



**More Diverse, More Skeptical? How Changes in Class-based Network Diversity Shape Public Support for Commodified Welfare Services: Longitudinal Evidence from Chile**

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Abstract:	<p>This study investigates the longitudinal relationship between class-based network diversity and support for market justice preferences in Chile, a country characterized by high inequality and a market-oriented welfare regime. Drawing on three waves of data from the Chilean Longitudinal Social Survey (ELSOC, 2016–2023), I test the market skepticism hypothesis, which posits that increased exposure to diverse socioeconomic networks reduces individuals’ support for the commodification of welfare services. Theoretically, the paper builds on distributive justice and social network literatures, arguing that interpersonal ties across class boundaries provide both informational cues and socializing experiences that shape fairness judgments over time. Using two-way fixed-effects models, the findings show that increases in network diversity are significantly associated with declining support for market-based welfare distribution, even after accounting for occupational mobility and other network characteristics. These results suggest that social networks function as dynamic channels of political learning, where exposure to heterogeneous class experiences fosters more critical views of inequality and market outcomes. The study contributes to sociological debates on class, attitudes, and social networks by demonstrating that network diversity—not merely size or status—plays a distinct role in shaping distributive preferences. It also offers a comparative perspective by examining these dynamics in a Latin American context, where neoliberal reforms have deeply shaped welfare institutions. Implications for public policy include the potential of cross-class contact to promote more egalitarian attitudes, highlighting the importance of everyday sociability in contesting market-based inequality.</p>

## Introduction

The recent rise of income inequality in contemporary societies has drawn attention to how it affects social relations and networks, as well as their relationship with attitudes toward inequality (Iturra-Sanhueza 2025; Lindh and Andersson 2024). In addition to class positions—defined as the structural positions in the labor market and authority within production units, traditionally studied through individuals’ employment status and occupational characteristics—the role of class-based social networks in preference formation has gained increasing attention (Otero and Mendoza 2023). These studies argue that social influence plays a role in shaping attitudes by exposing individuals to the information and experiences of others (Lindh et al. 2021). Prior research shows that *class profiles*—understood as ties to specific occupational-class positions—can either heighten or diminish attitudes towards inequality, depending on the class position of the network tie (Cobo-Arroyo 2022; Lindh et al. 2021). Similar evidence suggests that *simultaneous* exposure to different class positions through network ties is linked to more skeptical views of economic inequality (Otero and Mendoza 2023; Paskov and Weisstanner 2022). Network *diversity*—defined as the extent to which individuals maintain ties across different occupational classes—provides a broader window through which individuals learn about others’ living conditions and experiences of economic inequality (Mijs and Usmani 2024).

Despite recent efforts to address this link from a longitudinal perspective (Plaza et al. 2026), a key research gap is still the longitudinal relationship between social networks and the justification of welfare commodification. The present study examines the *market skepticism hypothesis*, which posits that class-based network diversity may reduce the justification of the commodified distribution of welfare services over time (Castillo, Iturra, et al. 2025; Immergut and Schneider 2020; Lindh 2015). This may be particularly the case as the legitimization of economic inequality is often anchored in social networks that provide concrete empirical benchmarks of fairness rooted in others’ lived experiences (Shepelak and Alwin 1986).

Recent studies have argued that theories of class-based attitude formation have mainly relied on cross-sectional evidence, and only a few efforts have addressed the class-attitude link longitudinally. The relevance of this claim emphasizes the role of “class experiences” – understood as the socialization processes linked to individual experiences within the class structure across the life course (Ares 2020; Helgason and Rehm 2024; Langsæther et al. 2022). They argue that preference formation is neither completely shaped by the class of destination nor origin, where those immobile in their class positions are much more aligned with class-based interests than the mobile. A compelling argument is that mobile individuals are exposed to more diverse “class experiences” through changes in their interpersonal networks that provide varied socializing experiences as they navigate different positions throughout the life course (Ares 2020; Helgason and Rehm 2023; 2024). Thus, it is unclear whether networks play an additional role in the process when accounting for individual occupational mobility (Ares and Van Ditmars 2025). The relevance of this claim requires scrutinizing whether changes in social networks contribute to attitude formation, independently of the class experiences linked to the claimed relationship with social mobility (Ares 2020; Helgason and Rehm 2024). Class-based network diversity represents cross-class embeddedness through ties with family,

friends, and acquaintances (Paskov and Weisstanner 2022). These diverse connections provide access and expose individuals to a qualitative spectrum of others' class experiences. Thus, *diversity* rises in importance, rather than the volume of information represented by network size (Contreras et al. 2019; Plaza et al. 2026), or the influence of a single class-based represented by network class profiles or occupational status of the network tie (Cobo-Arroyo 2022; Lindh et al. 2021).

Most of the longitudinal studies on the class-attitude link have been focused on Western industrialized democracies (Ares 2020; Helgason and Rehm 2024; Langsæther et al. 2022). There is a scarcity of longitudinal studies linking changes in socioeconomic positions (Castillo, Laffert, et al. 2025) or class-based networks with political attitudes (Otero and Mendoza 2023; Otero, Völker, Rözer, et al. 2022). Thus, I argue that studying the network-attitude link in countries with modest public provision of welfare and high inequality, such as the Latin American context, offers a substantial comparative contrast with Western industrialized countries. A key feature that shaped the development of the social policy regimes in Latin America has been the pivotal role of market institutions and principles in the provision of welfare (Huber and Stephens 2012). From the 1970s onward, neoliberal reforms—marked by deregulation and privatization—transformed welfare systems in Latin America by transferring market logics to social domains that were previously publicly covered (Arrizabalo 1995).

From a moral economy perspective, market mechanisms in resource allocation have coexisted with economic redistribution and reciprocity, crystallized in welfare state institutions and family norms, in conjunction with their manifestation in popular views on these domains (Koos and Sachweh 2019). This set of principles and norms, including the role of individual effort and productivity as a central criterion for resource allocation, has been addressed as of *market justice* (Kluegel et al. 1999; Lane 1986). As these principles emphasize self-reliance and minimal government intervention, they function as a legitimizing mechanism of economic inequality by framing it as the result of fair competition (Svallfors 2007). The empirical distributive justice literature shows that market justice attitudes are salient in contexts of high inequality and modest public provision of welfare, where the capacity of citizens to contribute or pay constrains access to welfare services (Immergut and Schneider 2020; Lindh 2015; von dem Knesebeck et al. 2016).

