politics cannot pretend to encompass every possible single observable *trait* of “populism” nor, still less, provide a theory of populism, it does appear to cover all cases usually considered populist in political science and to exclude those not considered populist. The present definition is thus somewhat narrow in intention (nothing is said about economic policies, for example, and little about organization) but is specific in its extension.

The present two-dimensional space also has advantages. First, it explicitly identifies the political opposite of populism. More importantly, it underscores the formal neutrality, or conceptual “perpendicularity,” of the populist/anti-populist axis relative to the much-used left-right scale in politics. Making this neutrality explicit is particularly important: often political scientists have regarded populism as *implicitly* left-of-center, since it is said to redistribute income in favor of the popular sectors, oppose orthodox economic policies, and, in Latin America, allied historically with labor unions. Equally often, in other settings, populism is thought “*obviously*” to be on the right, since it demagogically bypasses the deliberative institutions of liberal democracies, creating a somewhat authoritarian and plebiscitarian relationship between the leader and his followers. The antagonism of populism to liberalism has furthermore been consensually recognized, from Urbinati’s forceful piece (1998) favoring liberalism, to Laclau (1977), favoring populism, including Coppedge’s in-between sharp description of the theoretical trade-off (2003). While the first understanding has been prevalent in the study of 1930s-to-1970s Latin America, the second has been dominant in Europe and has also reentered Latin American politics with the debate on neo-populism and the neo-populist politicians, as well as with the increasing concern of the discipline with institutional issues and its move away from socioeconomic dynamics.

We do know intuitively that there are both unquestionably right-wing populists (George Wallace in the US, Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, Carlos Menem in the Argentina of the 1990s, Maurice Duplessis in Québec) and left-wing populists (Lionel Brizola, João Goulart, Hugo Chávez). Unlike the definition of populism that focuses on

economic policy, my conceptualization of populism as the low in politics (in both of its subdimensions) does allow precisely for the existence of a populist left and a populist right. Since there is no reason to limit this statement to the low, it also underscores the existence of a high-right (conservative, proper, polished, and favorable to existing differential entitlements) and a high-left (refined Marxist intellectuals, “serious” socialists of the Lionel Jospin or Ricardo Lagos type, educated “liberals,” and many practitioners of the social sciences and humanities) sector. The high-right has been the historical enemy of populism in countries such as Argentina and Brazil (with the high-left equidistant from each position), while the high-left has been the main enemy of populism in Europe (with the high-right equidistant from both positions). The four quadrants shown in Figure 2 thus logically come to the fore.

A final advantage of the low-high terminology over the use of the category of “populism” (for the low) is that it allows for a quantifiable scale, just like that used for the left-right axis. It would be foolish to describe George W. Bush as populist; however, Bush positioning (or being) himself significantly to the low of the very high Gore arguably played a role in Bush’s marginal victory in 2000, especially with floating voters. The same may perhaps be said about Joaquín Lavín, clearly not a populist, and Ricardo Lagos, quite on the high (left), a few months before. This does not in any way imply that the US or Chilean party system is structured along the high-low axis, quite the contrary in fact, or that populism is an important phenomenon in these contemporary societies, as it is not. But high-low positioning may play an electoral role with uncommitted voters. Furthermore, we need a vocabulary to describe politicians like Fernando De la Rúa, Arturo Illia, or Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, one that names what they have in common and what *starkly differentiated them* from their lower political adversaries. Finally, we need terms that do not have any temporal or historical connotations attached to them, as populism still (correctly or not) has, insofar as it is sometimes treated either as a political phenomenon associated with a phase of import substitution industrialization or as a transitional moment between tradition and modernity.

A “strictly political” understanding of populism should not be equated with a narrow institutionalist understanding of the political, as is perhaps too often the case. Certainly, a consensus has arisen within political science that populism should not be

understood either in terms of expansionary and redistributive economic policies (e.g., Dornbusch 1991) or sociologically in terms of a particular class alliance or coalition, as originally stated in Di Tella (1965a). But politics is more than just institutions. As stated above, the dichotomy between the personalist authority of a strong (often male) leader and the institutionally mediated, more procedural, and comparatively more impersonal authority of the high fully encompasses the institutionalists' concerns. Populism as "non-institutionalization" or "non-mediated" authority, however, remains a definition by the negative. Usually, it is preferable to define by the positive. Taking here as our starting point Weyland's article aimed at clarifying the concept of populism by anchoring it in the political domain, we have "a direct, unmediated contact to a largely unorganized mass of followers" (2001: 5), where "an individual leader seeks or exercises governmental power based on the support from a large number of followers" (12). But what is meant by this "direct"? Can it be given some content or substance? How is it achieved? It seems to me that to dwell on the *content* of this directness irremediably forces us in the direction of political style, or at least political communication. To state it in a more forceful way, the process of political mobilization that bypasses institutionalized forms of mediation is embedded within the political style of populism.⁵⁰ In other words, the "power capability" of numbers is activated as a "political strategy" through political style.⁵¹ Political appeals on the low are indeed a political strategy, "a method and instrument of winning and exercising power" (12). For a leader with such power capabilities, domination is not necessarily fickle, as seen in the case of Chávez already more than ten years after his initial electoral victory. In fact, political success may lead to the exact opposite of institutionalization, as it increases the unchallenged dominance of the leader over all forms of organization and bureaucratic formal institutions. Focusing only on the institutional aspect furthermore risks missing what after all constitutes a central, if not the central, appeal of populism. A tight and fair working definition of populism must thus involve both the political-cultural and the social-cultural components described above. Without those special—and often colorful—appeals described, there is in fact no populism to speak of.⁵²

The exclusively institutionalist and/or organizational approach has led to a remarkable and major paradox, whether one examines neo-populism or classical

populism in Latin America. As we saw, Weyland's definition of populism (2001:14) convincingly emphasizes *lack of* organizational mediation and lack of constraints on the populist leader. On the other hand, Collier and Collier (1991), examining what most scholars would call the various "classical populist" experiences of Latin America (Juan Perón, Lázaro Cardenas, Rómulo Betancourt, the Peruvian APRA,⁵³ etc.), differentiate *populist* from *non-populist* types of initial incorporation of labor by the key criterion of "union linkage to a party or a movement" (1991: 167, also 163, 165), that is, an eminently organizational and institutional variable (see for example their central Figure 5.2, in 1991: 166–167). But here, the more organized and the more institutionalized this linkage, the *more* populist the type of incorporation is. In support of their view, one can state confidently that, for example, organizing the masses was probably by far Perón's main political project in the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁴ Certainly, classical populism is associated with the formation of the largest, and therefore presumably most organized, mass parties of Latin American politics: the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI), the Partido Justicialista (Justicialist Party, or PJ), Acción Democrática (Democratic Action, or AD) for forty years, Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, or APRA) for almost a century, etc. To thus simplify, from an institutionalist, organizational standpoint, one has populism as a noticeable *lack of* organization and as *hyper*-organization. An institutionalist perspective is thus not overly helpful for resolving this conundrum. To me, there is no contradiction in having personalized rule by an individual leader *with* highly effective mass organization—that is, after all, what fascism was all about, to name a prominent case. Within the institutionalist paradigm, this riddle was arguably solved in a similar (and more refined) way by Levitsky's idea⁵⁵ of "parties with low routinization and strong mass organization" (legend of Figure 1.1 in 2003: 23), under-institutionalized party organization, nonroutinized intra-party rules of the game, and informal mass linkages (1998b: 451), "informal organization" (1998a: 86) or "informal mass parties" (2003: 59) or, to summarize in my own words, parties with strong organization (and mass linkages) but weak institutionalization, understood as routinization—conceptualizations inspired by, and particularly applicable to, the paradigmatic populist case of Peronism.