Against this backdrop, the main question of this paper is: to what extent do individual changes in the socioeconomic composition of social networks affect changes in support for market justice preferences? Drawing on three waves of data from the Chilean Longitudinal Social Survey (ELSOC, 2016–2023), I test whether increases in network diversity reduce individuals' support for the commodification of welfare provision. This study contributes to the literature by providing evidence emphasizing how socioeconomic changes in personal networks shape economic preferences over time in Chile, one of the most unequal countries in the Latin American region, with a welfare system that is heavily reliant on private provision.

## **Theoretical views on structural positions, social networks, and market justice preferences**

### **Does time matter? The role of (changes in) individual structural position and networks on attitudes towards inequality**

Socioeconomic position plays a well-established role in shaping attitudes toward inequality. People in higher-status positions—those with higher education, better-paid, and more secure jobs—tend to favor market-based over state-based distributions because such systems align with their self-interest and sense of merit-based fairness (Lindh and McCall 2020; Svallfors 2007). Empirical evidence consistently shows that socioeconomically advantaged individuals are more likely to support the idea that those with higher incomes should pay more for better-quality social services in education, healthcare, and pensions (Castillo et al. 2024; Immergut and Schneider 2020; Lee and Stacey 2023). By contrast, individuals in disadvantaged positions—whose livelihoods depend more on public provision—tend to favor universal and redistributive arrangements. In this way, class position and educational attainment not only determine one's material interest in redistribution but also shape the underlying belief that market outcomes reflect merit and personal effort (Häusermann et al. 2015; Kluegel et al. 1999).

Beyond these well-known group differences, recent longitudinal studies show that the link between structural position and attitudes unfolds as a gradual process of adaptation. Political attitudes evolve alongside changes in individuals' structural locations, reflecting both material interests and learned experiences over time. Helgason and Rehm (2023; 2024) reviewed different mechanisms for explaining changes in attitudes: (i) socialization, which posits stability through early-life family experiences; (ii) anticipation, aligning attitudes with expected future income; (iii) myopic self-interest, based on short-term income effects; (iv) learning, as cumulative adjustment to past and current experiences; and (v) status maximization, which ties preferences to the highest structural position reached. Attitudinal change is therefore understood as slow and cumulative, where class-based divides emerge not only from static differences but also from differential exposure to upward or downward mobility. Empirical studies confirm this pattern: individuals experiencing upward mobility, especially through wage or occupational change, tend to become more accepting of inequality, while those with stable trajectories show more consistent class-based preferences (Ares 2020; Helgason and Rehm 2024; Langsæther et al. 2022; Stegmueller 2013). Yet mobile individuals often display nuanced and ambivalent views, suggesting that mechanisms of learning and adaptation underpin the evolution of inequality attitudes over time.

Building on this life-course perspective, recent literature extends the analysis from individual structural position to the composition of social networks. Social networks contribute to attitude formation beyond material self-interest and value-based explanations (Kulin and Svallfors 2013; Maldonado et al. 2019). Studies of network *class profiles*—the share of ties to specific social classes—find that more working-class ties increase perceived inequality and support for redistribution, whereas more service-class ties reduce both (Cobo-Arroyo 2022; Lindh and Andersson 2024). Networks thus shape attitudes through social influence, as individuals adjust their views based on interactions with their contacts (Lindh et al. 2021). A related strand of research highlights a simultaneous connection to diverse socioeconomic positions as another pathway. Socioeconomic diversity in interpersonal networks—understood as the degree of

connectedness to dissimilar class positions—links individuals to cross-cutting social circles and exposes them to a wider range of experiences (Blau 1977; Otero and Mendoza 2023). Such dissimilarity provides inferential spaces for understanding inequality (Mijs 2018): those embedded in diverse networks better grasp the magnitude and causes of inequality (Mijs and Usmani 2024). Cross-class contact may foster empathy with those in economic disadvantage (Sachweh 2012) or, conversely, legitimize inequality as contact fades (Vargas Salfate and Stern 2023).

The distributive justice literature clarifies the micro-foundations through which such exposure shapes views about distributive fairness. Existential standards—understood as context-dependent benchmarks of fairness rooted in lived experiences—emerge through two complementary mechanisms: information and socialization (Castillo 2011; Immergut and Schneider 2020). On the informational side, individuals observe how income, status, and opportunities are allocated in everyday contexts such as workplaces or neighborhoods, developing concrete “referential structures” of fairness (Shepelak and Alwin 1986). On the socialization side, these repeated observations become internalized as normative expectations of what outcomes are legitimate. Those embedded in structurally diverse networks—especially in bridging positions across disconnected groups—encounter contrasting experiences and interpretations of inequality that broaden their understanding of justice (Burt 2004; Vedres 2022). Consequently, the content and normativity of fairness evaluations are conditioned by exposure to diverse settings and institutional contexts, anchoring fairness judgments in the concrete empirical realities of social life rather than purely abstract ideals (Christensen et al. 2024; Immergut and Schneider 2020).

Empirical evidence shows that socioeconomic diversity in personal networks is associated with more critical views on inequality. Paskov & Weisstanner (2022) found that diverse networks lead to dis-aligned class-based redistributive preferences in Europe: working-class individuals with ties to the upper-middle class show more nuanced attitudes, while upper-middle-class individuals connected to the working class express greater support for redistribution. Likewise, Otero & Mendoza (2023) demonstrated that individuals with more socioeconomically diverse acquaintance networks report higher perceived inequality, stronger egalitarianism, and more skepticism toward meritocracy in Chile. People embedded in cross-cutting social ties receive more heterogeneous information about labor market processes, such as job seeking or wage differences (Contreras et al. 2019; Plaza et al. 2026; Svallfors 2006), which highlights the role of structural and non-meritocratic factors—like inherited wealth or social connections—in getting ahead (McCall et al. 2017). Taken together, these studies demonstrate that network diversity is associated with more egalitarian attitudes; however, most of this evidence is mainly cross-sectional and captures static differences between individuals rather than changes within them over time.

Despite this progress, little is known about whether changes in network composition—particularly in socioeconomic diversity—affect political attitudes. From the perspective of individual change, networks provide access to diverse information and thus enable social learning (Druckman and Lupia 2000; Lin 2001). Theoretically, they can be seen as a “social convoy” (Kahn and Antonucci 1980), a dynamic set of relationships through which information and support flow (Hollstein 2023). These ties evolve through life-course events such as employment transitions, marriage, or residential moves (Rözer et al. 2020). Moreover, acquaintanceship ties—typically weaker and more heterogeneous—

tend to vary more than strong family or friendship ties (Völker 2022). The absence of longitudinal evidence on how changes in network diversity shape attitudinal change remains a key limitation in understanding political learning and adaptation across the life course.

Several mechanisms may explain how shifts in network diversity influence inequality attitudes. Changes in the socioeconomic composition of social activities may create opportunities to form new cross-class ties (Feld 1981). Evidence from school desegregation shows that exposure to diverse peers can alter attitudes toward inequality, increasing skepticism about the fairness of market outcomes (Londoño-Vélez 2022). Similarly, social mobility exposes individuals to new class contexts and ideas that may challenge their class of origin, reshaping political attitudes (Ares 2020). Through these new “class experiences,” people gain alternative perspectives and more accurate insights into their own and others’ positions (Helgason and Rehm 2024). These mechanisms suggest that social networks not only reflect structural mobility but also operate as independent channels of political learning and normative adaptation. Nonetheless, most studies continue to focus on networks’ associations with perceptions of inequality or redistributive preferences (Cobo-Arroyo 2022; Lindh et al. 2021; Otero and Mendoza 2023), leaving open the question of whether similar processes affect attitudes toward the marketization of welfare—an important dimension of the moral economy of inequality (Busemeyer et al. 2020; Castillo et al. 2024; Immergut and Schneider 2020).

Taken together, these theoretical arguments suggest that exposure to socioeconomic diversity provides both informational cues and socializing experiences that gradually alter fairness judgments. Through repeated interactions across class boundaries, individuals encounter contrasting standards of justice, prompting reassessment of market-based fairness and of the legitimacy of inequality in commodified welfare domains.

In line with the above, I expect that even after accounting for social mobility, changes in social networks exert distinct effects. Network diversity should nurture skepticism toward the fairness of market mechanisms and the legitimacy of market-based welfare distribution. As individuals encounter new social contexts and experiences, they may develop more critical views of market outcomes—a dynamic I refer to as the *market skepticism hypothesis*. Over time, greater network diversity allows individuals to accumulate varied experiences and learn from qualitatively new information. Therefore, I hypothesize that increases in class-based network diversity over time reduce support for market justice (H1).

## **Market justice and support for the commodification of welfare**

In this study, I will focus on public support for the commodification of welfare services. While redistribution in market societies mainly focuses on the capacity of the state to reallocate resources from those in more advantageous positions to those in greater vulnerability, market institutions also play a role in shaping the distribution of economic resources (Koos and Sachweh 2019; Lindh and McCall 2020). Hereby, the legitimacy of resource allocation based on market principles has been referred to in the literature as *market justice*. In his seminal work, Lane (1986) defines *market justice* as a distributive principle that mainly focuses on rewards based on “earned deserts”. At the same time, this contrasts with political justice, more closely related to the social policy architecture that prioritizes the principles of equality and need. In this line, he argues that individuals

perceive market outcomes as fair because they are directly linked to individual effort, which in turn reinforces the importance of self-reliance and individual responsibility (Lane 1986). These principles advocate efficiency through competition, minimal government intervention, and voluntary asset exchange. Additionally, market justice underscores the protection of individual rights, particularly those related to private property, allowing individuals to control resources and benefit from their labor.

Theoretically, I conceive *market justice* preferences as individual beliefs that legitimate inequalities associated with market outcomes, such as wage inequality among groups or unequal access to welfare services based on personal income (Kluegel et al. 1999). In this sense, the market is understood as a self-regulating arena, which coordinates economic exchanges based on supply and demand, where rewards are distributed according to individual contributions and efforts (Kluegel and Smith 1981). This idea is grounded in the belief that the market promotes procedural fairness, where everyone has equal opportunities to compete, yet individual capabilities determine the outcomes (Lane 1986). Unlike systems based on political justice, which emphasize equality and need, market justice is seen as a process where just outcomes are achieved through the fair competition of agents (Lane 1986). This notion of justice stems from the assumption that outcomes are deserved, as they reflect individual effort and ability, fostering a sense of fairness (Svallfors 2007). However, achieving perceived fairness depends on maintaining open and responsive systems, where equal opportunities are a precondition for an outcome to be considered just (Kluegel et al. 1999). Through this lens, inequalities are accepted—even seen as necessary—because they incentivize innovation and productivity, reinforcing societal prosperity by rewarding individual achievements and self-responsibility (Castillo et al. 2013). Thus, market justice values individual responsibility, linking economic rewards to personal contributions rather than redistributive mechanisms based on the principles of equality and need.

Part of the empirical distributive justice studies have addressed the extent to which market justice principles are linked to the legitimacy of how market outcomes (e.g., wages) are transferred to other social domains, such as income-based access to welfare services (Castillo et al. 2024; Lindh 2015). This implies that welfare services are viewed as legitimate commodities that can be traded, evaluated, and priced (Busemeyer and Iversen 2020). For instance, in the healthcare domain, Knesebeck et al. (2016) and Immergut and Schneider (2020), have assessed whether citizens find it fair that wealthier individuals receive better healthcare services than poorer individuals. In the educational domain, Lee and Stacey (2023) scrutinized Australian citizens' support for income-based access to schooling by gauging whether individuals consider it fair that higher-income families can secure a better education for their children. Similarly, other cross-country comparative studies, such as Lindh (2015) and Svallfors (2007) have combined both indicators as a general indicator for the “market-based distribution” of welfare services. Similarly, a study by Castillo et al. (2024) scrutinized market justice preferences on the student population in Chile in the domains of education, healthcare, and pensions, as well as by employing a single indicator of market justice. As I am interested in the general preferences beyond the specific social policy domains, in this study, I adopted the latter approach to scrutinize market justice preferences as a single dimension.