While clientelism is often used to explain what makes this non-institutionalized, but organized, domination “by an individual” or a few individuals at the top not only possible but *appealing*, it cannot explain the rise of populist leaders *prior* to their taking over the command of the state or a state (e.g., Chávez in the 1990s). The well-known but empirically understudied Weberian concept of “charisma” (here taken outside of its religious redemptive context) is the other common alternative variable often used to explain their *attractiveness*.⁵⁶ To me, it is actually essential to study appeals (whatever these appeals may be in practice) and reception, to empirically explain such leaders’ attractiveness.⁵⁷

Whether left or right, populism always involves the expression and manifestation of popular ways in politics, a strong personalist leader, and a certain procedural “relativism” (within the organization). On the social-cultural front specifically, populism is thus a type of political appeal that resorts for power purposes to established and concrete local forms of the culturally popular (including also socially differentiated desires—expressed in tastes).⁵⁸

COMPARATIVE CASE APPLICATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

How generalizable is the high-low framework? The high and low dimension is present in the politics of numerous countries. The fact that one can recognize such a dimension in many settings does not mean, however, that most party systems are *structured* along a high-low divide. In fact, I would argue that this is not the case. There are, however, a variety of countries, including in Latin America, where the high-low divide plays a crucial role in the structuring of political conflict and/or political competition at the level of the party system. The fact that such polities may be a minority does not detract from the dimension’s great relevance; on the contrary, it may enhance it. Indeed, it helps to circumscribe the universe of study, in much the same way as did discussions surrounding the concept of bureaucratic-authoritarian regime; that is, it avoids a dilution of the concept that, as with all cases of dilution, could risk making the concept banal.

There are differing levels of importance at which the high-low axis can come into play in the study of electoral and party politics. At the highest and most relevant level, the

high-low axis is the main dimension defining the political cleavage of a given country. In Latin America, I would argue that this has been the case in Argentina for decades, and that it is now largely the situation in Venezuela since the emergence of Chávez and the anti-Chavista opposition. Even in such cases, this does not mean that the *left-right* dimension is irrelevant, as seen above and illustrated in Figure 2 (e.g., the Chávez government is clearly on the left). There is also the instance where high-low differences play a key role in a given election, but do not play a structuring role in a given party system for the simple reason that there is no party *system* in that polity, due to high electoral volatility and little continuity of political actors. This arguably has been the situation in Ecuador and, less clearly so, in the Peru of 1995. Second and at a less prominent level, high-low differences may play an important role in *intraparty* competition, that is, in differentiating factions vying for power within a political party. It seems to me that an important, but not exclusive, aspect of political differentiation within the PRI in Mexico during the 1980s and 1990s was along the high-low dimension, with the so-called dinosaurs on the low-center⁵⁹ and many of the technocrats and/or democratizers on the high, with some left-right differences among the latter.

In the least important way, high-low differences may be present among political candidates, but without playing a structuring role in politics, where political conflict occurs along some other dimension, whether right-left or other. In these instances, such high-low differences may make for enjoyable journalistic commentary, but they are not central in the party system or at the intraparty level. These differences may nonetheless have an electoral effect at the margins, especially among undecided voters and/or voters with no established political preferences or identities.

In the remainder of this paper, I shall briefly make use of the high-low dimension to explain the politics, and more precisely the structure of the political arena, of three Latin American countries.

Argentina. The use of high and low to describe Argentina's main political cleavage and explain Argentina's ever-changing party system forms the topic of an elaborate Kellogg Working Paper that should be read in conjunction with the present paper.⁶⁰ The

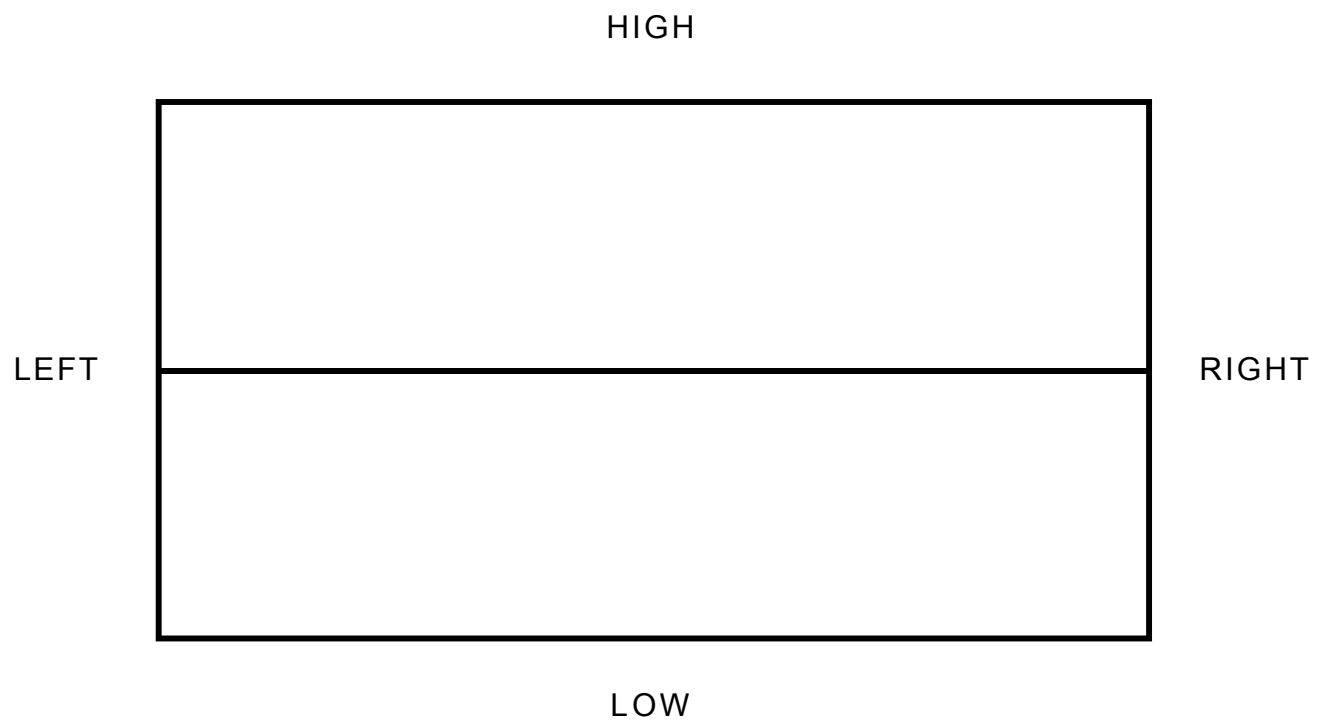
conceptual categories of high and low in fact emerged genetically from the close study of Argentine politics over the years.

Let it be said that the main political cleavage that structures and defines the Argentine party systems is that between Peronism and the political forces opposing Peronism-in-power, i.e., anti-Peronism. While particular institutional parties and political fronts have come and gone over the last sixty years in Argentina, that particular cleavage has, in contrast, proven remarkably resilient. In fact, it may be one of the few stable features of Argentine politics over the years. The importance of the Peronist/anti-Peronist cleavage does not mean, quite on the contrary, that the left-right axis is irrelevant in Argentina. In fact, the left-right dimension is essential, but not sufficient, for understanding Argentina's politics. What is particularly striking in Argentina is the fact that the Peronist/non-Peronist cleavage has over the years proven to be quite perpendicular to the left-right axis. That is, there is clearly a Peronist right, a Peronist center, and a Peronist left, including all shades and nuances along that spectrum. Similarly, one finds anti-Peronist socialist forces on the left; anti-Peronist center, center-left, and center-right *Radicales* and "Radical offspring"; and—historically—a quite vehement anti-Peronist right.

Consequently, I argue that the dynamic Argentine party system is structured in a remarkably *stable* way as a *double political spectrum* (see Figure 3). Such is, in fact, the argument historically developed and analytically demonstrated in the companion working paper "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities, and Strategies, 1944–2003" (Ostiguy: 2009), an account of Argentine politics.