Hence, support for market justice reflects the legitimization of inequality in commodified welfare provision, making it a meaningful indicator for testing the market skepticism hypothesis.

## Case of Chile

Chile provides a valuable case study to shed light on how public views regarding the market distribution of social services develop in conditions of decreasing poverty and relatively high income inequality in the context of a residual social policy regime (Ferre 2023). Since the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, Chile's welfare system has leaned heavily on private provision, where services are often privatized and only accessible to those who can afford them (Arrizabalo 1995). This "crowded-out" welfare model benefits higher-income groups, leaving lower-income individuals to rely on limited public options. Despite economic growth, it remains one of the most unequal countries in the OECD, with a high Gini index and concentrated wealth among the top deciles (Rodríguez Weber 2017). Scholars studying social stratification have suggested that Chile exemplifies a society with upward mobility from lower classes to intermediate classes, yet with limited access to the upper classes (Torche 2005). Although research indicates that while the class structure in Chile shows greater fluidity regarding occupational class and educational attainment, it does not reflect the same pattern when it comes to income mobility (Espinoza and Núñez 2014). These inequalities are evident in the high levels of residential segregation found in large urban centers (Garreton et al. 2020), which have also influenced individuals' interpersonal networks (Otero, Völker, and Rözer 2022). Specifically, it has been noted that the upper classes in Chile can be described as "open but segregated," as they display high levels of segregation while still able to connect with a diverse range of social classes within their networks (Otero et al. 2021).

Regarding public opinion, the International Social Survey of 2019 shows that Chile has a moderate-low support for the idea that it is fair that those with higher incomes can buy better health care and/or education for their children with around 22%, which contrasts with high support in countries like Taiwan (48%) or the low support in Germany (9%). Against this background, a cycle of mass protests known as the "social outburst" started in October 2019. Initially, the protests were sparked by the mobilization of high school students, which progressively triggered different sectors of society to join the demand for greater equality in access to education, health care, and old age pensions. These protests were interpreted by the political system as a demand for a public shift toward a "crowded-in" welfare model, with greater public provision of social services (Somma et al. 2021). In sum, Chile is an illustrative case where marketization has been predominant compared to public provision of social services. This institutional arrangement has coexisted with changes in the living conditions of citizens during the past decades, which have been accompanied by shifts in public opinion for a more inclusive and public-based welfare system.

## Data, variables, and method

### Data

The primary data source is the Chilean Longitudinal Social Survey (ELSOC 2022) from 2016 to 2023, including three-time measures, designed to annually assess how individuals think, feel, and behave regarding social issues related to conflict and cohesion in Chile. Using a probabilistic, stratified, clustered, and multistage sampling design, the survey covers major urban centers (Santiago, Valparaíso, and Concepción) and smaller cities.

The first wave included 2,927 participants aged 18 to 75, representing populations in the north and south, covering 77% of Chile's total population and 93% of the urban population, with a response rate of 62.4% (Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies, 2022). After listwise deletion, the analytical sample includes 6,562 observations nested within 2,884 individuals. In 2018 (Wave 2), a refreshment sample was added to the study, consisting of 1,519 cases, while 2,229 cases corresponded to the original sample from 2016 (Wave 1). I decided to exclude this refreshment sample to focus on longer-term trends. The initial sample included 2,757 respondents in wave 1. Of these, 2,136 (77.5%) completed wave 3, corresponding to an attrition rate of 22.5% from wave 1. By wave 7, 1,669 respondents remained (60.5% of the original sample), yielding an overall attrition rate of 39.5%. Between wave 3 and wave 7, attrition was 21.9%.

## Variables

### *Market justice preferences*

The main dependent variable of this study is *market justice preferences*: 'It is fair that people with higher incomes have better pensions than people with lower incomes', 'It is fair that people with higher incomes have access to better education for their children than people with lower incomes', and 'It is fair that people with higher incomes can access better healthcare than people with lower incomes'. These items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The Cronbach alpha is close to 0.8 in all time points ( $\alpha_{t1}=.82$ ,  $\alpha_{t2}=.86$ ,  $\alpha_{t3}=.83$ ). Here, the three items are combined in a single indicator where higher values indicate stronger support for market justice principles ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ).

### *Occupational socioeconomic status*

For measuring socioeconomic status (SES), I use the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom 2010). This indicator assigns continuous scores to occupations based on their required education and associated income levels. The ISEI synthesizes information on occupational hierarchies, educational attainment, and earnings to reflect the socioeconomic positioning of individuals within the labor market. The ISEI scores range from 16 (lowest status) to 88 (highest status). Following Langsæther et al. (2022, p. 963), I argue that including other socioeconomic factors, such as income, can be considered a post-treatment variable of occupational positions in a longitudinal context, as it results from occupational mobility. Therefore, all model specifications include ISEI scores based on occupations as the main SES measurement. In line with comparative research (Otero et al. 2024), those individuals classified as "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" (NEET) have been assigned an ISEI score of 10<sup>i</sup>.

### *Class-based network diversity*

In this study, respondents were asked about the socio-economic diversity of their acquaintances in Chile. An acquaintance was defined as someone they could recognize by name and could converse with if encountered in public. Respondents were asked to approximate the number of people they knew in each occupation (see occupations in Table S1). The network diversity index was calculated to capture the socio-economic

diversity of respondents’ networks. Following recommendations in social network literature (Otero and Mendoza 2023; Sapin et al. 2020), a single dimension was used to represent network diversity, incorporating two indicators through a Principal Component Analysis (see Figure S1). With this strategy, I consider both the possible ties to the available occupations jointly and how these ties are distributed across each group (Koopmans and Schaeffer 2015). First, generalized entropy measures the degree of *balance* across groups based on the number of acquaintances in each occupation<sup>ii</sup>. The second indicator is extensivity, which aims to capture the degree of *variety* of known groups, in this case, the number of occupations with which the individual declares to have acquaintances. I use this information to create a composite measure representing class-based diversity in social networks. This index has a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 and will be used in all subsequent analyses throughout the article. Thus, higher values on this index represent higher socio-economic *diversity* in social networks.