Figure 3

The Argentine Political Space:
A Double Political Spectrum



In spite of its resilience, however, this cleavage between Peronism and anti-Peronism has been notoriously difficult to characterize *politically*, including ideologically. Even more so, while intensely felt nationally in Argentina, the cleavage has proven difficult to categorize in analytic terms that would display comparative validity and conceptual traction. And while historical narratives are certainly essential for providing contextual richness and local meaning, comparativists need categories that can be usefully and validly applied with a minimum of violence across cases. In that light, I argue that Peronism over time is best described as politically on the “low” and that anti-Peronism has presented itself as being politically on the “high” (Ostiguy 2009).⁶¹

The high-low dimension in fact has a long history in Argentine politics. Not coincidentally, the major political cleavage and political-military conflict during most of Argentina’s 19th century was drastically framed and labeled by one of modern Argentina’s founding fathers—Domingo Sarmiento, himself a vehement advocate of the high—as one between “civilization and barbarism.” In this radical cultural dichotomy, the Federal caudillos and gauchos of the hinterland were labeled, characterized, and defined by Sarmiento in his most famous book (1974 [1868]) as “barbarians”—a social reality that had to be overcome through the political agency of the offspring of the Unitarians (Unitarios) by bringing civilization.⁶² Certainly, this divide had already been resolved (by force) by 1880, but in the 1940s opponents of Perón forcefully brought it back to life. It should be emphasized that the Federal/Unitarian divide was political, *aesthetic* (in terms of style), and, in the sense alluded to above, “cultural” (at least in terms of political project).⁶³ Many Peronists, ever since the late 1960s, have incidentally also claimed the exact same “continuity,” vindicating figures such as Juan Manuel de Rosas, Facundo Quiroga, and Ángel “Chacho” Penaloza, in antagonistic relation to the “ungrounded,” culturally “snobbish,” and Eurocentric Unitarians.

As just stated, *both* Peronism and the various anti-Peronist forces have *fully ranged* across the left-right spectrum. Even in its inception, the electoral coalition of parties that brought Perón to power in 1946 included the newly formed left-of-center Labor Party and right-wing, pro-Axis nationalists. The forces that then opposed Perón, calling themselves the Democratic Union, ranged from Communists and Socialists on the left, to *Radicales* in the center, to conservative business sectors on the right. In the 1970s,

the Peronist right and the Peronist left were waging gunfights against one another.⁶⁴ In the post military regimes era, Peronism eventually came under the domination of right-wing Peronist Carlos Menem, to be later succeeded by his Peronist nemesis on the left, Nestor Kirchner. Needless to say, an equal political distance characterizes the anti-Peronist left and right.

Precisely because the Argentine party system is structured as a double political spectrum, it has been both relatively easy and frequent to have the Peronist party (PJ) leadership and the main anti-Peronist parties “leapfrog” one another along the left-right axis, without fundamentally altering the party system. This observation would seem, at first glance, to contradict the general pattern found in basically all countries of Europe by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) of the European Consortium for Political Research. The MRG found that parties rarely leapfrog each other and that parties shift their positions only within “ideologically delimited” areas of the policy space (Adams 2001: 122). However, the framework developed in this article makes it plain that Argentina is no special exception. The very same “positional” logic as that described by the MRG is at work in Argentina, but *along the high-low dimension*, which is also the country’s main political cleavage. Moreover, the frequent leapfrogging of Argentina’s main political parties past one another on the left-right scale does not appear to alter, nor to have altered in the least over the last decades, the central political cleavage that structures party competition and the party system in Argentina.

To a certain extent, this cleavage is largely class based. Empirically, education level is an even more remarkable statistical predictor of voters’ preferences across this cleavage than income level.⁶⁵ “Argentina’s Double Political Spectrum” (Ostiguy 2009) provides ample data on the social composition of the vote over time in Argentina, as well as qualitative and quantitative data on political preferences and reasons stated for such preferences. Politically, the paper sheds light on numerous paradoxes. It shows how the double political spectrum, which certainly involves questions of identities, explains the electoral viability of the 1990s neoliberal Menem government *as well as* the nature of the political opposition that it created, with the evolving spatial positions of the Frente Grande (Broad Front), Frente País Solidario (Front for a Country in Solidarity, or FREPASO), and Alianza (Alliance). It delineates the configuration of the new party

systems in Argentina since the collapse of late 2001, and it even accounts for the current inability of the anti-Peronist left and center and of the Peronist right-of-center to form a joint coalition in their common antagonism to Kirchnerism on the Peronist left.

Venezuela. Since 1998, the Venezuelan political arena has been conspicuously and notoriously structured by a—social, political, and cultural—cleavage between Chavismo, on the political “low-left,” and anti-Chavismo, claiming to be on the political “high.” In contemporary 21st-century Latin American politics, one would be hard-pressed to find a more emblematic figure of a successful leader on the political “low” than Hugo Chávez.⁶⁶ There is one key difference with the political space of Argentina, however. In Venezuela, Chávez is *also* very clearly located on the left, while correspondingly the center of gravity of anti-Chavismo is, although perhaps less clearly so, right of center. There is thus no double political spectrum in Venezuela. In contrast, the two-dimensional space in Venezuela is arguably largely made up, very roughly, of a single spectrum ranging from the Chavista low-left to the demographic bulk of the anti-Chavistas, on the high-right—although clearly anti-Chavismo does range from left to right. In other words, a low right within Chavismo is absent in Venezuela, in contrast to Argentina.

Chávez embodies to a maximal extent the two subdimensions of the “low” in politics. He is maximally on the “coarse, uninhibited, culturally *popular*” pole (Figure 1), and he is at the same time an extreme manifestation of the personal authority of a strong male leader, with “balls.” To watch Chávez in public is either a pure enjoyment or a source of aversion, depending on the viewer. Hugo Chávez sings in his speeches, coarsely insults his opponents, remembers the feats of his *llanero* (cowboy from the plains) great-grandfather “Maisanta,” salutes the crowds, evokes vivid images, and sings again, all dressed in not-exactly subtle red. The opposition is appalled, despairs, and, just like the anti-Peronists of the 1940s, intermittently shows signs of hysteria.⁶⁷

Obviously, both the right in the US and the left-wing partisans of Chávez are misleading in overly associating Hugo Chávez with *Castrismo* (Castro communism) in Cuba. There are no meaningful, polarized, competitive elections in Cuba, while this is certainly not the case in Venezuela, which, in contrast—and in a rather typical populist fashion—has a mania for closely spaced electoral contests. The number of elections,

referenda, and popular consultations in Venezuela since late 1998 has indeed been quite extraordinary. The country is in fact in almost constant electoral battle. A much more accurate comparison is with historical Peronism, with its large and recurrent rallies for electoral (and power) purposes in the plaza, its lack of institutionalization, its not exactly precise ideological project, its anti-imperialism, etc. Undoubtedly, both Chavismo and Peronism are populist and, more specifically (and conceptually less controversially), “low”—with Chávez, however, being more unambiguously on the left than Perón.

Within the low, the traits that probably set Perón and Chávez apart most conspicuously from other political leaders with popular-sector support are their pronounced behavior and mode of communication on the *sociocultural* low. In Venezuela, the radio program “Hello President,” where callers phone the president and he talks to them with expressions of affection, words of love for the women who call, reminders to rural folks to “tie up the donkey,” and so forth, partakes of the same cultural revolution which Perón accomplished four decades before by taking his coat off, using folksy language, etc. Such successful appeals on the low and the identification of the popular sectors with “their” leader led to a drastic restructuring of the party system in Argentina and will eventually do likewise in Venezuela, where the old party system has now collapsed and where anti-Chavismo is as strong as anti-Peronism was in Argentina in the early 1950s, although less well-organized. In both instances, the largely middle-sector political opposition discursively stresses democracy, civil society, and proper procedures (i.e., the other subdimension of the high) in their political attacks,⁶⁸ while Chávez and Perón use the language of identification with the *pueblo* (the people) and the *patria* (motherland), claiming a close, direct, personal, and even affectionate bond between themselves and the popular sectors.

In practice, it should be emphasized that much of the opposition to Perón and Chávez, especially among the educated middle sectors, is not mainly a reaction to left-wing economic policies, but rather to the combination of seeing the government in the hands of “undereducated” and “unqualified” men and the so-called “farcical,” “grotesque” image that the leader and his rhetoric (i.e., the cognitively dominant, social-cultural dimension of the high-low axis) are seen as projecting abroad. The image is vastly at odds with the political opposition’s (educated middle-class) self-image as

proper, “European” (in the case of Argentina) or basically similar to US middle-class ways (Venezuela).⁶⁹ Colorful, but non-leftist, invectives on the part of such leaders on the low, such as “squealing pigs,” vis-à-vis those who oppose them, drastically antagonize the “*decente*” (“respectable”) middle sectors but reinforce identification among the popular sectors.