Method

First, to examine the extent to which changes in network diversity predict market justice preferences, I estimated two-way fixed-effects linear models (Andreß et al. 2013). I analyzed the data using the R library “plm” (Croissant and Millo 2008). In the context of panel data, within-person effects capture how changes in individual-level variables (e.g., network diversity) between waves are associated with preferences for market justice while controlling for the influence of time-invariant characteristics. Additionally, to account for non-linear relationships on network diversity, I included a quadratic term under the assumption that for those with greater changes in network diversity, the theorized relationship might be stronger as they are exposed to others’ class experiences more widely than individuals experiencing smaller changes. As the sample is an unbalanced individual panel, all models include longitudinal panel-weights<sup>iii</sup>.

In Equation 1, the description of the regression model is depicted. Here, the focus variable is  $\beta_1 D_{it}$  represented by the linear (within-person) effect of diversity and  $\beta_2 D_{it}^2$  quadratic (within-person) effect of diversity. In addition,  $\alpha_i$  are individual fixed effects (unit-specific unobserved heterogeneity),  $\tau_t$  represents time fixed effects, and  $\varepsilon_{it}$  the idiosyncratic error term.

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{it} + \beta_2 D_{it}^2 + \alpha_i + \tau_t + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

Changes in network diversity and market justice preferences

[Table 1 about here]

The results from the fixed effects models are presented in Table 1. First, Model 1 includes the individual changes in occupational status, showing that increasing the socioeconomic status has a negative but non-significant relationship with support for market justice preferences ( $\beta = -0.011, p > 0.05$ ). Second, Model 2 includes other network characteristics of size and average network status, showing a non-significant negative association with market justice preferences. In Model 3, I introduce network diversity to account for how changes in the socioeconomic diversity of acquaintance networks affect market justice preferences. The results indicate that a one standard deviation increase in diversity drives

a decrease of -0.067 in the market justice scale ( $\beta = -0.067$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In the following estimation presented in Model 4, the relationship between network diversity and market justice preferences remains relatively unaffected, even when controlled for changes in occupational status, network average ISEI, and network size. Additionally, I included a quadratic term to consider a non-linear relationship between changes in network diversity with market justice preferences. However, the coefficient shows a negative but non-significant quadratic effect of network diversity ( $\beta = -0.019$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

Figure 1 presents the average predicted values of market justice preferences across levels of network diversity. Here, I included predicted means of market justice preferences according to the linear (Model 4) and quadratic (Model 5) terms of network diversity. Based on Model 3, when network diversity is at the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile, the average predicted market justice preference is 2.20 (95% CI: 2.12 – 2.28), and it decreases to 2.08 when it is at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile (95% CI: 2.02 – 2.14). These results indicate that a shift from a low-diversity to a high-diversity network is associated with an average decrease of approximately 0.12 points in support for market justice. According to the original scale (1 to 5) of the market justice preferences index, this difference represents a change of around 3% [ $0.12 / (5 - 1)$ ], which is considered rather low but still relevant, as it has been argued that political attitudes in the economic domain do change, but it is a rather slow process of adaptation (Ares 2020; Helgason and Rehm 2023). In this sense, when considering the meaning of the scale values, the results suggest that individuals are shifting within the “agreement” range (i.e., between “Strongly disagree” [1] and “Disagree” [2]).

Thus, the observed changes indicate that, on average, increased exposure to diversity leads individuals to disagree more strongly with the idea that income should determine access to welfare services in Chile. All the above evidence supports the *market skepticism hypothesis* ( $H_1$ ), suggesting that individuals embedded in more socioeconomically diverse networks tend to express more critical views of market-based distributive principles.

[Figure 1 about here]

## Discussion and conclusion

The findings presented here provide empirical support for the market skepticism hypothesis: increasing socioeconomic diversity of personal networks is associated with declining support for market-based principles in the distribution of welfare services.

According to my theoretical expectations, the evidence presented here suggests that changes in network diversity influenced changes in attitudes. This relationship may operate through two (non-exclusive) mechanisms. *Information* — exposure to non-redundant environments may independently foster attitudinal change, in line with inferential or social learning approaches (Druckman and Lupia 2000; Mijls 2018); or *Socialization* — over time, individuals normatively adapt to their new social environments, and these adaptations are reflected in their attitudes (Ares 2020; Helgason and Rehm 2024; Otero and Mendoza 2023). This relationship is consistent in a longitudinal context, suggesting that exposure to heterogeneous social environments—particularly across socioeconomic lines—plays a central role in shaping individuals’ views on market justice principles in the provision of social services.

Two interrelated theoretical explanations can account for this relationship. First, from a life-course perspective, interpersonal networks evolve in part, but not exclusively, due to changes in individuals' occupational trajectories. This perspective aligns with the notion of the *social convoy* (Kahn and Antonucci 1980), a changing configuration of social relationships that accompanies individuals over time. Importantly, shifts in these convoys are not solely driven by social mobility. Rather, this might also reflect broader life transitions—such as entering or leaving the workforce, changes in marital status, or geographical location. Nonetheless, in this work, I assume this according to previous findings (Rözer et al. 2020). As individuals accumulate more varied experiences through these evolving social ties, they gain access to different sources of information, jointly with others' views on the distribution of economic opportunities or labor market outcomes, such as the procedures related to educational opportunities, wage inequality, or living conditions of pensioners. These experiences may challenge previously held assumptions about the legitimacy of market-based distributions.

Second, drawing from empirical justice theories, it is argued that exposure to socioeconomic diversity transforms the *existential standards* individuals use to evaluate distributive fairness (Immergut and Schneider 2020; Shepelak and Alwin 1986). These standards refer to what people perceive as normal, expected, or acceptable within their social context. When individuals interact with others who are situated differently within the social structure and who may face distinct constraints in accessing better education, healthcare, or pensions, they are confronted with contrasting experiences of inequality. Over time, these encounters may destabilize the moral foundations of market justice by exposing individuals to realities that contradict the assumption that outcomes are solely the result of individual effort (Otero and Mendoza 2023).