While Weber (1978: 246–254, 1121–1133) predicts a routinization of charisma, which, for the two cases examined here, would entail a withering of socio-cultural and political-cultural traits on the low in favor of institutionalization, such was not the case in Argentina with Peronism. If, as I originally wrote in 2002,⁷⁰ Venezuela continues on the same path (and it has), this will not be the case in Venezuela either. What becomes institutionalized, or routinized, is instead a certain set of *performances* on the low. Such a pattern has many advantages: performances on the low nourish certain bonds, while “institutionally” acting on the low has the adaptive advantages that Levitsky and his collaborators (Levitsky 1998; Levitsky 2003: 25–27, 75–81, 84–87, 3, 13–14, 20–22; Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Helmke and Levitsky 2004; Freidenberg and Levitsky 2006) have highlighted. What does become institutionalized over time in the conventional sense, however, is precisely the *political divide*.

This routinization of performances, rather than institutions, has led to a rich debate amongst political theorists and comparativists, with regard to the relationship of populism and liberal democracy. Some scholars have forecast the gradual transformation of the populist leader into an authoritarian leader, with the erosion of constitutional guarantees, checks and balances, division of powers, and other defining features of liberalism restraining the state.⁷¹ Other scholars have, in contrast, highlighted the danger of class-based authoritarian reactions that populism often triggers.⁷² Certainly, there is a difficulty in “getting rid” of populist leaders, considering their effective appeals, mobilizational abilities, close and demonstrated identification with “the people,” lack of interest in alternation in power, and preference for constitutional amendments allowing for repeated or indefinite reelections. Not surprisingly, populist leaders are thus vulnerable to losing power through a coup on the high-right or high-center. Perón was first almost deposed in October 1945 by the “democratizing” faction of the armed forces, which wanted to hand power to the Supreme Court and civilian authority, and he was

saved in extremis by an impromptu huge demonstration by the popular sectors in favor of “their” colonel. In April 2002, Chávez was also briefly deposed by a fraction of the military, which wanted to hand over power to conservative civilian representatives, but he was also saved in extremis by violent spontaneous protests from his lower-sector supporters. Perón was taken out of power by an anti-populist military coup in 1955, after ten years of concentration of power and intense antagonisms.

Perhaps of greater interests to political scientists is the search for causes leading to the creation and structuring of political cleavages (and political spaces) along the high-low dimension. In terms of immediate causation, here again the cases of Venezuela and Argentina show a similar pattern. In the Argentina of 1930–43 and in the Venezuela of the 1990s, the party system had lost all representative legitimacy and was seen as controlled from above *and* also as restrictive of alternative majority expressions. The so-called *partidocracia* (“party-crazy”) that eventually developed from the pact of Punto Fijo in Venezuela and the Concordancia of Argentina shared striking similarities. In both instances, it became clear that the party system was “closed,” with collusion between the main parties, a sharing of the spoils, and a wide gap between what electoral competition is meant to entail and actual practices of “representation.” Such a situation, whether a product of “patriotic fraud” and of a *concordancia*⁷³ like in Argentina, or the *partidocracia* between AD and COPEI⁷⁴ in Venezuela, created a legitimacy crisis, compounded by the effects of a severe economic downturn, both in 1930s Argentina and in 1990s Venezuela. The party system of Venezuela in the 1990s, like that of Argentina in the 1930s, thus faced a severe legitimacy *and* effectiveness crisis. Note that in each case, the preceding political situation was not that of authoritarianism or military rule, but of representative failure of the existing arrangements in a clearly somewhat exclusionary (and pacted) party system.

In terms of historical genesis, in both cases a nationalist colonel was involved in a military coup to overhaul the party system and the mechanisms of representation. In 1992, Hugo Chávez failed in his coup attempt, while Perón, as part of the Grupo de Oficiales Unidos (United Officers Group, or GOU), succeeded in 1943. Both leaders became immensely popular among the popular sector electorate and triggered hatred

from the middle sectors, not mainly because of their economic policies but because they positioned themselves very much on the low socioculturally and political-culturally. In both instances, the older political parties and newer groups from civil society united in opposition to the “demagogue,” forming a broad (formal or informal) left-right front under the banner of “democracy” in its liberal democratic form. Chávez and Perón both counterattacked by colorfully maligning the “oligarchy”—as the “squalid ones,” in Venezuela—and accentuating their low demeanors, vocabulary, and mode of relating to “the people.” In Argentina, the socialists, communists, and *Radicales*, all of which had had a strong presence in the labor movement, adopted a very high position politically, while their popular-sector electorates gradually shifted toward Perón. In Venezuela, a similar phenomenon occurred with the country’s trade union umbrella organization Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (Confederation of Venezuelan Workers, or CTV) and with AD.

While deeper socio-historical structural explanations should perhaps be sought, they should be viewed not so much as direct determinants, but instead as (fertile) terrain *positively* enabling the emergence of such a high-low dimension, beyond leaders’ sheer circumstantial strategic abilities and sense of timing. History, as well as “culture,” a much-maligned term that may be best understood here as a repertoire and itself a historical product, may indeed come into play. We already saw what could be understood as the idiosyncratic role of the Federal wars in Argentina during the 19th century, the historical opposition between the Federal caudillos and the “civilizing” Unitarians, and how such debates occupied the centerstage of Argentina’s political (and military) life for almost a century. Venezuela, from its early wars of independence up to the end of the Federal Wars with Ezequiel Zamora, saw the exact same divide. Historians of Latin America are all fully familiar with the well-known reputation, feats, and image of the *llaneros* in 19th-century Venezuela. In the vast plains of a free-ranging cattle economy, *llaneros* and *gauchos* are equivalent. Simón Bolívar’s project of independence failed during the second republic because of the fierce, terrible, and “barbaric” *llaneros* under José Boves. Bolívar’s project of independence succeeded in the third republic *because* of the *llaneros* and their self-made-man caudillo leader José Páez, who later became Venezuela’s first president. Even more relevant, the Federal Wars in Venezuela show

sociocultural similarities to those of Argentina, in terms of the nature of the two sides in each case. Political scientists often ignore that one of Chávez' main historical reference points is indeed Ezequiel Zamora, the caudillo with little formal schooling who violently challenged the coastal oligarchy. Not surprisingly, Hugo Chávez named his key electoral battle to defeat the recall referendum of 2004 (arguably the biggest electoral challenge to his rule) the battle of Santa Ines, which Zamora won.

In other words, there is a terrain—a set of usable dichotomies, which have resonance for the local population (and for the leader) and which are defined largely in high-low terms—that seems to play a role as a sort of structural precondition or, to use a different metaphor, as a fertile terrain, for the rise of high-low cleavages in politics. Interestingly, Ecuador, which certainly lacks these 19th-century precedents, also very clearly has such structural preconditions, in its very well known sociocultural discursive opposition between its coast, arguably the most fertile terrain for populism in all of Latin America, and its sierra.

Ecuador. Abdalá Bucaram, who briefly was President of Ecuador in 1996–97 thanks to his base in Guayaquil, the center of gravity of coastal Ecuador, probably holds the continental record for politician most on the low in all of Latin America. Bucaram, however, is not unique as a politician located on the low there. Coastal Ecuador in fact has a long populist tradition: from the Concentración de Fuerzas Populares (Concentration of Popular Forces, or CFP), to Jaime Roldós Aguilera, to the Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (Ecuadorian Roldosista Party, or PRE), to Bucaram (uncle and nephew), to Álvaro Noboa, up to the contemporary and milder Rafael Correa.⁷⁵ The coastal style of politics in Ecuador contrasts with the more “restrained” style of the sierra, whether on the left, as with the Izquierda Democrática (Democratic Left, or ID) politicians, or on the right, as with Jamil Mahuad. These are to a certain extent stereotypes, but these regional stereotypes have an element of truth and do in fact inform the discursive political scene of Ecuador.