From a longitudinal perspective, *skepticism* is likely amplified when networks bring together individuals from otherwise disconnected segments of the class structure. In such cases, people are more likely to access divergent and often non-redundant information about how social systems function across different positions (Burt 2004). Prior research suggests that these types of ties are especially valuable for broadening individuals' perspectives, as they provide access to unfamiliar and sometimes conflicting interpretations of economic and institutional realities (Vedres 2022). In the context of preferences for commodified welfare, these contrasting experiences and informational flows may encourage individuals to question the fairness of allocating public goods according to income and purchasing power. Thus, the presence of socioeconomic diversity in personal networks serves not only to increase exposure to inequality but also to deepen understanding of its structural roots (Londoño-Vélez 2022; Mijs and Usmani 2024).

Building on previous research on the role of social heterogeneity in networks (Mijs and Usmani 2024; Otero and Mendoza 2023; Paskov and Weisstanner 2022) a theoretically relevant contribution of this research is to distinguish more clearly between the role of network *class profiles* (Cobo-Arroyo 2022; Lindh and Andersson 2024; Lindh et al. 2021) as the pure single connection to certain classes and, network *diversity*, as the attribute of the network related to simultaneous connections to more than one class position. In line with my theorization, an assumption is that changes in network ties entail shifts in both the type and amount of information individuals receive. It is noteworthy that my results suggest network diversity plays an independent—and partially more significant—role than either network size or status. In theoretical terms, this implies that, beyond the

volume of information associated with larger networks and the dominant narratives conveyed by higher status ties, it is the qualitatively different nature of information arising from heterogeneous connections that contributes more robustly to attitudinal change. Taken together, these insights point to the social embeddedness of distributive preferences. Attitudes toward market justice are not merely reflections of fixed individual characteristics or ideological predispositions; rather, they emerge through social interaction and exposure. Therefore, socioeconomic diversity in networks—rising over time—appears to be an important factor for political learning and normative re-evaluation (Helgason and Rehm 2024).

In a comparative perspective, a country characterized by high economic inequality and a market-oriented welfare system such as Chile provides a compelling context to examine the link between class-based networks and market justice preferences. Within this stream of research, my findings contribute longitudinal evidence and add to the growing literature on class-based networks and political attitudes. Comparative studies show that lower levels of public welfare provision are associated with weaker justification of market-based social services and smaller attitudinal differences between socioeconomic groups (Immergut and Schneider 2020; Lindh 2015). Moreover, in countries with high inequality and low redistribution, the association between class-based networks and egalitarian preferences tends to weaken (Iturra-Sanhueza 2025; Lindh and Andersson 2024). Under these circumstances—where a relative consensus across social classes *against* market-based welfare services is expected—I argue that part of the shifts in public opinion can be attributed to individual changes in the socioeconomic diversity of social networks over time.

This research is not without limitations. First, the analysis focuses on Chile, a country that combines high inequality and a market-oriented policy regime. While this setting offers a theoretically rich context to explore the relationship between class-based networks and market justice preferences, it limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to societies with different institutional and socio-structural settings. Second, the measurement of network diversity relies on self-reported information about the socioeconomic composition of personal ties with a limited 13-occupation position generator. Although such indicators provide valuable insights into social network composition, it does not capture other occupational characteristics, such as levels of autonomy (Langsæther and Evans 2020) or distinct work logics (Lindh et al. 2021). Third, despite the use of longitudinal data, there are some caveats regarding causal claims. Changes in attitudes and networks may unfold concurrently or be shaped by broader exogenous shocks that are not accounted for in the research design, such as the massive protest in October 2019 (Disi Pavlic et al. 2025) or events related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Castillo, Iturra, et al. 2025). Moreover, the analysis draws on three survey waves, which restricts the ability to observe long-term trajectories compared to studies using richer longitudinal data with ten or more waves, such as those available in other countries (Ares and Van Ditmars 2025). Nonetheless, the data set employed in this research represents the most comprehensive source currently available to examine the longitudinal relationship between social networks and economic attitudes in Chile and Latin America.

A possible vein for future research is whether network ties, besides being linked to changes in political attitudes, trigger shifts in other social domains. For instance, one could argue that rising exposure to socioeconomic diversity might have a “cohesive”

effect as it bridges those who were previously segregated (Otero, Völker, Rözer, et al. 2022). That said, does social trust strengthen as interpersonal networks become more diverse? (Lancee 2017). It can be hypothesized that a rise in trust in others might have behavioral consequences, such as cooperation-based activities like participation in voluntary associations that aim to strengthen the common good (Uslaner and Brown 2005; Yamamura 2012). Nonetheless, the assumption of the cohesive influence of exposure to social diversity still needs further research to clarify whether the claimed relationships hold for the attitudinal and behavioral expressions of social cohesion (Chan et al. 2006; Delhey et al. 2023).

Finally, these findings raise implications for public policy design. If exposure to socioeconomic diversity fosters more critical attitudes toward market-based inequality, then institutional arrangements that promote cross-class contact—such as integrated schooling, urban desegregation, or civic participation—may contribute to the development of more egalitarian or prosocial attitudes (Chávez et al. 2025; Galeano-Salgado and Álvarez-Rivadulla 2025; Londoño-Vélez 2022; Cebula 2025). In this regard, the everyday spaces of sociability that shape individuals' understanding of inequality deserve closer attention—not only as outcomes of stratification, but also as potential instruments for its contestation.

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<sup>i</sup> Alternative operationalizations and modeling strategies were implemented as robustness tests. First, I used a categorical version of ISEI, dividing respondents into bottom, intermediate, top tertiles, plus a NEET group. Second, I estimated a within-between multilevel model that distinguishes between time-varying and time-invariant characteristics. Third, instead of assigning an ISEI score of 10, I tested an alternative specification with a lower value of 0. Across all these strategies, the coefficient for network diversity remained robust.

<sup>ii</sup> The formula is depicted as  $H = -\sum_{j=1}^{13} p_j \log(p_j)$ , where  $p_j$  is the proportion of ties in category  $j$  (e.g., the proportion of social ties that belong to occupation  $j$ ). This excludes observations with no network ties (which represent around 3% of the total sample).