The presence of the low in Ecuadorian politics has been extremely well documented in the work of Carlos de la Torre. On Abdalá Bucaram, De la Torre quotes him as stating in an interview that Rodrigo Borja Cevallos, the leader of Izquierda

Democrática, had “watery sperm” and was a “lukewarm man”; that with regard to his coastal rival, León Febres Cordero, “I have bigger balls than [him]. In other words, I have balls, Febres Cordero does not” (1997: 16). He once even stated that, “voting for me is like...throwing excrement at Guayaquil’s elitist Club de la Unión” (17). Almost as if he had had the present paper in mind, De la Torre himself writes: “[Bucaram] ridicules his rivals’ delicate manners and tastes, which he contrasts to his own and the common people’s masculine ones. The representation of the oligarchy as imitators of foreign and effeminate lifestyles is well received by his audiences” (17). He adds: “those who consider themselves ‘civilized and cultured’ abhor Abdalá’s words and political style” (18). Interestingly, Bucaram’s career ended up abruptly when the Congress of Ecuador, under pressures by the Armed Forces, ended up dismissing him from the Presidency on charges of “mental inability.”

Ecuador has often been considered a paradigmatic case of a polity without a structured party system. In his overview of national party systems in Latin America, Coppedge (1998a: 196–197) characterizes Ecuador as “the most consistently unstable country in Latin America,” underscoring that “the overwhelming fact of Ecuadorian politics has been instability and, therefore, political parties have hardly organized.”⁷⁶ This is absolutely true. While the party “system” has proven to be very fluid (Mejia Acosta 2002), there have nonetheless been some patterns in Ecuador’s political space of electoral competition between (ever-changing) parties and candidates.⁷⁷ The Democratic Left (ID) party was clearly on the high during the 1988 presidential campaign; it is left of the center and operates mainly in the sierra, especially Quito. The Roldosista Ecuadorian Party (PRE) is very much on the low; it is also left of center, and it operates mainly on the coast. In terms of personal demeanor, Rodrigo Borja Cevallos of the ID, president of Ecuador between 1988 and 1992, was definitely on the high, while former President Abdalá Bucaram (1996–1997) of the PRE was singularly low. The 1988 presidential election, thus, was structured mainly by high-low differences, in terms of both the political dimension and, literally, altitude.

The political relevance of the high-low political divide, moreover, has not been limited to presidential elections. Some smaller parties on the low-left such as the Movimiento Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Movement, or MPD) have

attempted to capture votes in the sierra, occupying a space that the coastal PRE had attempted to fill. Similarly, on the coast, the Partido Social Cristiano (Social Christian Party, or PSC) on the right and the PRE on the low have attempted to squeeze each other out from the low-right corner. Party leaders have thus adapted their electoral strategies along the high-low axis in order to improve their electoral performance.⁷⁸ In this way, this spatial situation is a magnification of the phenomenon already described in the case of Argentina: institutional actors are highly unstable in their organizational existence, making them poor objects of study from an institutionalist party perspective, but spatial positions and antagonisms show a discernable and (relatively, in the case of Ecuador) more stable pattern.

Within Ecuador's two main regions, class or educational levels are likely to significantly correlate with voters' positions on the high-low axis. However, in Ecuador nationally, it seems that it is sociocultural differences between the more constrained sierra and the more exuberant coast (which are also part of Ecuadorian lore) that most self-evidently correlate with high-low political differences in the overall national political space, especially on the left.

Peru 1995. In the Andean country of Peru for the 1995 elections, Alberto Fujimori's main opponent was former United Nations Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, a candidate who was uncommonly erudite, cosmopolitan, prudent, lacking in charisma, and procedural, that is, highly "respectable" in terms of both dimensions of the high. On the political-cultural front, his campaign was about liberal democracy and the rule of law. Pérez de Cuéllar also located himself somewhat left-of-center. During the first five years of his mandate, meanwhile, Fujimori had successfully positioned himself on the low—by historical Peruvian standards—on the *political-cultural* dimension.⁷⁹ In the elections of this decade, Lourdes Flores has stood repeatedly on the high-right and, like the two previous candidates on the high, lost. In Peru the low has arguably become an increasingly viable and large space in the political arena,⁸⁰ especially as the Marxist-influenced left has lost its strength.

CONCLUSION

The paper has introduced the political concepts of high and low in order to characterize an overall dimension structuring given political cleavages and party systems. High and low as appeals are also, in addition, an important part of political actors' political campaigns and spatial strategies. Just like left and right (or liberal and conservative in the US), high and low can easily be integrated into the type of methodology prevalent in the field of political behavior, electoral studies, and campaign analysis. Political preferences are not limited to issues or even ideologies, nor are they always governed by strict calculations of material interest, since motivations behind preferences are varied and identification is an important factor. Following Weber's sociology of action (1978: 4–26), it should be remembered that social action, like all actions, may be guided by instrumental rationality, often understood in material terms, by normative concerns (for example regarding corruption or the importance of loyalty), and by expressive considerations, particularly when they invoke identities and/or social-cultural preferences. Since spatial analysis follows a Downsian logic, there is fortunately no reason why the logic of distance/proximity and of preferences cannot be applied to questions of identity and of social-cultural and political-cultural preferences. Broadly understood, the notions of “utility” and of preferences thus have an open-ended realm of application. The two-dimensional political space introduced in this paper can thus readily be used as an analytic tool for a spatial analysis of politics, whether structural or conjunctural, as well as to inform the sociological analysis of the reception of parties and candidates in society.

ENDNOTES

¹ For example, if I say that George W. Bush is “to the low of Al Gore,” this does *not* mean that I take Bush to be a populist.

² I apply in a detailed fashion the concepts introduced in the present article to the analysis of the case of Argentina’s political space and party system in the companion working paper (Ostiguy 2009).

³ On the relation between “systematized concepts” and indicators in research design, see for example Adcock and Collier (2001).

⁴ As Kruskal and Wish (1978: 12) emphasized regarding MDS, “once the configuration has been obtained, however, it is usually important to interpret it.” Very few authors have engaged, like Ronald Inglehart and to a certain extent Herbert Kitschelt, in *both* theory construction and survey analysis, which in part explains those authors’ unusual success. Less theoretically driven survey analysis (or survey analysis which, for lack of resources, must start with given survey questions) often engages in testing previously stated theoretical propositions regarding social, cultural, or political change, as well as empirical refinements of cross-national comparisons. Usually, the concepts used in the analysis are taken from a given repertoire.

⁵ Or at least they relate to how the public understands a politician to be and behave.

⁶ “Well-mannered” or “well-bred” in demeanor is used here as translation of “*bien educado*” in Spanish or “*bien-élevé*” in French.

⁷ In Argentina, Fernando De la Rúa is a clear case, but one can also think of Walter Mondale in the US, of Lionel Jospin in contrast to Jacques Chirac in France, or of Georges-Émile Lapalme in contrast to Maurice Duplessis in Québec.

⁸ Heavy local accents and expressive body language are all in a certain way difficult-to-ignore intrusions of physicality, of the concrete particular body, in the interaction. In contrast, it seems that on the high the body and all its distracting marks and particularistic presence has been somewhat evacuated from the discourse, making it in that sense more “clean” (as “simply words”) and thus—though only seemingly—more “universal.”

⁹ Examples of cases on the extreme low include Abdalá Bucaram in Ecuador and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in Russia. Cases more typical of the low are, in Argentina, Carlos Menem and many in his entourage (such as Luis Barrionuevo or Armando Gostanian) or, even lower, Herminio Iglesias. On a narrower scale, skewed significantly toward the high, in the US on the low one

finds the ex-wrestler Jesse Ventura, especially in the late 1990s, and Ross Perot. In electoral competition, Bill Clinton effectively cast himself lower than Bob Dole. In Canada, Camil Samson or Réal Caouette (a car dealer) of the Social Credit Party in the 1960s, were very clearly on the low.

¹⁰ Elias' interest logically led him to the sociology of excitement and sports (1986), including soccer—a topic highly relevant in Argentina in more ways than one, especially for concretely understanding the powerful conjunction between Peronism and popular culture.

¹¹ It is important to emphasize that these are *claims*, repeatedly made in the political arena, rather than observations of actual behavior along those lines. They are, in other words, types of appeals and ways of presenting oneself to the public. Of course, to be credible it helps if there is a relation between those claims and actual practices, or that there at least be no overt contradiction.

¹² This characterization is *not* to be equated with “authoritarian,” even if politicians on the high often attempt to make that equation for politically motivated purposes. There have been many instances of impersonal and highly authoritarian rule, as O'Donnell (1979: 91, 102, 76–85) emphasized with regard to the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes. Certainly, to the followers of those strong personalistic leaders, the latter are not “authoritarian” but rather strong leaders who, relying on popular electoral support, care for them and can lead the nation.

¹³ It would be tempting to say “legal-rational,” but Max Weber's standards may be too high for many developing countries and thus, as an ideal type, not that useful for purposes of characterization.

¹⁴ “Fairness” is a much-debated category on that dimension. The high claims to be more “fair” because it claims not to discriminate, to promote equality before the law, and to have the public administration treat every claim equally. The low claims to be much more fair, socially, even if it implies a trade-off with at least minimal procedures and non-partisanship. A good local example is the work and rhetoric of Evita.

¹⁵ Initiated by Guillermo O'Donnell (1994) with his work, first, on lack of horizontal accountability and delegative democracy and then on the polyarchies that are not of the global Northwest (1996), a significant debate on the question of accountability in Latin America has developed in North America among major scholars of Latin American politics, such as Jorge Domínguez and Susan Stokes. While in O'Donnell (1996) the debate was internal to the category of democracy, it subsequently came to be about accountability *and* democracy.

¹⁶ Aldo Rico made this famous statement, now a part of Argentine folklore, in front of television cameras in January 1988, in the aftermath of the military rebellion of Monte Caseros. Rico had been a leader of the 1987 military rebellion against the human rights trials of military officers responsible for the torture and disappearances during the military regime. Under house arrest for this rebellion, he escaped to the garrison of Monte Caseros, where he led a second military rebellion against the Alfonsín government. After being defeated by governmental troops, he made the famous declaration quoted here, not regretting anything, before going back to jail.

¹⁷ Again, the point is *not* that leaders on the high do not steal, while those on the low do, as there are several cases that clearly illustrate the contrary. The point is about a certain mode of presenting and legitimating oneself, a certain type of discourse displayed in the public arena to gather political support and perhaps a sort of “out-of-place frankness,” as in the case of Luis Barrionuevo in Argentina.

¹⁸ On the low, electoral success is a clear demonstration and empirical proof of closeness to “the people,” of their support by the *pueblo* (people), “their” *pueblo*. On the high, clean elections with clear rules and without irregularities are an integral part of what they advocate and claim to stand for. To make the same point negatively, politicians on the high have often employed constitutional clauses or enacted *legal* measures to bar certain political actors or components of society from the electoral contest, while politicians on the low have often committed certain “irregularities” during the contest.

¹⁹ Sublimation and suppression of drives are obviously not the same thing. The first was highly valued by Freud, for example, as the psychological mechanism for “civilization,” including the production of its most refined artifacts. Suppression is a different story. While I certainly do not think the low is more “natural” (a somewhat absurd proposition), I do not view it either (at least, in most of its instances) as a “return of the repressed.”

²⁰ Independently of political programs or of ideologies, it is the affinities along a high and low dimension which often make people comfortable socially with one another, for example in leisure activities (be it a prolonged dinner, a night at the bar, or a weekend spent together).

²¹ On this particular point, my analysis is close to that of Weyland (e.g., 2001) on populism and neo-populism. See below.

²² Leaders on the low often claim that politicians on the high are hypocritical and, for example, as corrupt (or improper) if not more so than they are, but that they themselves, at least, do not make a “big fuss” about the concrete realities of politics or about “crass” taste and practices.

²³ A notable exception is Daniel James (1995). In his writings on 17 October 1945 in Argentina, for example, James makes the reader understand what was at stake, including within the “structure of feeling” on the low—particularly on the social-cultural dimension.

²⁴ This feature is particularly at play in a context of “transnational,” Western or Westernized, elites who are often trained in Western institutions and have adopted a certain set of common “master-keys” and modalities. There is often a clear “trickle down” or demonstration effect to the middle class.

²⁵ By “localist,” I do not mean local in the sense of local community, the town hall meeting, or other type of small-scale localities. Localism refers to an emphasis on particularistic traits, manners, and expressions displayed in public and understood (felt) as an important cultural element of one's own self-definition. In a sense, they are cultural referents.

²⁶ See for example Huber and Inglehart (1995) and, for Latin America, Talavera (1995). A major conceptual and historical work on the categories of left and right, remarkable for its breath and depth, is that of J.A. Laponce (1981). The more recent bestseller by Bobbio (1996), the accessibility of which does not detract from its learnedness, is also an excellent summary.

²⁷ See for example the set of indicators and questions used in the Eurobarometer surveys, which correspond to those two dimensions of left and right. See also Huber (1989), Knutsen (1989; 1995), Kitschelt and Hellemans (1990), and Inglehart (1990: 258–300). It cannot be argued that this scale is simply a product of the survey analysts' questions (i.e., a social scientific construction) since much of this research in political behavior has been precisely on the *semantics* (or meaning for ordinary users of the term) and underlying value dimension of the left-right orientations in mass publics.

²⁸ See for example Huber (1989), the prolific work of Knutsen (e.g., 1988, 1989, 1995), or Inglehart (1990).

²⁹ On the concept of entitlement, as used here, see the work of Amartya Sen (e.g., 1981).

³⁰ In the 18th century, as Laponce (1981) correctly points out, privatization, free competition, and free trade were on the left, with the right favoring mercantilistic privileges and close ties to the Crown. Equality and equalization is, and has been, the main criterion to define the left.

³¹ It is precisely for this reason that fascist governments in the 20th century, or mercantilist states in the 18th century, are *not* considered on the left, even though each favored particularly heavy state intervention in the economy. The goal of their political intervention in the economy was not to achieve greater socioeconomic equality.

³² It would certainly be a mistake to understand the left pole of this subdimension as being *necessarily* more “liberal-democratic”, and the right pole as *necessarily* “anti liberal-democratic.” Riots, protests, and anarchist bombings, on the left, have often contributed to the downfall of liberal democracies. Conversely, moderately conservative scholars, such as Almond and Verba (1963) and many since them, have been arguing for a political culture that allows for engagement in, and respect for (when not deference to), *established* institutions as a prerequisite for stable liberal democracies. A more conservative scholar such as Huntington (1968) of course went beyond concerns for liberal democracy to state, in contrast, that his main interest was in the “degree of government” or “political order,” independently of liberal-democratic forms *per se*.

³³ Just as for the first dimension of left and right with the declining relevance of nationalizations and the rise of the antiglobalization agenda, issues that are relevant to that second dimension for a given time period do change, but the overall conceptual polarity remains basically the same.

³⁴ As is well known, Inglehart (1990) has elaborated the sophisticated and empirically sound theory, based on Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs, that there has been a major “culture shift” among the public of advanced industrial democracies. Although relative percentages may have changed historically, it is not clear that “post-materialism” itself or, more exactly, the specific questions used to measure relation to order, freedom, self-expression, beautification, or military might are in reality new, even as political, public issues.

Some of the batteries of questions for measuring the post-materialist/materialist divide basically correspond to a “soft” (“friendlier,” more “beautiful”) versus “hard” (defense, police, hard work) divide, the soft side of which may admittedly have grown, even if the polarity itself is not new. However, the questions on workers’ participation refer to a century-old program of the participatory left dating back to the 19th century. This participatory left seems to have peaked in different time periods, such as the late 1960s or, in Southern Europe and its offshoots, at the beginning of the 20th century with the anarcho-syndicalist movement.

³⁵ We shall return later to Kitschelt’s “political spaces,” when we discuss the very explicit relation of Kitschelt’s categories to *left and right* and to the definitions provided here. In terms of

terminology, Kitschelt called this spatial dimension “social-cultural” in most of his early 1990s writing (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990; Kitschelt 1992; Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt et al. 1999), but repeatedly calls it “political-cultural”—referring to “political-cultural governance”—in his later, more recent texts (1997: 139–40, 2004, 2004; Brinegar, Adam, and Jolly 2004; Kitschelt and Rehm 2005: 6–10).

³⁶ As Knutsen writes, “new politics supporters *assume* that the explanatory power of this [leftist-rightist materialism] value dimension diminishes when a social class dealignment or more generally, a status dealignment takes place. This approach implicitly assumes that left-right materialist values and social status variables are very closely related so that the former will not have large causal explanatory power when the impact of the latter variable group seems to be strongly reduced” (1988: 326–327). In his empirical research, he “found support for the argument that the Left-Right dimension has altered from a structural class or status cleavage to an *independent* ideological cleavage (in a causal sense)” (349).

³⁷ An underexplored area of left and right, particularly in this second dimension, is the relevance of rigidity, the danger of “mess” and “dirt,” and the fear of somewhat uncontrollable life (and “sexualized”) forces, on the part of the right, and, on the other pole on the “new” left, the centrality of notions of “self-expression” and “self-fulfillment,” when not (to speak in euphemisms) of “exploratory hedonism.” The polarity between the slogan of *métissage* (racial mixing) in France, on the left, and the phobic National Front, on the right, is a very illustrative case, not entirely unlike the earlier polarity between Haight-Ashbury’s “gyrating” hippies and Ronald Reagan in late 1960s California.

Back in the 1930s, Wilhelm Reich (1974 [1945]: 157–160; 168–247) made the quite original, and historically documented, claim that the Russian revolution turned to the right the moment it adopted an explicit policy to crack down on the youth communes that had proliferated in the 1918–1928 revolutionary period in Russia. While historically questionable from a causal standpoint, Reich’s analysis is fully in line with that second dimension of left and right, as are the writings of Habermas (1984: 119–197) on “system” and “lifeworld.” Most movements on the far right have certainly been much more concerned with phobia of contamination or “miscegenation” than with the defense of private property.

³⁸ The conflict and polarity between rebellious students and police forces is certainly not limited to the advanced industrial countries, nor is the conflict between student-staffed guerrilla and

national guard troops limited to Latin (especially Central) America. See for example Kroes (1975).

³⁹ In fact, non-political science books and magazines directed at a wider public concerned with questions of social status, distinction, and social trends, such as *The Atlantic*, have addressed the phenomenon quite squarely, publishing electoral sociology articles with titles such as “Joe Sixpack’s Revenge” (Caldwell 2000), “America’s Forgotten Majority” (Rogers and Teixeira 2000) and “Crossing the Meatloaf Line” (in “One Nation, Slightly Divisible,” Brooks 2001) or highlighting the inverse (social, political, cultural) category of “bobos,” or bourgeois bohemians (Brooks 2000).

⁴⁰ For an example of a normatively “balanced” perspective in that dimension of left and right, see Hirschman (1979: 87–97), with his observations on the complementary (and contradictory) function of what he called the entrepreneurial (accumulation) and reform (redistributive) functions.

⁴¹ In discussions of politicians’ and parties’ locations in Argentina with both country experts and nationals, I have found it striking that there is a much greater consensus about where to locate actors along the (much less well-known) high-low spectrum (of my “creation,” so to speak) than along the more familiar left-right spectrum.

⁴² In fact, spaces delineated by non-orthogonal axes tend to become unidimensional over time.

⁴³ In a certain way, the two poles of this subdimension largely correspond to what in the US are called “social conservatives” and “liberals.” No one in the US would doubt that the liberals are to the left of the conservatives, or the conservatives to the right of the liberals.

That I call this second dimension of left and right “political-cultural” while Kitschelt has called it “social-cultural” (Kitschelt et al. 1999) is irrelevant here. Both are “noneconomic” and, more importantly, the specific dimension tapped is the same (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 418–419). In both instances, this dimension has to do with relation to authority, social order, power involved in social roles and related mores, and perhaps individual “self-government” and expressive self-development as well. More recently, Kitschelt has also referred to it—appropriately--as “political-cultural” (see endnote 34).

Very unfortunately, in the US this axis is often referred to as “social issues,” while one thing Kitschelt’s writings and mine do agree on is that it is “cultural” (independently of the

adjective preceding it). This anomalous American media terminology is not unlike the “red” states standing for states on the right of the spectrum, instead of on the left.

⁴⁴ In their empirical study of the semantics of left and right in post-communist Eastern Europe, Kitschelt et al. find two relevant dimensions of left and right: one socioeconomic and about economic policy alternatives (dominant cognitively in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria), and the other non-economic. On the latter dimension, “*left and right* relate primarily to [non-economic] issues, with *rightist* positions signifying policies of closure *against* autonomy of the individual, universalistic norms of conduct, multicultural tolerance, and participatory decision making, while *leftist* positions endorse such visions of *political order*” (1999: 73).

⁴⁵ To be fair, this mistake of relying on assumptions (themselves not culturally neutral), rather than observation, has occurred mainly in the comparative politics version of rational choice and not in the field of political behavior. In political behavior, rational choice does not posit any preferences a priori and allows for a *multiplicity* of interests relevant depending on the particular issue at hand. In elections, of course, there are always many issues on which both politicians and voters must take a stand.

⁴⁶ *Positions* or *preferences* (on a scale, in a space, etc.) must be assessed based on empirical observation, not assumed or “logically” derived from institutions’ rules. In my dissertation work, I studied the nature and formation of those preferences among popular-sector Peronist voters.

As Fiorina (1996) points out, rational choice is furthermore clearly much less useful for analyzing mass electoral behavior than the behavior of politicians. The stakes are lower for people who vote once every few years, many of whom may have little interest in politics, and whose employment is not a direct consequence of the electoral outcome. To Weyland (2002)’s criticisms, we would add that people, or voters, may have several rationalities when casting their votes.

⁴⁷ The number of dimensions of possible appeals is of course almost infinite, as are, in a different domain, the issue positions measured in conventional political behavior. There can be leftist and rightist appeals, nationalist and antinationalist appeals, crass material appeals, cultural-identity types of appeals, and ideational-normative appeals. Left-right and high-low *condense* the number of dimensions. Appeals can also arouse a variety of sentiments: desire (whether for material or economic gain, or sexual through proxy prowess), fear (of aliens, delinquents, people of color, etc.), resentment, social envy, etc.

⁴⁸ The list of books and articles that have addressed the debate over the meaning of the concept of populism is too lengthy to include in detail here. One can mention, on the definitional debate itself, the work of Margaret Canovan (1981, 1982, 1984, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2005), Laclau (1977; 2005), Conniff (1982; 1999), De la Torre (1992), Knight (1998), Taguieff (1995), Weyland (2001), Collier (2001), Panizza (2005), Arditi (2007), as well as the older pieces by Di Tella (1965), Ionescu and Gellner (1969), Germani (1978), and Weffort (1978), to name but a few.

⁴⁹ Various forces, which can be characterized as anti-populist and more specifically as high, played a key role in the transformation of their polity. One example, left of center, is that of the Progressives in the United States. In France, Republican discourse has moved increasingly on the high and has become a stalwart barrier against all historically resurgent forms of populism, from Poujadism to Le Pen's Front National (National Front, or FN), understood in France as a dangerous form of populism. On the high right in Argentina, repeated attempts by anti-populist forces to stamp out Peronist populism and return Argentina to "political normalcy" have failed, but they became ever more central in that country's violent politics.

⁵⁰ I want to thank one of my students, Giampaolo Bianconi, for this wonderful synthesis.

⁵¹ To characterize political style as "a broad," "not clearly delimited concept" that can be "occasionally adopted," or turned on and off at political will, is an easy criticism. On the contrary, the political style on the low is clearly recognizable and delimited, empirically. It simply requires a different method of observation and a different acquired comparative expertise: the watching of innumerable videos of campaign rallies, political advertising, speeches, televised appearances, etc., all of which are often far from the institutionalists' domain. Second, style is no more occasional than populist leaders' reliance on clientelistic practices (which can also be increased or decreased).

⁵² It appears to me incorrect to include, in and of itself, rule by opinion polls as a form of populism. It is conceivable to imagine a political leader who is lacking color, completely cold, and entirely without charisma yet who rules through surveys precisely in order to make sure he has the numbers and who would be legitimized that way. But without that special appeal, there is simply no populism.

⁵³ APRA is the acronym for the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance). While APRA was not formally in power at any time during the long

leadership of Haya de la Torre, the Colliers clearly associate the incorporation of labor in Peru to APRA (as a mass party) during the José Luis Bustamante government.

⁵⁴ Books, writings, and speeches of Perón are bountiful on this topic. A classic work by Perón is his book *La comunidad organizada* (1983). In line with his military training, one of his key concepts was “the nation in arms.” Perón in power had an incessant drive to “organize the people.” Together with “leadership” (*conducción*), “organization” was his leitmotiv.

⁵⁵ The terminology, as listed here, has been somewhat varied, but the basic idea remains one and the same.

⁵⁶ Outside of the work of Madsen and Snow (1991), there has been little empirical study, in Latin American politics, of “charisma” as charisma—and not as an easy short-cut—with its intrinsic components of redemption and unlimited allegiance.

⁵⁷ While the extremely well documented organizational approach of Levitsky (2003, 2001; Burgess and Levitsky 2003) explains how the rapid transformations of the PJ were made possible, it only goes so far in explaining what made (or kept) Peronist populism *attractive* to Peronists, besides the simple (but causally limited) truth that it was able to “adapt” pragmatically to adverse environmental circumstances once in power. “Adaptation,” in and of itself, is not a source of appeal or a way to increase (Downsian) “utility,” but simply a condition for party or governmental *survival*. Obviously, the questions asked here are different.

⁵⁸ The behavior of a politician with the lifestyle of a soap opera star, on the low, is likely to be quite popular among the popular sectors, while it may be looked down upon or condemned on the high. The examples of Fernando Collor de Melo in Brazil and of Menem in Argentina in the 1990s seem to illustrate this point. The type of comparatively more *sober* lifestyle displayed by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, despite his being quite wealthy, stands in sharp contrast.

In developed countries, quite noticeably and differently, populist leaders often *appeal* mainly to popular *fears* (about foreign immigrants, terrorism, national decline, etc.) rather than desires. This tendency is in fact a characteristic of right-wing populism.

⁵⁹ That the so-called dinosaurs were on the low was clear. That they were on the center may be debated.

⁶⁰ See Ostiguy (2009). These two Kellogg working papers should normally be read together, as they form a series.

⁶¹ Once more, we need to reiterate that “high” and “low” are not normative categories. It is equally possible to politically favor the low as it is to favor the high. Laponce (1981) has convincingly shown that in everyday usage and in religious worldviews, “right” and “high” are dominant and normatively positive, with “left” and “low” comparatively negative. But he has even more convincingly shown that with the inversion brought about by democratic politics against the “natural cognitive order,” “left” and “from below” have often generally become the normatively preferred categories of modern politics.

⁶² The Unitarians (Unitarios), the centralist political force in 19th-century Argentina (or what became known as Argentina), were largely based in the city of Buenos Aires and stood in sharp conflict with the Federals (Federales). The conflict between Unitarios and Federales defined most of 19th-century Argentine politics.

⁶³ Any historian cannot but be struck by the aesthetic difference between the “dandy-looking” Unitarian figures of the independence period, whether on the left, such as Mariano Moreno, or right of center, such as Bernardino Rivadavia, and the hyper-macho and fierce appearances of Juan Manuel de Rosas, Facundo Quiroga, José Gervasio Artigas, and most major Federal caudillos.

⁶⁴ Or to be more precise, the Peronist right started a campaign of physical elimination against the Peronist left, which in turn had been gunning down centrist Peronist union leaders.

⁶⁵ I demonstrate this fact in my book manuscript through a logit regression based on survey data. Results display a remarkable significance level (α), under .0005.

⁶⁶ Providentially for the present author, the emergence of Hugo Chávez on the political scene came after the formulation of the concepts of low and high in politics.

⁶⁷ The latter is something not overly surprising to me, considering the somewhat “social Freudianism” underpinning the high-low differences (see Figure 2). In fact, the one truly surprising absence in Chavismo is the lack of offensive, explicitly sexual (“in your face,” so to speak) imagery, in sharp contrast with the playful and extreme male obscenities of the Peronist chants, or the equally extreme sexual public language of Bucaram in Ecuador’s coastal populism.

⁶⁸ Note that in both Argentina and Venezuela, it is the anti-populist high that has been most associated with (successful) military coups, in their aversion to the low.

⁶⁹ In other words, “this is not ‘us.’”

⁷⁰ The first draft of this paper was written in 2002.

⁷¹ This “liberal” tradition is probably the dominant one in political science and can be traced back to Aristotle, in whose *Politics* demagogical leaders on the low gradually become despots.

⁷² Oddly enough, Guillermo O’Donnell almost belongs to *both* categories of scholars. He played a central role as a scholar in the second perspective during the first part of his career (1977, 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1988, 1999). His writings on delegative democracy and horizontal accountability (1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1999a, 1999b), during the more recent part of his career, almost placed him in the first perspective as well, but in fact not quite, as he is adamantly clear that delegative democracy is a full form of democracy. One cannot help but think, however, that “delegative democracy” is a “lesser” form of democracy (or a democracy of particularly low quality), with a particularly powerful—in the sense of unchecked and, in between elections, unaccountable—leader. The affinity between delegative democracy and populism in electoral democracies is quite apparent.

The greater emphasis on class analysis in O’Donnell’s early career tends to lead the analyst to expect a coup from the ruling class (and the right) against populist experiments, while the greater institutional emphasis in O’Donnell’s later career can lead one to expect (probably as a misreading) an erosion of liberal institutions of checks and balances in favor of ambitious populist leaders.

⁷³ The *Concordancia* (“deal,” “agreement”) in Argentina was an agreement between some of Argentina’s main political parties to govern together *and* to exclude the *Radicales Yrigoyenistas* (the *Radicales* belonging to the Hipolito Yrigoyen wing of the Radical Civic Union), also called *personalistas* (personalists) from fairly running for elections. The *Radicales Yrigoyenistas* had been the largest political force in Argentina from 1916 to 1930. Yrigoyen was overthrown in 1930 by the first military coup in Argentina.

⁷⁴ The Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (Independent Electoral Political Organization Committee, or COPEI) was one of Venezuela’s two main political parties from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s. It is a Christian-Democratic party, on the center-right.

⁷⁵ Even macho Febres Cordero, not a populist, was comparatively on the low.

⁷⁶ A similar assessment is provided in Mainwaring and Scully (1995). Coppedge (1998b) offers some nuances to an overall similar appraisal.

⁷⁷ For a regional mapping of Ecuadorian parties in the earlier part of the decade, see Eduardo Pizarro and Simon Pachano, “Atomización y regionalización partidista: Colombia y Ecuador,”

paper presented at the conference “The Crisis of Democratic Representation in the Andes,” Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 13–14 May 2002. On Ecuador, together with the already cited work of De la Torre, see Freidenberg (2001a, 2001b, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), Mejía Acosta (2002), Conaghan (1995), and Mertz (1980, 1983), amongst others.

⁷⁸ I wish to express my warmest gratitude to Andres Mejía Acosta, for the original inspiration and subsequent highly valuable insights about the politics of his country.

⁷⁹ In his initial 1990 campaign, Fujimori had also noticeably positioned himself on the culturally *popular*, dressing up in a poncho and dropping chicha on the ground in honor of Pachamama, something quite unprecedented on the part of a presidential candidate in Peru.

⁸⁰ Although Peru has historically been a somewhat elitist country politically (at least as perceived by the population), there have been important politicians on the low before the current contemporary period, perhaps most conspicuously Manuel Odría.

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