<sup>iii</sup> More details about the construction of the panel weights can be found at <https://coes.cl/elsoc/>

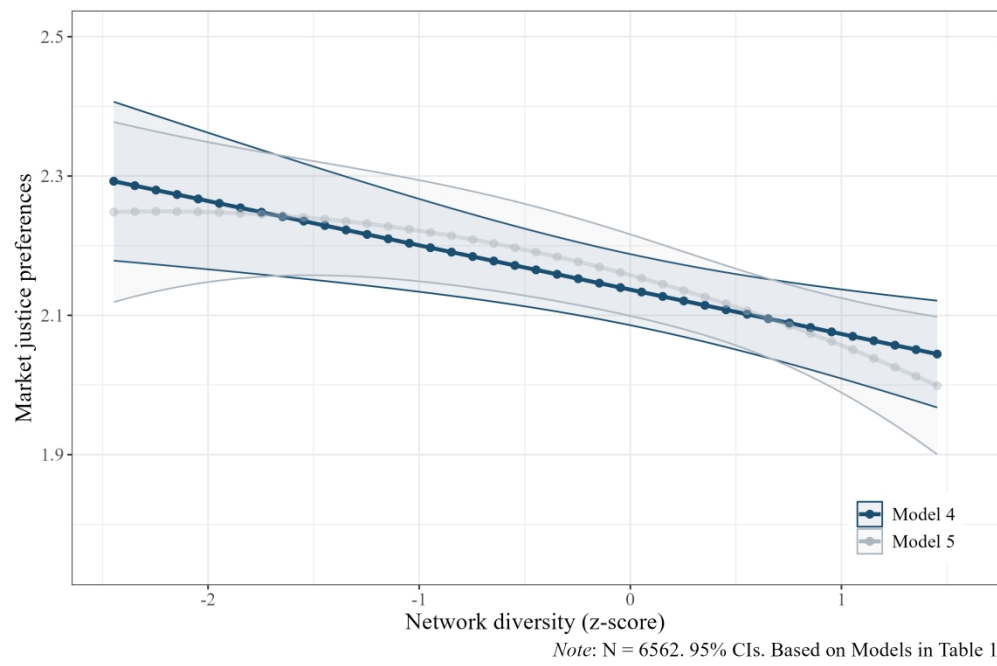


Figure 1: Predictive estimates of market justice preferences by network diversity

571x380mm (126 x 126 DPI)

Table 1: Fixed effects regression for market justice preferences and network diversity

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>
Occupational status (ISEI)	-0.001 (0.001)			-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Network status		-0.018 (0.016)		-0.012 (0.016)	-0.013 (0.016)
Network size		-0.032 (0.016)		-0.001 (0.019)	0.008 (0.020)
Network diversity			-0.067*** (0.018)	-0.064** (0.021)	-0.082*** (0.025)
Network diversity <sup>2</sup>					-0.019 (0.013)
Age	0.030* (0.012)	0.030** (0.012)	0.031** (0.012)	0.033** (0.012)	0.034** (0.012)
Age <sup>2</sup>	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)
Unit FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	6562	6562	6562	6562	6562

\*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05; p < 0.1; Standard errors in parentheses.

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## **SUPPLEMENTARY ONLINE MATERIALS**

for

**More Diverse, More Skeptical? How Changes in Class-based Network Diversity Shape Public Support for Commodified Welfare Services: Longitudinal Evidence from Chile**

*Social Forces*

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## Supplementary materials

### *Class-based network diversity index*

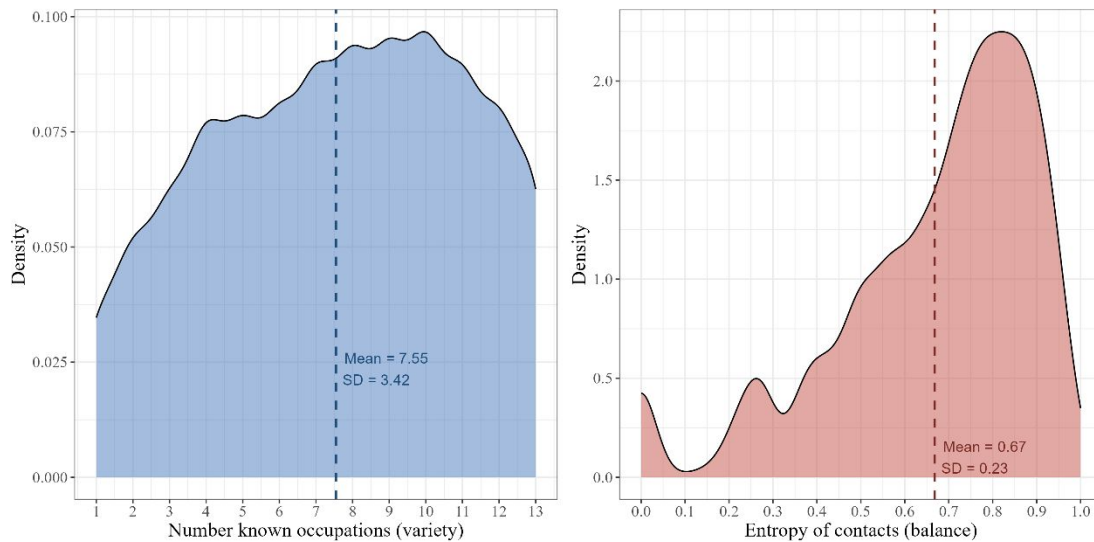


Figure S1: Components of the class-based network diversity index

To assess whether the two indicators of network diversity capture a common latent dimension, a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was conducted using the “psych” package in R (Revelle, 2025). The analysis included the entropy and the total number of known occupations as observed variables. A single-component solution with varimax rotation was extracted. The results indicated that a one-component structure provided a good representation of the data. Both indicators loaded adequately on the first principal component (0.98 for *variety* 0.98 for *entropy* ), with communalities of 0.97, showing that nearly all variance in each variable is explained by the common factor. The extracted component accounted for 97% of the total variance (SS loading = 1.93), and the root mean square of residuals (RMSR = 0.03) indicated a good model fit. The mean item complexity of 1 further confirmed that each variable is adequately associated with the same latent dimension.

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Table S1: occupations included in the position generator

Occupation	ISEI-08
Doctor	88
Attorney	85
University professor	77
Manager of a large firm	70
Accountant	60
Secretary	53
Shop assistant	43
Preschool teacher	43
Waiter	34
Car mechanic	34
Taxi driver	30
Street vendor	29
Office cleaner	16

Table S2: Descriptive statistics for study variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Market justice preference	6562	2	0.87	1	5
Entropy	6562	0.67	0.23	0	1
Extensivity	6562	7.5	3.4	1	13
Class-based network diversity	6562	0.00	1	-2.4	1.5
Occupational Status (ISEI)	6562	27	19	10	88
Network status	6562	48	10	16	88
Network size	6562	28	25	1	197
Age	6562	49	15	18	90
Sex	6562				
... Man	2493	38%			
... Woman	4069	62%			

## Supplementary analysis

### *Intragenerational social mobility trajectories*

To construct the trajectories of intragenerational mobility or simply “mobility profiles”, I used four categories for individuals’ occupational status: low, middle, high, and NEET. The procedure consists of two stages. First, individuals are categorized based on their first and last observed positions to identify profiles of mobility and stability. Second, to ensure a more robust classification of stability, I implemented the Class Mode Approach (Ares & Van Ditmars, 2025; Helgason & Rehm, 2024). Here, those who participated in the panel for three to four waves and remained in the same position for at least 75% of the time are classified as stable.

Table S2: Occupational socioeconomic status and intragenerational social mobility trajectories

Mobility	Freq.	%	Mobility	Freq.	%
Downward (Any to NEET)	688	10.48	Downward	941	14.34
Downward (H to L)	75	1.14			
Downward (H to M)	88	1.34			
Downward (M to L)	90	1.37			
Stable: high	794	12.10	Stable: high	794	12.10
Stable: low	760	11.58	Stable: low	760	11.58
Stable: middle	633	9.65	Stable: middle	633	9.65
Stable: NEET	2095	31.93	Stable: NEET	2095	31.93
Upward (L to H)	119	1.81	Upward	1339	20.41
Upward (L to M)	399	6.08			
Upward (M to H)	307	4.68			
Upward (NEET to Any)	514	7.83			

### *Methods*

To examine whether changes in network diversity are associated with market justice while accounting for mobility trajectories in the model specification, I employed a between-within (hybrid) multilevel regression model (Schmidt-Catran, 2016; Singer & Willett, 2009). This model includes two levels: individuals (j) and observations within individuals (i), with repeated measurements nested within individuals.

For this analysis, I focused on three key variables: mobility trajectories, network diversity (both individual-mean and demeaned). This approach allows for the estimation of both between (BE) and within (WE) effects of network diversity while incorporating mobility trajectories. Including both terms in the regression equation yields a hybrid model, which simultaneously estimates within- and between-unit effects. The coefficient vector for WE captures the within-individual effects of the variables, while the coefficient vector for BE represents the between-individual effects.

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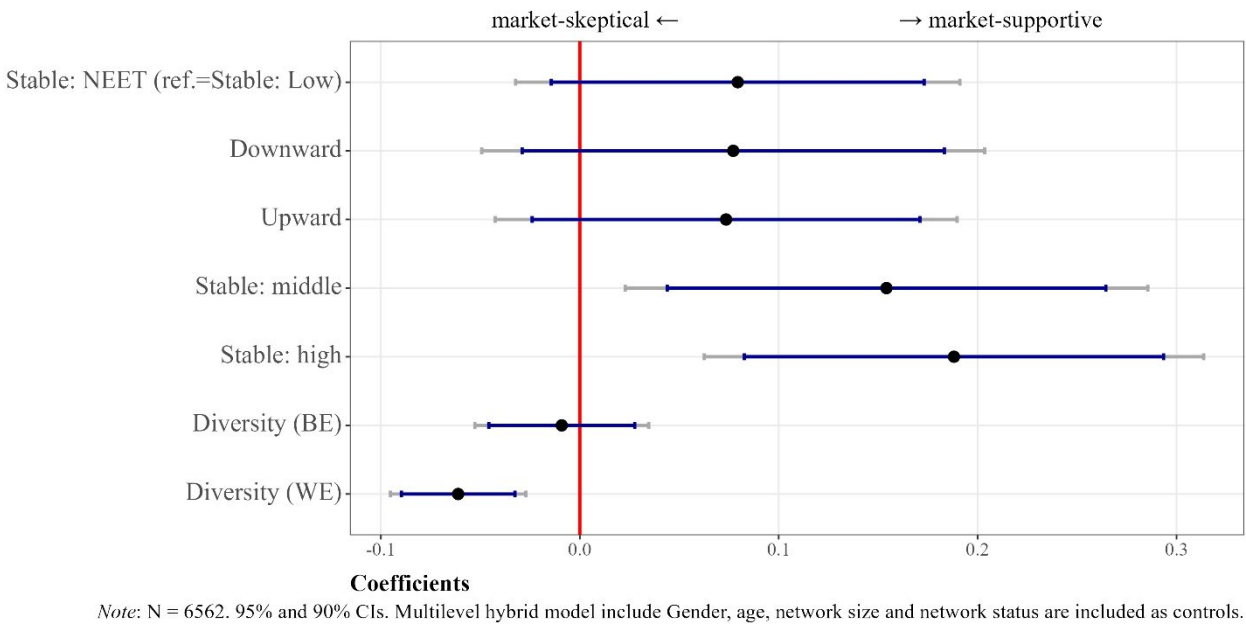


Figure S2: Multilevel within-between model for intragenerational occupational mobility, network diversity, and market justice preferences.

## References

Ares, M., & Van Ditmars, M. M. (2025). A life course approach to political preference formation across social classes. *West European Politics*, 48(4), 951–976. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2024.2415845>

Helgason, A. F., & Rehm, P. (2024). Class experiences and the long-term evolution of economic values. *Social Forces*, soae135. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soae135>

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Schmidt-Catran, A. W. (2016). Economic inequality and public demand for redistribution: Combining cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence. *Socio-Economic Review*, 14(1), 119–140. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwu030>

Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (2009). *Applied longitudinal data analysis: Modeling change and event occurrence*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated.