

LINKÖPING STUDIES IN ARTS AND SCIENCES NO. 760

INTERPRETING POLICY CONVERGENCE BETWEEN THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT

ESSAYS ON EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

JOHAN WENNSTRÖM



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UNIVERSITY

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For Malin

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is made up of four essays that address major problems in the policy areas of education and immigration in Sweden and an introductory essay that offers an overarching analysis of the results of the four individual studies. The first three essays analyze the significant decline in quality of elementary and secondary education since the late 1990s from three different angles: the decline in teachers' working conditions and status (Essay I), the deficiencies in the regulatory framework of Sweden's system of school competition between public and for-profit providers of education (Essay II), and the prescribed view of knowledge in Swedish schools (Essay III). The fourth essay examines the policy of refugee placement in recent years. It shows that peripheral and rural municipalities with declining populations and high unemployment have received greater numbers of refugees per capita than growing urban municipalities offering better employment opportunities. The introductory essay focuses on the common thread in the four essays, namely, policy convergence between the Left and the Right. In fact, the empirical evidence in the individual studies suggests that the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party have a propensity for policy convergence in the two areas analyzed, but that it is unintentional and hard to detect for the actors themselves. This observation runs counter to what is typically assumed in political science, namely, that the Left and the Right are polar opposites with widely divergent policy agendas.

KEYWORDS: Hedgehog–fox metaphor, Immigration, Moderate Party, Moral foundations, Policy convergence, School choice, Social Democracy, Thought collectives.

LIST OF ESSAYS

This dissertation is based on the following essays, which will be referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

- I. Wennström, J. (2016). A left/right convergence on the New Public Management? The unintended power of diverse ideas. *Critical Review*, 28(3–4), 380–403.
- II. Wennström, J. Marketized education: How regulatory failure undermined the Swedish school system. *Under review for possible publication*.
- III. Henrekson, M., & Wennström, J. “Post-truth” schooling and marketized education: Explaining the decline in Sweden’s school quality. *To be revised and resubmitted*.
- IV. Wennström, J., & Öner, Ö. Political hedgehogs: The geographical sorting of refugees in Sweden. *Unpublished manuscript*.

AUTHOR’S CONTRIBUTIONS

Essay III: Both authors have been fully involved in all aspects of the research and writing of this article.

Essay IV: Öner was responsible for the statistical analyses while Wennström took the lead in interpreting the results and in writing the article.

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I am particularly grateful to the Catarina and Sven Hagströmer Foundation, whose generous financial support enabled me to embark on my PhD studies and complete my dissertation in time.

I have had the good fortune to work halftime in the Political Science Division of Linköping University. There, my principal supervisor Professor Elin Wihlborg has been a loyal and tireless supporter of me personally and of my work. For this I am grateful, and I can only hope that many more young scholars will have the benefit of Elin's abilities in the future.

The other half of my time has been spent at the Research Institute of Industrial Economics (IFN) in Stockholm, where Professor Magnus Henrekson has offered continual advice and support in his capacity as my second supervisor. I thank Magnus for including me in the Institute's stimulating academic environment and for his many lessons in academic as well as non-academic matters. I am honored to be able to include an essay in this dissertation that is co-authored with Magnus.

My third supervisor, Professor Johan Tralau, has followed my academic career closely since I began my undergraduate studies at Uppsala University more than twelve years ago. During all this time he has offered invaluable encouragement and counsel, without which my academic work would surely not have been completed. I thank him for his generosity and patience.

Dr Özge Öner has been a close and valued friend during the course of my PhD studies. The second jointly written essay in this dissertation is a fortuitous product of our friendship. I thank Özge for her support and collaboration.

By offering her insightful comments Associate Professor Katarina Barrling helped to shape the introductory essay at an early stage.

Remaining weaknesses were skillfully detected by Dr Jörgen Ödalen at a very late stage. I am thankful for their help and advice.

The many good colleagues who pointed me to new sources of information, told me about articles or books, read sections of drafts, shared their views about issues and events relevant to my research, or assisted me in other ways include Associate Professor Niclas Berggren, Thomas Gür, Gabriel Heller Sahlgren, Professor Henrik Jordahl, Professor Daniel B. Klein, Mårten Lindberg, Associate Professor Lars Niklasson, Elisabeth Precht, Dr Tino Sanandaji, Professor Mark S. Weiner, Dr Richard Öhrvall, and several discussants and participants at conferences and seminars in Boston, Chicago, Engelsberg, Roskilde, Stockholm, and Vienna. I thank them all.

An immense debt of gratitude is owed to my parents, Dr Erik and Kerstin Wennström, for their endless love and support. As this book was being finished, our family went through particularly hard times. Despite this, my parents remained, as always, interested and engaged in my work, for which I am touched and thankful.

My in-laws Eva and Stefan Hasselblad have also encouraged my work in many small and big ways. For this, I am grateful.

It is with love that I dedicate this book to my wife and most important collaborator, Malin Hasselblad Wennström. In the dark days when it seemed that I might never finish, it was Malin who gave me the strength needed to stay the course and complete the present work.

Before ending this preface, a note on style is necessary. The introductory essay is written in American English and uses the APA format for citations. When making the first direct mention of an author, it uses his or her first name. The remaining essays are presented in the fashion that they have been published by, or submitted to, particular journals. This is in keeping with the character of the compilation dissertation.

Johan Wennström
Stockholm, January 2019

I. INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War, almost all Western European countries created welfare states that provide income transfers and social services such as health care, housing, and education (e.g., Hemerijck, 2012). Distinctive for the Swedish welfare state, however, is its strong, future-oriented “social investment profile” (Morel et al., 2012b, p. 357), which has been particularly pronounced in recent decades but extends back to the prophylactic social policies of the prominent Social Democratic thinkers Alva and Gunnar Myrdal (1934/1997). This welfare state model rests on the notion that broadening and improving the nation’s human capital is critical to long-term prosperity, and that the way to accomplish this goal is through social policies that break intergenerational patterns of poverty and social immobility. Chief among such policies are the provision of public education for children and adolescents, which Nathalie Morel et al. (2012a, p. 11) refer to as promoting “the intergenerational transmission of knowledge,” and the facilitation of access to the labor market for groups with lower labor force participation rates (Jenson, 2012; Morel et al., 2012a).

Previously, the policy emphasis was on inducing (female) labor market entry in families that only had one adult in the workforce (Berggren & Trägårdh, 2006). Today, the focus is increasingly on non-European immigrants (e.g., Lindh, 2012). Already in the 1960s, Gunnar Myrdal (1968) cautioned that countries such as Sweden that have generous welfare-state arrangements were likely to face the prospect of large-scale immigration of low-skilled workers. Two of the leading economic thinkers on the right, Friedrich Hayek (1979, p. 56) and Milton Friedman,¹ later issued a similar warning. This is now a reality in all Western European countries, not least in Sweden due to

1 In a much-cited email, Friedman (October 16, 2006) wrote: “There is no doubt that free and open immigration is the right policy in a libertarian state, but in a welfare state it is a different story: the supply of immigrants will become infinite.”

the large refugee inflows in recent years (as detailed in Section 2.1). From the social investment perspective, it is of paramount importance to try to generate positive economic effects from this immigration, and to avoid fostering the worklessness and welfare dependency of ethnic minorities that is visible in other advanced welfare states, for example, the U.S. (e.g., Magnet, 1993; Mead, 2006; Murray, 1984/1994). Large-scale immigration of low-skilled workers may otherwise increase the fraction of individuals living off transfers, undermining the financial sustainability of the welfare state itself (e.g., Lindbeck, 2006) and the willingness of citizens to pay for it (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004; Dahlberg et al., 2012).

Thus, the quality of elementary and secondary education and the handling of immigration and immigrants are two issues that are central to the future of the Swedish welfare state and, therefore, worthy of consideration in political science. How these issues have unfolded is also the topic of the four essays that provide the empirical basis for this compilation dissertation. Essays I–III address what is, in fact, a significant decline in quality of elementary and secondary education since the 1990s.^{2 3} Essay IV describes and analyzes the uneven distribution of refugees among Sweden’s municipalities in recent years, with economically depressed peripheral and rural municipalities taking a disproportionate share of the responsibility for receiving and integrating refugees.

This introductory essay should be seen not just as providing an overview of those studies, but also as a further exploration of these problems (cf. Persson, 2014). While the symptoms of the problems raised in the four studies are clearly distinct, the introductory essay explores the possibility that their underlying cause is the same. The dissertation will ultimately propose a counterintuitive but highly plausible explanation of both the decline in quality of elementary and secondary education and the irrational policy of refugee settlement, which may have important implications for the understanding of other public policy issues as well. But before we try to identify the cause,

2 Quality of elementary and secondary education refers here to the provision of essential knowledge and skills, the presence of qualified teachers, and the existence of structure and peace in the classroom. This definition is in line with the purpose of education in the “social investment” welfare state (Morel et al., 2012a).

3 Essay I and a previous version of Essay II formed the basis for my licentiate dissertation (Wennström, 2017).

it is appropriate to briefly review the different problems addressed in each of the four essays.⁴

The first study considers the decline in teachers' working conditions and status, a critical issue for quality of education as a vast body of literature documents the central role of teachers in student achievement.⁵ Swedish teachers used to enjoy trust and autonomy in their work. Consequently, the profession of teaching had high status in society and attracted top students. However, since the 1990s teaching has become "proletarianized" (Bottery, 1996, p. 180) in the sense that it is micromanaged and routinized, in line with New Public Management (NPM) principles for public administration.⁶ Essay I explores the process by which this change, which was detrimental to the teaching profession, materialized. I here suggest that the abandonment of the old professional ethos of Swedish teachers, prompting them to excel in their vocation to impart knowledge to new generations, paved the way for NPM in the school system. Teachers today lament "lost autonomy and power," but have at the same time become primarily driven by monetary incentives instead of professional norms (Helgoy & Homme, 2007, p. 240),⁷ which perhaps motivates increased monitoring and other NPM measures in schools.

The second study analyzes the incongruous evolution of results in international assessments of Swedish students' knowledge and Swedish grades. In the last 15–20 years, Sweden has slipped significantly in country rankings such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). At the same time, the average merit rating

4 Extensive summaries of the essays offering further supporting references are provided in Section 5.

5 See, e.g., the studies of David Blazar and Matthew Kraft (2017) and John Hattie (2009) for an overview.

6 NPM is an umbrella term for market-inspired reforms of the public sector designed to increase efficiency (e.g., Christensen & Lægrid, 2010). Such reforms typically include the following elements (Hood, 1991, pp. 4–5): hands-on professional management; explicit standards and measures of performance; output controls coupled with rewards and incentives; disaggregation of units in the public sector; competition in the provision of public services; stress on private-sector styles of management practice; and discipline and parsimony in resource use.

7 As demonstrated by Ingrid Helgoy and Anne Homme (2007, p. 241), Swedish teachers believe that "individual pay motivate[s] them to do a good job." In their study, a teacher and union representative is quoted as saying (p. 241): "One needs individual wages. If not, nothing happens."

(based on grades) in the final year of elementary school has markedly improved. This is compelling evidence of widespread grade inflation in Swedish elementary schools, and the same problem can be seen in secondary education as well. Essay II attributes such grade inflation to the lax regulation of competition between public schools and for-profit voucher schools, which came into existence after Sweden's universal school choice reform was enacted in 1992. The essay demonstrates that in the absence of both a well-defined national curriculum stipulating what material is to be taught and external mechanisms by which grades are evaluated, independent schools were free to begin inflating grades. The introduction of grade inflation gave students and parents an incentive to choose independent schools, and forced public schools, as well as independent schools with high academic standards, to gradually adapt in order to remain competitive.

The third study, co-authored with Magnus Henrekson, extends and deepens the analyses in Essays I and II by taking a wide-angle view of the malaise in the teaching profession, the decline in knowledge, grade inflation, and other deficiencies in the Swedish school system—including a sharp rise in truancy, ADHD diagnoses, and mood disorders among children and adolescents. Essay III argues that the source of the problems is the increasing presence of postmodern, social constructivist theory in the school system, the antecedents of which extend as far back as the late 1940s. Social constructivism contends that knowledge and reality are subjectively constructed, which implies that knowledge cannot be transferred from teacher to student and that objectively measuring academic ability and achievement should not even be attempted.⁸ Once this philosophy becomes institutionalized, it is not surprising that the view of what being a teacher entails eventually changes, even among teachers themselves, or that the state refrains from specifying in detail what is to be taught and creating mechanisms for external assessments of grades. It is also not unlikely that truancy and mental health problems among children and adolescents will increase. When students, in line with social constructivist pedagogy, are left to discover and piece together information on their own, instead of benefiting from being taught according to what have proven to be the most efficient methods, it overloads the working memory and causes frustration.

The fourth study, co-authored with Özge Öner, takes us, as already

⁸ The defining characteristics of social constructivism are further discussed and referenced in the summary of Essay III and in the essay itself.

noted, into the realm of immigration policy. Essay IV shows that, contrary to most European countries, refugees in Sweden have been disproportionately placed in peripheral and rural municipalities with high unemployment and rapid native depopulation, where the prospects for integration, both socially and economically, are poor. This placement policy is counter-productive given that integration is more likely to be achieved in larger and more diverse labor markets, whereas a large influx of refugees to smaller communities may be detrimental to social cohesion. However, local politicians in rural municipalities have voluntarily chosen to accept large per capita numbers of refugees. The essay explores and evaluates some potential reasons for this unexpected behavior, and proposes that the chosen course of action is best explained by the views of the politicians, which diverged sharply from the views of the general public on refugee reception.

For many years, only one national party—the immigration-critical Sweden Democrats—took the same position as large voter groups on refugee reception, whereas the mainstream left- and right-wing parties converged toward a liberal stance on asylum seekers and immigration in general. For reasons discussed in the essay we can assume that this large divide between elite and popular opinion at the national level was present at the local municipality level as well. The essay also suggests a set of hypotheses to explain why local politicians in peripheral and rural municipalities, with only some exceptions, shared this favorable view of refugee reception.

This political consensus reveals the possible common cause of both the deficiencies in Sweden's school system and the erratic policy of refugee placement, namely, a policy convergence between the traditional Left and Right. Indeed, the empirical evidence provided in the four essays suggests that the Left and the Right both unintentionally contributed to the dismantling of the teachers' professional ethos and thus to the emergence of NPM in the school system; the lax regulation of school competition; the rise of social constructivist pedagogy; and the disproportionate placement of refugees in peripheral and rural municipalities. This observation, which forms the overarching topic of the dissertation and will be explored in the following sections, runs counter to what is typically assumed in political science, namely, that the Left and the Right are polar opposites with widely divergent policy agendas (e.g., Bobbio, 1996; Kymlicka, 2002; Lewin, 1967).

An illustration is the recent claim of the noted political scientist Francis Fukuyama (2018, p. 6) that twentieth-century politics was

“organized along a left—right spectrum defined by economic issues, the Left wanting more equality and the Right demanding greater freedom.” Social democratic parties sought economic redistribution, whereas the Right “was primarily interested in reducing the size of government and promoting the private sector.” While new noneconomic issues have been added to materialist ones in twenty-first-century political discourse (e.g., Inglehart, 2007), the left—right opposition remains, according to Fukuyama (and others, e.g., Mair, 2007), who argues that it has merely taken on other dimensions, notably identity. Indeed, building on ideas first formulated as predictions in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Fukuyama maintains in his latest work (2018, p. 6) that the Left now focuses on promoting the interests of various minority groups while the Right “is redefining itself as patriots who seek to protect traditional national identity.” However, as this dissertation seeks to demonstrate, in opposition to the received political science wisdom, the dividing line between the Left and the Right is not always as clear-cut, neither on the issue of market versus state nor when it comes to issues of identity and immigration.

1.1 AIM, DESIGN, AND DELIMITATIONS

1.1.1 *Aim*

From the argument in the previous section, the following overall aim for the dissertation emerges: to explore the proclivity for unintended policy convergence between the Left and the Right, using evidence from the policy areas of education and immigration. This aim is inspired by the critique of contemporary social science research expressed by Mats Alvesson and co-authors in a number of publications,⁹ in which it is argued that scholars tend to prioritize technical rigidity, “gap-spotting,” and incremental contributions over research that “stands out as adding to (or against) earlier thinking and understanding” (Alvesson, 2012, p. 81). Thus, following these authors’ calls for “assumption-challenging research” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011) and a “return to meaning” in social science (Alvesson et al., 2017), this dissertation aims to “have something to say” (Alvesson, 2012); namely, that the received wisdom

⁹ See, e.g., Alvesson (2012) and works co-authored by Alvesson and Dan Kärreman (2011), Yiannis Gabriel and Roland Paulsen (2017), and Jörgen Sandberg (2011).

in political science underestimates the Left's and the Right's proclivity for unintended policy convergence.

Education and immigration are apt policy cases for exploring this hypothesis because they each represent what is perceived to be both more traditional and more “modern” political cleavages between the Left and the Right. The system of public education is, as noted above, one of the most important welfare-state institutions and, at its core, a program of economic redistribution (Katz, 2010). In Sweden, the public school system has also become inextricably linked to the market (e.g., Holmlund et al., 2014). This raises issues of privatization of public services. Moreover, there is in Sweden, as in many other countries, an open political conflict over the pedagogy used in classrooms, in which the Left purportedly defends looser pedagogical principles and the Right claims to stand for order and discipline. Immigration is also an issue of central importance to the welfare state, ultimately giving rise to questions about whether to expand or narrow the scope and size of the welfare state by increasing or restricting access to the benefit system (e.g., Sinn, 2000). In addition, social and cultural aspects of immigration have recently come to the fore in public debate, which, it is argued (e.g., Fukuyama, 2018), has opened up new lines of conflict between the Left and the Right regarding the understanding of what constitutes a national state and how the boundaries of such a state should be defined.

If convergence between the Left and the Right can be observed in both these policy areas, it would provide substantial validity to the claims in this dissertation. The choice to study policy convergence in Sweden can also be justified because of the firmly established description of the Swedish political landscape as governed by the traditional left—right spectrum (e.g., Lewin, 1967; Oscarsson, 1998; Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2016).

1.1.2 Design

Several different analytical approaches could potentially have been selected to explore this topic. For example, since NPM reforms play a role in several of the essays, it could be argued that it would have been reasonable to utilize the common interpretation of NPM as a normative model for public administration, in which “the relationship between public agencies and their customers is understood as based on self-interest” (Denhardt & Vinzant Denhardt, 2000, p. 550), and apply NPM as a theoretical framework to guide the analysis. However,

the issues and themes of the dissertation are far wider, and this is the reason why this particular approach was not chosen.

What other approaches could then have been taken? Could I, for instance, have relied on what has been called an “intellectual cousin” of NPM, namely, *public choice theory* (Kamensky, 1996, p. 251)? Among many economists, and also in the context of NPM, the use of this term is “linked closely and specifically to the Virginia School of [James] Buchanan and [Gordon] Tullock” (Kurrild-Klitgaard, 2018, p. 246).¹⁰ However, some scholars, particularly in political science, also use it as an interchangeable term for *rational choice theory* (e.g., Kurrild-Klitgaard, 2018; Nannestad, 1993; Ostrom, 2007).

In its simplest form, rational choice (or public choice) theory assumes that individuals act consistently in line with their preferences.¹¹ For example, “in the case of government actors, the presumption is that they want to stay in power” (Lichbach & Zuckerman, 1997, p. 27). Thus, rational choice theory is a broader, more generalizable type of theory that arguably could have been employed here. However, as is also mentioned in Essay IV, “the role of ideas in rational choice theory is, at best, limited” (Marsh, 2009, p. 682), which gives the theory a somewhat reductionist, materialist character (Blyth, 2003) that seems inadequate in the analysis of as complex a topic as policy convergence between the Left and the Right.¹²

10 I use the Virginia school of public choice and its assumptions about the motivation of public-sector employees as objects of analysis in Essay I.

11 In economics for most of the last century, this was taken as a given (hence the prefix “public” in studies of choice in non-market settings). However, in other social science disciplines it was not generally assumed that actors have rational preferences. Therefore, “rational choice” is the more widely used term in political science.

12 As a counterpoint, it could be argued that the median voter theorem (Downs, 1957), one of the most well-known applications of rational choice theory to politics, is the best candidate for explaining policy convergence between the Left and the Right. According to the median voter theorem, political parties will “move *to* the position of the median voter and so adopt the *identical* policy positions,” i.e., converge upon the center ground, in order to maximize their votes (Hindmoor & Taylor, 2015, p. 56; emphasis in original). However, as has been noted above and will be discussed in more detail later, the Left and the Right have not converged toward the center in any of the policy areas studied in this dissertation. On the contrary, the establishment left and right parties have both adopted quite radical policy positions that diverge sharply from the views of the general public, particularly when it comes to the issue of asylum immigration. This suggests that the median voter theorem is not the best explanation for Left/Right policy convergence and that we, instead, primarily should consider ideational aspects.

A more promising approach appears to come from theories that have been developed under the rubrics of *critical theory*, *postmodernism* (sometimes called *poststructuralism*), and *discourse analysis*.¹³ Indeed, from a methodological viewpoint, these theories offer interesting perspectives, which may be meaningful and useful for my research. It could, for example, be said that Frankfurt School critical theory urges the individual researcher to analytically criticize previously established patterns of thought (also within the scholarly community) and to prioritize the creative intellectual enterprise, generally resting on a synthesis of secondary empirical material (e.g., Lasch, 1978), over technical orthodoxy.¹⁴

From postmodernism, we are made aware of the limits to rationality and reproducibility in qualitative research (e.g., Richardson, 2000). The “pluralistic ideal” of postmodernism or poststructuralism also encourages the researcher to seek “variation in the empirical work (observations, interviews)” as well as in the theoretical interpretation of the empirical material (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 187), and to question the meaning of different sociological and political categories that are perceived as given (see, e.g., the works of Butler, 1990; Fraser & Nicholson, 1988; Scheurich, 1997). Finally, discourse analysis encourages the researcher to study “accounts or documents which have arisen in the natural course of events, rather than in interactions between participants and researchers” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 206), such as written contributions to social and political debates, email texts, news articles, or public documents, and to bring such variations in language use together in a single analytical category (i.e., the discourse).¹⁵ All of this deserves serious consideration and seems relevant to my undertaking.

In fact, the methodological implications of these three related theories, which are well established within political science, bear a striking resemblance to what I have done in the dissertation. This demonstrates that the choices I have made with regard to methodology

13 Discourse analysis is “as much theory as method” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 121), and closely linked to both critical theory and postmodernism (Lindberg, 2018b).

14 See, e.g., Max Horkheimer’s (1972, pp. 190–191) critique of social science as attempting “to follow the lead of the natural sciences with their great success” and employing methods that add up “to a pattern which is, outwardly, much like the rest of life in a society dominated by industrial production techniques.”

15 See also Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell’s (1987) discussion on overall principles for conducting discourse analysis.

and research design, which are discussed below and in later sections, are supported by modes of thought that are frequently relied upon in qualitative research. Nevertheless, I would not say that this dissertation relies on critical theory, postmodernism, or discourse analysis.

On the contrary, while I effectively employ some of the methods listed above, and agree with the emphasis on interpretation over method (in a narrow, technical sense) for validity, as well as the ideal of empirical and theoretical pluralism (including invoking secondary empirical material), in critical and postmodernist texts, I rely on completely different theoretical frameworks in my analysis. Although I find the perspectives of critical theory, postmodernism, and discourse analysis interesting and thought-provoking, these theories are ultimately based on normative premises that I consider to be both vague and controversial, and do not share. Having said that, it cannot be the purpose of this dissertation to explain why I believe that, or to justify my own normative premises. Let me instead turn to the approach that I did take.

In keeping with the stated aim of the dissertation, I employ a light or moderate version of the creative research approach advocated by Alvesson and Kärreman (2007, 2011), in which the point is to provide interpretations that offer an unconventional understanding of social phenomena and ultimately contribute to new theory. “A key element here is the role of empirical material in inspiring the *problematization* of theoretical ideas and vocabularies” (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011, p. 15; emphasis in original). Highly original interpretations are thus considered to arise from encounters between established theoretical assumptions and empirical observations, in which a “breakdown” occurs. The task of the researcher is then to resolve the breakdown by articulating a new and unexpected interpretation, with potential theoretical implications for other cases.

Building on the work of Karl Weick (1989), Alvesson and Kärreman refer to this approach as a process of “disciplined imagination.” It means embracing theoretical breakdowns and puzzles, and the space they create for new ideas, and imaginatively developing such ideas, limited by and anchored in the empirical material. Examples of studies employing such an approach are Weick’s (1993) analysis of the death of thirteen professional firefighters in the Mann Gulch fire disaster of 1949 in Montana, USA, and Karen Ashcraft’s (2000) analysis of the surprising objection to female personal relationships within an openly feminist organization.

The inference mechanism used is called *abduction* (Peirce, 1978), or

“inference to the best explanation” (Harman, 1965). As the latter term suggests, it means choosing the hypothesis that best explains the available data or empirical material. For example, “[w]hen a detective puts the evidence together and decides that it *must* have been the butler, he is reasoning that no other explanation which accounts for all the facts is plausible enough or simple enough to be accepted” (Harman, 1965, p. 89; emphasis in original), and effectively applying the (abductive) method of inference to the best explanation.

Not dissimilar to a murder detective comparing evidence from a variety of sources and examining all plausible conclusions, the scholar following the abductive research strategy advocated by Alvesson and Kärreman (2007, 2011) mobilizes empirical material, first, to explore weaknesses and problems in received wisdom. Thus, the researcher starts from “a selective interest in what does *not* work in an existing theory” (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011, p. 15) in relation to the evidence. Building on the inconsistencies in the received wisdom that the empirical material has exposed, the researcher then abductively arrives at another and coherent explanation for the evidence. However, this effort is not a straightforward process, but rather an intensive back-and-forth interplay between the empirical material and the ideas of the researcher, in which the detective’s virtues of curiosity, imagination, and intuition are all called for (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, 2011).

In my case, a breakdown can be spotted when the typical assumption in political science that there is a permanent divergence between the Left and the Right (which I expand upon in the next section) meets my empirical observations from the policy areas of education and immigration described in Essays I–IV. The aim is then to resolve this breakdown with a new interpretation of the relationship between the Left and the Right. The suggested interpretation, which accounts for all the empirical facts, is, as already noted, that the Left and the Right have an underexplored proclivity for unintended policy convergence.

To advance this interpretation, multiple theoretical frameworks are called for (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, 2011). I attempt to integrate the following three theories (which are previewed here and more fully introduced in Section 3): a theory of *thought collectives* and associated *thought styles* (Fleck, 1935/1979), *Moral Foundations Theory* (Haidt, 2012), or MFT, and the fox/hedgehog model of predictive styles (Tetlock, 2005). The first theory (Fleck, 1935/1979) is based on an intuitive observation, that members of groups tend to think in a collective rather than individual manner, thus forming thought collectives (akin

to “filter bubbles” in today’s parlance). The assumption of the theory is that the thought styles shared within the different collectives are (unconsciously) constructed. From this theory I retain only the observation that groups think collectively, because the second, empirically grounded theory (Haidt, 2012) seems to show that individuals are not sorted into groups with shared thought styles by chance, but according to the individuals’ innate psychological/moral profiles. Thus, the second theory may more accurately explain how thought styles arise as well as offer an account of their inherent moral content. The third, also empirically based theory (Tetlock, 2005) serves as a complement to the second theory. It suggests that the manner in which individuals cognitively approach information and ideas may also play a significant role in how they are sorted into different thought collectives.

Thus, to be clear, the first theory operates at the observational level, while the remaining two theories operate at the analytical level. Brought together, these three theories will, in a novel way, allow me to (i) organize and describe the Left and the Right, and show (ii) *what* these two groupings think or believe, as well as (iii) *how* they think. This is how convergence will be determined and, ultimately, explained.

While all three theories have been a major inspiration for my research, they are not all mentioned in all four essays. In fact, MFT is not mentioned at all. There is no substantive reason for this omission; it is entirely due to the compilation dissertation as a genre. The compilation dissertation builds on articles written for publication in academic journals with their own distinct audiences, conventions, and word limitations, in which it is necessary to dispense with anything that is not directly relevant to the research question as formulated in the article. The place to fully discuss theoretical issues is instead here, in the introductory essay. For the same reason, it is also in the introductory essay that methodological issues related to the individual articles may be discussed in fuller detail. As further explained in Section 4, I have drawn on a variety of empirical material including books and public documents, interviews, and quantitative data. This material was analyzed using ideational analysis as well as quantitative methods.

1.1.3 *Delimitations*

Before I end this section, a short note on delimitations in scope is in order. Because this introductory essay focuses on the common thread in the four essays that provide the basis for the dissertation, namely, policy convergence between the Left and the Right, other aspects of

the individual studies will receive only a cursory treatment. Hence, the introductory essay does not attempt to provide a full historical account of reforms in Swedish elementary and secondary education. The reader is instead referred to such comprehensive histories of the school system as those offered by Esbjörn Larsson and Johannes Westberg (2015) and Gunnar Richardson (2010). Likewise, the introductory essay does not seek to give an exhaustive overview of market-inspired NPM reforms in the Swedish school system. Again, the reader is referred elsewhere for an extensive account of this topic (e.g., Lewin, 2014). In consequence, it is also beyond the scope of this introductory essay to provide an in-depth description of immigration policy in Sweden in recent years. Once more, the reader is referred elsewhere for a detailed consideration of this topic (e.g., Sanandaji, 2017).

1.2 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

The introductory essay consists of six sections. After this first section, the next section will provide a brief background to the policy areas education and immigration in Sweden, as well as a description of the actors that constitute the Left and the Right in the Swedish context. Section 3 introduces the theoretical frameworks used both in the four studies and in this introductory essay. In Section 4, I delve into the empirical material and methods used in the individual studies. Section 5 provides an extended summary of the results of the individual studies. In the final section, I then offer an overarching analysis of those results (supported by my theoretical frameworks), which explores policy convergence between the Left and the Right, including the causes and implications of policy convergence. I end the final section by discussing directions for future research.

2. THE SETTING OF THE STUDIES

This section sets the scene for the four essays and the dissertation as a whole by providing an overview of the two policy areas education and immigration (Section 2.1) as well as the actors who have enacted the policies discussed, i.e., the Left and the Right (Section 2.2). While doing so, this section also reviews previous literature on these topics that is relevant to my research. However, given that the dissertation is not about education or immigration policy *per se*, but rather about policy convergence between the Left and the Right, the main literature review is presented in Section 2.2.

2.1 TWO POLICY AREAS

2.1.1 *Elementary and secondary education in Sweden*

Compulsory elementary school consists of nine years of schooling for pupils aged 7 to 16 years, divided into lower grades (years 1–6) and upper grades (7–9). Elementary school is followed by three years of secondary school (*gymnasium*), which is not compulsory; nevertheless, it is attended by more than 95 percent of recent graduates from 9th grade (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014a). Academic grades determine whether students will be admitted to the secondary school and university program of their choice; yet, despite the importance grades have regarding future success, the Swedish school system uniquely leaves “the entire responsibility for the grading to the schools, and consequently to the teachers” (Wikström & Wikström, 2005, p. 310). Even standardized tests are, as a rule, graded by the pupils’ teachers and not by colleagues or external examiners.

Currently, elementary and secondary education is under the management of Sweden’s 290 municipalities. Municipal tax revenues and central government grants (in large part received by the municipalities in one block sum that can also be spent on other municipal activities) are

the schools' primary sources of finance (Government Bill, 1990/91:18). However, elementary and secondary education is also heavily characterized by the use of privatization and co-production. In the academic year 2016/17, 15 percent of pupils in elementary education attended any one of the over 800 independent voucher schools that presently exist at this level, and 26 percent of pupils in secondary education attended any one of the more than 400 independent secondary schools in Sweden. Seventy-four percent of independent school students attended for-profit schools (Ekonomifakta, 2018). The function of the central state in this system is merely to set general goals and objectives through the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*; established in 1991), and to ensure that schools comply with relevant legislation through the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*; established in 2008).

The present school system, a result of specific policies in education enacted mostly around the early 1990s, is radically different from what has gone before. Broadly speaking, it is possible to distinguish between three different periods in elementary and secondary education in Sweden (Skott, 2015), the first of which started with the Elementary School Act of 1842 (*folkskolestadgan*). The local parish administrations were then given responsibility for providing elementary schooling to the mass of the population. "With an estimated 73 % of school-aged children enrolled in 1890, Sweden was one of the countries that had attained a well-established school system by the turn of the twentieth century" (Westberg, 2015, p. 416). This was in line with the wishes of an assortment of mostly liberal intellectuals, who advocated mass schooling to spread knowledge among lower classes and buttress social stability. The thinking was that "citizenship in a constitutional state demanded a general education" (Edgren, 2015, p. 114).

However, while the state provided recommendations for the methods and content of education, hired school inspectors, and promoted a nascent teacher-training program (Skott, 2015), national schooling was at this early stage, in the mid- to late 19th century, a "project run by the parishes" (Westberg, 2015, p. 435), and heavily influenced by religious teachings. The institutions of secondary education were also to a great extent connected with the church (Larsson & Prytz, 2015). From the turn of the century, however, the state strengthened its presence in elementary and secondary schooling, initiating a prolonged period of centralization of education in Sweden (Skott, 2015). In 1919, the first formal national curriculum was enacted, and in 1920, a central school

authority, the Swedish National Board of Education (*Skolöverstyrelsen*), was established.

Teachers were also employed in the service of the state, which went to great lengths to ensure that teachers were qualified for their task. As Mats Sjöberg (2006b) has demonstrated in his study of teacher training in Sweden between the early 1900s and 1968, the demands on intellectual agility and even physical fitness were high. Because teachers were considered “the new, industrialized and secularized society’s normative agents,” filling the roles previously held by priests, only the best could be admitted into the profession (Sjöberg, 2006b, p. 301). The rigorous training contributed to the emergence of a professional ethos, which made it possible for teachers to operate with little or no explicit top-down monitoring (Sjöberg, 2006a). After 1968, the state settled for eliminating the weakest candidates for teachers on the basis of their grades and nothing else (Sjöberg, 2006b); however, the particularity of the teaching profession was maintained through regulations pertaining to the academic qualifications needed to teach different subjects, the system of promotion, and the teachers’ working conditions.

As the above account suggests, the church’s influence on schooling was increasingly displaced by the priorities of the emerging and secular welfare state (Edgren, 2015). The apogee of this development was the formal introduction of the unitary school system in 1960. This was a policy effort that had been steadily advanced for several decades, which aimed at abolishing the parallel education systems that differentiated pupils according to future occupations,¹⁶ and which was brought to completion in the years between 1960–1970 (Richardson, 2010). With the exception of those pupils attending a select handful of independent schools—which essentially taught the children of the wealthiest families or had alternative pedagogic profiles and were only partially supported by funds from the state—all students were now to be educated in the same public education system, encompassing nine years of compulsory schooling and a voluntary *gymnasium*.

The motives behind this policy were broadly to promote social equity in education and to cultivate “democratically minded” citizens

16 Schooling after elementary school (*folkskola*) was, after 1905, divided into two separate tracks: (i) intermediate school (*realskola*), which could be followed by college-preparatory school (*gymnasium*), and (ii) vocational schooling. Both public and privately run schools were included in this parallel schooling system (Richardson, 2010).

(Richardson, 2010).¹⁷ In line with these objectives, the school system was heavily regulated—perhaps more so than any other public school system in the world (Lewin, 2014; Skott, 2015). The state carefully controlled the structure and content of education (e.g., the time allocated to different subjects and course syllabi) and even inspected and approved textbooks and teaching aids, as Anna Johnsson Harrie (2009) has shown in her comprehensive study of this approval scheme.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the prolonged period of centralization and unification of education gradually shifted into the third (and present) period of decentralization (Skott, 2015). Following a number of reforms transitioning the management of the school system to the local municipalities that were initiated by a Social Democratic government and continued under a center-right coalition government in office 1991–1994, the state had by the early 1990s renounced its role both as regulator of the structure and content of education and as employer within the school system. The old Swedish National Board of Education was abolished and replaced by a new school authority, the Swedish National Agency for Education, which defined itself in opposition to traditional supervision and control (Haldén, 1997). A new, objective-based national curriculum, which effectively left it to each school to decide on what and how to teach, was also introduced (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1994),¹⁸ together with a new grading system, which eliminated the authority of centrally administered standardized test scores and gave individual teachers full autonomy to assign grades (Wikström, 2006).¹⁹ Furthermore, all school personnel, including teachers, became employees of the municipalities.

The previous regulations on teaching were repealed: subject-specific academic qualifications were no longer required of teachers;²⁰ schools were granted more discretion in employment decisions; and the teachers'

17 Several scholars, whose works are cited in individual studies in the dissertation but not reviewed in the context of this introductory essay, have studied the unitary school system from a policy perspective. See, e.g., the works of Inger Enkvist (2016), Karin Hadenius (1990), and Bo Rothstein (1986/2010).

18 The state has, at least ostensibly, reclaimed some of its former regulatory functions in the current [2011] curriculum (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011).

19 For a comprehensive history and description of grading practices and the functions of different standardized tests in the Swedish education system, see Christian Lundahl's (2015) chapter in Larsson and Westberg (2015).

20 This requirement was reinstated in 2011 (Government Regulation, 2011:326).

working conditions were significantly altered in accordance with NPM principles (Lewin, 2014). Notably, teachers became obligated to remain on school premises even when they were not teaching and to document their activities in detail. Individual pay was also introduced, giving school managers more control over teachers. In the previous system, the teachers' pay had been centrally determined based on years of service and experience, but in this aspect, as in others, teaching now became more of a regular job (Helgoy & Homme, 2007).

These school reforms are commonly understood as multiple strands of a single reform effort, referred to as "the decentralization reform." However, in keeping with my aim and delimitations, the decentralization reform will not be discussed further here. It has been described in detail elsewhere. Aside from Leif Lewin's (2014) comprehensive account, which I have drawn on in this section, there is, for example, an extensive study by Johanna Ringarp (2011). This dissertation does not aspire to be another exhaustive study of this subject. To the extent that the three education studies that provide the larger part of the empirical basis for the dissertation are concerned with the decentralization reform, they focus on the NPM policies in teaching (Essay I) and on the dismantling of the regulation of the structure and content of education (Essays II and III). Central to these studies is also the marketization of Swedish elementary and secondary education, which began within two years of the decentralization reform and should be understood in the context of that reform effort (Carnoy, 1998; Klitgaard, 2008).

As previously noted, public schools dominated the education sector in Sweden after circa 1970. In the early 1990s, the share of pupils who went to independent schools was 1 percent in elementary education and 1,7 percent in secondary education (Jordahl & Öhrvall, 2013). All other pupils went to the public school close to their homes. Thus, it was a radical reversal of policy when the center-right government in 1992 enacted a voucher system (Government Bill, 1991/92:95), offering pupils a free choice of schools and a public voucher to cover tuition.

The reform was a continuation of the earlier "initiatives to decentralize the administration, planning, and resource allocation for elementary and secondary schooling to municipalities or schools themselves" and completed the shift from the centralized unitary school system (Carnoy, 1998, p. 331). Now also private actors, such as foundations, parental and staff cooperatives, religious congregations, and for-profit firms, were allowed to run schools, with public funding for a minimum

of 85 percent of the average municipal cost per pupil.²¹ This funding scheme offered strong economic incentives for private providers, who began to expand rapidly.

The voucher system has been examined previously from several different perspectives. For example, a host of studies (Ahlin, 2003; Björklund et al., 2004; Böhlmark & Lindahl, 2015; Sandström & Bergström, 2005) have looked at the effects of school competition between public and independent schools on educational outcomes, i.e., grades and results on standardized tests. Other studies (notably Holmlund et al., 2014) have also examined the effects of the voucher system on equity in education and housing segregation. However, to my knowledge, no previous studies have done what the three education studies in this dissertation do, namely, examined the political motives behind the voucher reform in the context of NPM (Essay I), the voucher system's flawed institutional design (Essay II), and its potential for interacting with social constructivist pedagogy and adversely affecting the quality of education (Essay III).

2.1.2 Immigration

Only one of the studies in this dissertation concerns immigration. Therefore, I will keep this overview briefer, and restricted to asylum immigration, which is the specific topic that Essay IV addresses.

Asylum immigration has become an increasingly significant issue in the Swedish debate during the last 10–15 years. Sweden has in that time period kept a policy of granting residence permits to unprecedented large numbers of refugees. The country has certainly had high rates of asylum immigration before, during the 1980s and 1990s, with peak years in 1989 and 1992; however, there is no comparison to the influx of refugees during the 2000s and 2010s.²² The first surge in asylum immigration occurred between the years 2005–2008—peaking in 2006, when approximately 25,000 refugees were granted permission to stay²³—because of the large migration into Europe following the Iraq War and its aftermath. The second surge in asylum immigration occurred after 2011, when the “Arab spring” sparked political turmoil across the Middle East, leading to civil war in Syria.

21 The share of public funding was raised to 100 percent by a Social Democratic government in 1997 (Government Bill, 1995/96:200).

22 A detailed account (with graphs) is available in Essay IV.

23 All data is official Swedish Migration Agency statistics. See: www.migrationsverket.se.

The number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden increased each year, from 29,000 in 2011 to approximately 44,000 in 2012, 54,000 in 2013 and 81,000 in 2014. In 2015, 162,900 asylum seekers arrived in the country, which widely exceeded the number of native births and proved to be the breaking point of Sweden's capacity to receive more refugees. During the tumultuous autumn of 2015, more than 9,000 people, of whom the largest group was Syrian refugees, applied for asylum each week. In absolute numbers, only Germany and France received more refugees than Sweden. Per capita, Sweden received more refugees than any other EU member country, exceeding the reception in Germany and France by a factor of 4.5 in 2015, and the vast majority of those refugees were allowed to stay permanently.²⁴ The following year, 2016, the number of asylum seekers dropped to 28,939 due to the fact that Sweden enacted border controls and new temporary legislation that makes it more difficult for asylum seekers to obtain a permanent residence permit and to be reunited with their families in Sweden (Government Bill, 2016:752). However, hundreds of thousands of refugees had already been allowed to reside in the country on a permanent basis; this confronted, and continues to confront, Sweden with a host of problems.²⁵

One difficult question facing elected officials was how and whether to reconcile the large reception of refugees with the public's opinion on the matter. As demonstrated by Marie Demker (2017), approximately half of the Swedish population has since 1990 advocated that fewer refugees be accepted. During peaks in Sweden's refugee reception, this share has climbed to above 50 percent and even above 60 percent. Another problem was finding pathways for labor market integration of refugees. It has been demonstrated in previous research that immigrants, including refugees, constitute a net cost to the public sector in Sweden (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2015; Ekberg, 1999, 2009, 2011; Flood & Ruist, 2015; Ruist, 2018). This is mainly because the employment rate of immigrants, even in working ages, is substantially lower than in the native population, but also because employed immigrants on average have lower annual incomes than natives (Sanandaji, 2017).

In addition, the refugees who had been granted a residence permit

24 Seventy-seven percent of the asylum applications handled during 2016 were granted (Swedish Migration Agency, 2017).

25 Only those immigration-related problems that have bearing on the study can be mentioned here.

needed to be housed, which is the joint responsibility of the state and the municipalities. However, because Sweden has among “the politically and functionally strongest local government forms in Europe” (Wollmann, 2004, p. 647), access to housing for refugees depends on the voluntary cooperation of the municipalities. As briefly noted in the introduction and developed more fully in later sections, Essay IV deals with all of these issues, i.e., the political response to the increasing asylum immigration nationally as well as locally, the question of labor market integration, and the problem of placing refugees in municipalities.

Having now provided a context for the empirical analyses carried out in the four essays, I will turn next to the political actors who instigated the policies being studied.

2.2 THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT

2.2.1 *The Social Democrats and the Moderate Party:*

The main units of analysis

At the time of writing, Sweden’s political landscape is made up of eight political parties, forming three distinct blocks in parliament. On the left side of the political spectrum, there are the (former Communist) Left Party, the Greens, and the Social Democrats, and to the right of center there are the (formerly agrarian) Center Party, the (social liberal) Liberal Party, the liberal-conservative Moderate Party,²⁶ and the Christian Democrats. A third faction consists of the immigration-critical and social conservative party the Sweden Democrats.²⁷ While other political parties appear in the individual essays (particularly the remaining three center-right parties), the main units of analysis in the dissertation are the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party as well as various individuals and public intellectuals who can be connected to these parties or their ideas.²⁸ I schematically call these two groupings “Left” and “Right.”

26 Liberal conservatism, which the Moderate Party in Sweden uses as its ideological label, should be understood as an amalgamation of liberalism and conservatism, similar to Thatcherism in the UK and Reaganism in the U.S. (Hylén, 1991).

27 Social conservatism should be understood as a political conservatism that supports the idea of the welfare state (see Ljunggren, 1992, pp. 30–32).

28 See the discussion on “thought collectives” and “thought styles” (Fleck, 1935/1979) in Section 3.1.

Besides simplifying the analysis, there are also empirical reasons for focusing on the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party in an exploration of the propensity for policy convergence between the Left and the Right. First, they are the two largest and oldest continuous parties (founded in 1889 and 1904, respectively) and historically the leaders of the left- and right-wing factions in the Swedish parliament.²⁹ Hence, and second, the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party are widely viewed as the traditional antagonists in modern Swedish politics (see, e.g., Millares, 2015). Policy convergence between these two parties would be unexpected and provide validity to my hypothesis that the dividing line between the Left and the Right is not always as clear-cut as is typically assumed in political science.

Admittedly, it could be claimed that the choice to study the Moderate Party is erroneous and that the Sweden Democrats is the most right-wing political party. However, the Sweden Democrats entered parliament only as recently as 2010 and thus had no influence over most policies discussed in this dissertation, some of which extend back to the late 1940s. As suggested by the party's social conservative profile, it also shares certain traits with the Social Democrats and openly admits as much. Hence, the Sweden Democrats cannot be unequivocally defined as a right-wing party and thus would not serve my purposes in this dissertation.

2.2.2 *Ideological traits*

Before proceeding further I will make a slight digression on the ideological characteristics of the two selected parties, which will be useful in the concluding discussion. However, as a preamble, it should be noted that political scientists and political historians in Sweden have paid great attention to, and shown considerable interest in, the Social Democrats and the labor movement at large, while showing comparatively little interest in the Moderate Party and the development of liberal and conservative ideas (Nilsson, 2004).³⁰ The result of this

29 Insofar that there has existed, and exists, a unified right-wing block in Swedish politics; according to Tommy Möller (1986), the then three parties to the right of center did not learn to cooperate until the 1970s, and even then the relationship was not close.

30 In his comprehensive book on the history of the Moderate Party, the historian Torbjörn Nilsson (2004, p. 21) writes: "Is research on the Right necessary? For a long time, Swedish academic scholarship appeared to answer no." He also notes that the library at Stockholm University contains 25 bookshelves about socialism and only 3.5 and 1.5 bookshelves about liberalism and conservatism, respectively.

imbalance in scholarly attention is that the literature on the Social Democrats is immense and beyond that which can be adequately covered in an introductory essay. Therefore, I will in this section concentrate on describing the Moderate Party; suffice it to note Timothy Tilton's seminal observation about Swedish Social Democracy's "fundamental consistency in values" (1988, p. 383), which, according to him, consists of a preference for "integrative democracy," i.e., a synthesis of political and economic democracy; the conceptualization of political society as a family (*folkhemmet*);³¹ the notion of compatibility between socioeconomic equality and economic efficiency; priority to social (or state) control of the market economy; and the belief that the "strong" society (or state) is a precondition for enhanced individual freedom (Tilton, 1988, p. 369).³²

Whereas scholars seem to have largely agreed that the ideology of the Social Democrats has been consistent over time (see Hylén, 1991, pp. 262–264), there is disagreement on this point when it comes to the Moderate Party. According to the party itself, its ideology has always been an amalgamation of liberal and conservative ideas, striking a balanced view of the importance of the individual and the community, the market and the state. Some scholars, perhaps most notably Stig-Björn Ljunggren, also support the party's own interpretation. In his dissertation on the Moderate Party during the postwar era (Ljunggren, 1992, p. 419), and elsewhere,³³ Ljunggren claims that the party doctrine right up until the early 1990s has continuously "included elements of both liberalism and conservatism." Not even during the rise of the neoliberal "New Right" movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s did the party, in Ljunggren's account, abandon core conservative principles.

A somewhat different view is taken by Lewin (1967) in his seminal dissertation on the economic planning debate in Sweden from the 1920s to the 1960s. While also making the argument for ideological continuity, Lewin claims that the party, as early as the 1910s and 1920s, fully embraced a liberal interpretation of the concept of freedom—i.e., freedom from the state—and converged with the Liberal Party's defense of individual liberty and a *laissez-faire* market economy. Thus, in Lewin's view, the party rejected or, at least, distanced itself from conservatism

31 In effect, this amounts to replacing the family with the political realm (Berggren & Trägårdh, 2006).

32 See also Tilton (1990).

33 See, e.g., Ljunggren (1988).

at this early stage. Support for this interpretation can also be found in works by Nils Elvander (1961, pp. 466–467), Rolf Torstendahl (1969, pp. 12–13), and, more recently, Martin Kylhammar (2004, p. 39).

However, such an interpretation becomes problematic when contrasted with Jan Hylén's (1991) dissertation on the ideological evolution of the Moderate Party up until 1985: Hylén argues that a fundamental ideological change has occurred over time. He shows that conservative ideas, in fact, dominated the Moderate Party until the late 1940s. The party platform of 1919 succinctly summarized the content of these ideas: "The Swedish Right is a national party. It puts country first, its wellbeing over the special interests of individuals and classes."³⁴ Even liberal economic policies that Lewin (1967) refers to were formulated within a conservative paradigm, Hylén argues. At the same time, the party was also skeptical of free trade and supported protective tariffs, particularly on behalf of Swedish small farmers, whom the party viewed in national romantic terms.

After the 1940s, however, the party gradually abandoned its original conservatism. Hylén analyzes this change in terms of the party's view of human nature (pessimistic vs. optimistic) and its view of society, economics, and morality (collectivistic vs. individualistic). On all fronts, the Moderate Party yielded to liberalism, according to Hylén. The conception of man (including young children) shifted from irrational, in need of boundaries and disciplining norms and institutions, to a completely rational being with virtuous instincts. Accordingly, the party's conception of society changed from a collective enterprise to an individual one, in which freedom of choice is paramount. Economic and moral policies reflected this altered focus. The free market became sacrosanct and a model for reimagining and reframing activities that were previously conceived in non-economic terms. For example, the farmer became viewed as any other businessman. Individual rights and liberties also supplanted the nation, the state church, and the family as the most important moral guideposts. Indeed, according to Hylén (p. 261), the "Moderate Party of the 1980s would never dream of claiming that ... the nation is as real and morally significant as the individual."

However, another interpretation has more recently been given by Nilsson (2004, p. 310), who maintains that the Moderate Party remains both a conservative and a liberal party, which, even after the 1980s, has "clearly stuck to classical [conservative] positions such as a

34 Cited in Hylén (1991, p. 35).

strong defense, more police, and a strict criminal policy, knowledge and order as the leitmotif in schools, and a reasonably restrictive view of immigration.” Only as late as the early 2000s does Nilsson detect nascent liberal ideas regarding, for example, immigration and lifestyle choices, but he is open to whether they will become entrenched in the party or be reversed.

I will return to this scholarly debate and the issue of the ideological traits of both the Moderate Party and the Social Democrats later. In the next subsection, first, the issue of conflict between the Left and the Right is briefly revisited.

2.2.3 The Left and the Right: Conflict or convergence?

Despite its problematic assumptions about the ideological development of the Moderate Party, Lewin’s (1967) dissertation on the economic planning debate is a useful starting point for this section. There, Lewin (p. 135) described the emergence of two “closed ideological systems warring with each other” that, according to him, redrew the Swedish political map. On the one hand, there was the appearance of a socialist faction, championing state intervention in the economy and social equality, and on the other, the dawn of a non-socialist block, adhering to freedom of industry and the individual as an economic agent.

As previously noted, Lewin argued, perhaps incorrectly, that the Moderate Party and the Liberal Party became more or less philosophically united under the banner of economic and political liberalism, and that the two parties would remain so in the coming decades. By the time of the supplementary pension debate in the 1950s, Lewin argued, the agrarian Center Party, which for nationalist and conservative reasons had favored state intervention in the economy during the 1920s and 1930s,³⁵ had also joined this ideological system.

Lewin’s dissertation went against the grain of contemporary books and studies that proclaimed the “end of ideology” (Bell, 1960; Lipset, 1960; Tingsten, 1966). His analysis of the economic planning debate instead revealed opposing ideological arguments and beliefs intensely propagated by the Social Democrats and the amalgamated liberal opposition. Lewin (p. 522) concluded: “Almost every time the Social Democrats have proposed an expansion of the state’s role in industry and the economy, the [center-right parties] have been opposed with reference to their market ideology and their liberal concept of freedom.”

³⁵ See Lewin (1967) and Torstendahl (1969).

With few exceptions (to which I shall return), Lewin's description of the structure of political conflict in Sweden as essentially revolving around the issue of state intervention and social equality versus economic and individual freedom, and fought by two opposing ideological blocks, has remained mostly uncontested within the field of political science. It has, for example, been claimed that "ideological conflicts regarding socialism, state intervention in the economy, and market economy fuel the left–right dimension in much the same way today as it did thirty years ago" (Oscarsson, 1998, p. 308).

As also noted in the introduction, this image of the Swedish political landscape as dominated by material political issues and divided between the Left and the Right corresponds to how international political science scholars typically understand the nature of political discord. Indeed, as observed by Will Kymlicka in his introductory chapter in *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (2002, pp. 1–2):

Our traditional picture of the political landscape views political principles as falling somewhere on a single line, stretching from left to right. According to this traditional picture, people on the left believe in equality, and hence endorse some form of socialism, while those on the right believe in freedom, and hence endorse some form of free market capitalism. ... [It] is often thought that the best way to understand or describe someone's political principles is to try to locate them somewhere on that line.

This conventional model of political conflict to which Kymlicka refers rests on the assumption that the Left and the Right are irreconcilable because the two ideological blocks have different "foundational values." Indeed, according to Norberto Bobbio (1996, p. 2), the opposition between the Left and the Right represents "a typically dyadic way of thinking." Hence, the antithetical relationship between the Left and the Right is considered permanent. To maintain this position scholars claim that the traditional left–right spectrum is capable of absorbing emerging value orientations and reproducing itself within new political movements,³⁶ for example, the ecological movement (e.g., Bobbio,

³⁶ A competing spectrum, known as Green-Alternative-Libertarian/Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist, or GAL/TAN for short, is sometimes used to analyze political conflicts over new noneconomic issues (Hooghe et al., 2002). However, I will not delve further into the topic since it does not seem relevant to the dissertation.

1996; Oscarsson, 1998) or the identitarian movement (Fukuyama, 2018)—exceptionally so in Sweden (Oscarsson & Holmberg, 2016).

In exploring the propensity for policy convergence between the Left and the Right, this dissertation deviates from the traditional model of political conflict. However, this is not the first study to do so. In a Swedish context, Ljunggren (1992) has suggested that the conflict between the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party over Sweden's welfare state has been exaggerated. He argues (p. 419) that the Moderate Party, on both liberal and social conservative grounds, has "put forward its own version of the welfare state," concentrating its criticism not against "the welfare system as such, but rather against the Social Democratic use, or misuse, of it." In similar fashion, Emil Uddhammar (1993, p. 472) claims that "Swedish politics during the 20th century can be best characterized as an unopposed emergence of the big state."³⁷ Taking argument with Lewin (1967), among others, Uddhammar attempts to demonstrate that the pronounced expansion of the public sector in Sweden has been supported by both left-wing and right-wing parties.

More recently, Matilde Millares (2015) has observed that parties across the political spectrum support individual choice in the provision of public services. However, she contends that only giving attention to Left/Right policy convergence on this issue conceals the underlying ideological differences that remain largely unchanged between the two political camps. Thus, Millares distinguishes between *policy* convergence and *ideological* convergence, which is something I will return to in the concluding discussion. In a non-Swedish context, the feminist scholar Nancy Fraser (2016, p. 281; 2017) has investigated

The GAL/TAN spectrum has been criticized, among other reasons, for lacking in conceptual nuance and crudely ascribing views to large groups of voters and policymakers that they do not necessarily hold (e.g., Gustavsson, 2017). I agree with this criticism. As demonstrated by Karen Stenner (2005), authoritarianism is not a stable personality trait. Yoram Hazony (2018) has also observed that nationalism is not an inherently extremist point of view, but rather, and simply, a conception of how the world and individual societies do and should function. The same criticism can be made toward the online "political compass," which includes an authoritarian/libertarian axis. Nevertheless, other additional dimensions may be relevant. In fact, I will, in Section 3.2, introduce a new dimension that builds on Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt, 2012).

³⁷ Support for this interpretation comes from Henrekson's (1992) study of the sharp rise of government expenditure in Sweden between 1950 and 1980.

the phenomenon of “progressive neoliberalism,” an alliance of two unlikely bedfellows: “new ‘social movements’ (including feminism), on the one side, and the high-end ‘symbolic’ and service-based business sectors (Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood), on the other.” Left/Right policy convergence has, for example, also been noted in U.S. criminal policy, e.g., regarding mandatory sentencing guidelines (Stith & Cabranes, 1998). However, this is not mainstream scholarship. Additional studies of policy convergence between the Left and the Right seem relevant.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This section introduces the three theories that were first briefly mentioned in Section 1.1; i.e., the theory of thought collectives and associated thought styles, Moral Foundations Theory, and the fox/hedgehog model of predictive styles. As I will explain below, these theories were first selected for use in the individual studies; however, they will eventually, in the concluding section of this introductory essay, be brought together to help me analyze and interpret policy convergence between the Left and the Right. Some preliminary reflections on how this can be done are also offered below.

3.1 THOUGHT COLLECTIVES AND THOUGHT STYLES

As already noted, the first of the three theories is the physician and epistemologist Ludwik Fleck's (1935/1979) theory of thought collectives and associated thought styles. In the preface to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn (1962, p. vii) writes that Fleck's theory of thought collectives "anticipated many of [his] own ideas" about scientific communities and paradigms;³⁸ even so, it was largely forgotten until the 1980s (Sady, 2017). Today, however, Fleck's theory is applied in various fields, for example, in philosophy and the history of science and medicine (e.g., Löwy, 1988, 2008). It has also previously been applied in research relevant to political science, of which recent examples include two studies of the development of the neoliberal movement (Dean, 2014; Mirowski, 2013). A similar, but not identical, approach is taken in a study of the impact of the 1968 movement on the Swedish state church, in which Johan Sundeen (2017) describes influential "opinion collectives."

³⁸ Kuhn's concept of paradigms is used in Essay III. However, because it is only briefly mentioned I will not discuss the topic in detail here. See Mössner (2011) for a useful discussion on the differences and similarities between the ideas of Kuhn and Fleck.

According to Fleck, new knowledge and new ideas do not arise in individuals alone, but within communities of individuals who interact with each other. Fleck calls these communities “thought collectives” and views them almost like orchestras, in which individual instruments work together in harmony. However, instead of symphonies, thought collectives produce collective “moods” and modes of thinking.

Thought collectives can arise in various sectors of society, e.g., within “commerce, military, sports, arts, politics, fashion, science, and religion” (Fleck, 1935/1979, p. 107), and transgress all kinds of social boundaries, including national borders and the barriers of national languages. In fact, according to Fleck (p. 107), thought collectives do not even presuppose personal relations, because the “printed word, film, and radio all allow the exchange of ideas within a thought community,” which he believes the migration of ideas within the world of fashion clearly demonstrates. What people within a thought community instead have in common is a certain way of thinking, a “thought style” in Fleck’s terms. However, the “individual within the collective is never, or hardly ever, conscious of the prevailing thought style, which almost always exerts an absolutely compulsive force upon his thinking and with which it is not possible to be at variance” (p. 41).³⁹

Thought collectives influence institutions and social values, and can exist during both shorter and longer periods of time. At times, entire epochs can live under the influence of a certain thought style (in conformity with Kuhn’s paradigms). This occurs when a thought style becomes sufficiently sophisticated to evolve into a small *esoteric* circle and a wide *exoteric* circle. Members of the first group, e.g., scientists or priests, and theologians, are those “initiated” who have direct access to the thought style, whereas members of the second group are lay believers and admirers who receive the thought style second-hand (Sady, 2017). Exoteric members of the thought collective are in this theory considered to take the veracity of the thought style more or less for granted. Similar to the phenomenon of “trickle-down norms,”

39 Fleck’s conception of thought collectives and thought styles bears interesting resemblances to views found within modern institutional economics. For example, in Brendan Markey-Towler’s (2018, p. 5) theory of the competition and evolution of ideas in the public sphere, ideas are conceived as institutions that “guide the thought and behavior of the individuals who ‘carry’ them.” Moreover, individuals who share particular ideas are in this theory considered to belong to independent sub-populations called *demes*, which grow the more their ideas are successfully communicated.

i.e., that cultural change travels downward from the educated and successful (Reeves, 2018), thought styles originate from the esoteric circle and are communicated outward through the exoteric circle (Fleck, 1935/1979).

An additional aspect of the theory that is particularly relevant to this dissertation is the feasibility of “communication of thoughts between collectives” (1935/1979, p. 109). Ideas and concepts from one thought collective may, according to Fleck, be translated into the language of another collective and in that way be passed on or shared. In his view, however, the *content* of the idea always changes in some small or significant way when transferred to another thought collective, “sometimes beyond recognition, even if the word has remained unchanged” (Fleck, 1986, p. 88). Nicola Mössner (2016), a philosopher of science, offers a different assessment: she argues that “Fleck’s claim that any case of communication [of thoughts between collectives] implies also a change in meaning is too strong” (p. 327). Using the example of how ideas can pass from the thought collective of science to the thought collective of design, she demonstrates that “a change in appearance does not necessarily imply a correlated change in underlying thought” (p. 326). I agree with Mössner and make the same interpretation of inter-collective communication.

Something remains to be said about how I make use of Fleck’s theory in the individual studies.⁴⁰ In Essay I, sources that share ideological beliefs are grouped into thought collectives centered on the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party,⁴¹ which I refer to as “Left” and “Right.” (The same approach is, as already noted in the previous section, taken in the dissertation at large.) Here, esoteric members of the respective thought collectives, e.g., authors, experts, and political figures, are in focus. In Essay II, Fleck’s theory is not explicitly referred to; however, interviews are conducted with esoteric members of the Right thought collective (namely, two special advisers to the center-right government of 1991–1994) in that function.⁴² Through these interviews, as well as through the use of other sources, a particular thought style with regard to regulation of private providers of tax-financed services is discerned. In Essay III, Henrekson and I analyze the actions of practical people who design curricula and inspect schools, and who could be said to be exoteric

⁴⁰ This discussion is continued in the next main section on material and methods.

⁴¹ Influential books and public documents; see the next section.

⁴² See the discussion on interviews in Section 4.4.

members of a postmodern, social constructivist thought collective.⁴³ In Essay IV, Fleck's theory is, again, not explicitly referred to, but the concept of "thought communities" (Cerulo, 2006, p. 248), which is derived from Fleck (e.g., 1935/1979, p. 107) as an interchangeable term for thought collectives, is broached. Thus, the theory unmistakably makes its presence manifest.

In the final analysis of this dissertation, Fleck's theory offers, as noted earlier, a useful way to organize and describe the Left and the Right. If we conceive of these factions as thought collectives, crucial ideational relationships between, for example, public intellectuals and the political parties being studied that otherwise could have been overlooked, may be observed. This, in turn, gives us a more accurate understanding of what the Left and the Right are. Particularly importantly for my purposes, Fleck's theory also makes us aware that groups (e.g., in politics) are defined by shared thoughts. Moving from the observational to the analytical level, the content of those thoughts may be illuminated by the second theory introduced in this section.

3.2 MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) was conceived by the social psychologist Jonathan Haidt,⁴⁴ and both popularized and expanded upon in his book *The Righteous Mind* (2012). MFT takes its point of departure from the now accepted fact that human beings are not born as moral "blank slates," but rather equipped with an innate morality (see references in Graham et al., 2013). According to Haidt (2012), this innate ("organized in advance") morality consists of a set of evolved intuitions that he refers to as "moral foundations." Natural selection, he claims, has favored (at least) six universal moral foundations:⁴⁵ *Care, fairness, loyalty, authority, sanctity, and liberty*. All of them are the result of longstanding challenges faced by our ancestors for hundreds of thousands of years, including "caring for vulnerable children [care], forming partnerships with non-kin to reap the benefits of reciprocity

43 In Essay III, as discussed in detail in later sections, we attempt to uncover a postmodern ideology of social constructivism in the governing documents of the school system and inspection reports from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate.

44 Together with Craig Joseph (see, e.g., Haidt & Joseph, 2008). Subsequently, other collaborators have helped to develop MFT (e.g., Graham et al., 2013).

45 The six moral foundations are presented somewhat simplified here.

[fairness], forming coalitions to compete with other coalitions [loyalty], negotiating status hierarchies [authority], and keeping oneself and one's kin free from parasites and pathogens [sanctity],⁴⁶ as well as the challenge of living in small groups with individuals who would try to dominate others [liberty] (Haidt, 2012, p. 125). However, due to the fact that genes, culture, and experience interact differently in each person, higher preference is given to some foundations over others at the individual level (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt, 2012).

The main point of MFT, at least as Haidt (2012) applies it,⁴⁷ is that the combinations of moral foundations that people rely on have implications for their political views. According to Haidt, liberals and conservatives, as these terms are commonly understood in a U.S. context (i.e., left- and right-wing), rely on different sets of moral foundations, which comprise divergent “moral matrices.” Liberals tend to endorse care, fairness, and liberty, whereas conservatives endorse all the moral foundations more or less equally because they are regarded as mutually interdependent and balancing one another. In Haidt's view, this is a vital but neglected clue to the understanding of political conflict. For example, seen in the light of MFT, it can be posited that the “culture war” over social issues in America is “a battle between a three-foundation morality and a six-foundation morality” (Haidt, 2012, p. 208). However, an additional benefit of MFT is also its, as of yet untested, potential to illuminate and explain policy convergence between the Left and the Right in a non-U.S. context. My rationale for this is as follows:

It can be deduced from Hylén (1991), and other sources (e.g., Scruton, 1980), that Haidt's (2012) description of the liberal and conservative moral matrices corresponds well also to the European understanding of the values that are most important to liberalism and conservatism. Indeed, in the modern European political tradition, too, liberals are most concerned about the rights, liberties, and wellbeing of individuals (e.g., Rosenblatt, 2018), whereas conservatives also place limits on people's autonomy, endorse authority-based relationships, and regard, for example, the state and the nation in sacred or quasi-sacred terms.

46 The foundations are also responses to challenges that exist in the modern world. For example, sanctity can be broadened to include maintenance of moral taboos, chastity, sobriety, and reverence to religious rituals or national symbols.

47 See, e.g., Helena Lopes' (2018) study of the moral dimensions of the employment relationship for an application of MFT outside of the political sphere.

Therefore, we should think of the liberal and conservative moral matrices as just that—liberal and conservative.

Despite the tendency in both Europe and the U.S. to simply equate the terms liberal/conservative and left-/right-wing, it is evident that the latter terms have different meanings in the European context. Here, it is generally assumed that the liberal and conservative ideas belong on the right side of the political spectrum, while the Left is assumed to be oriented toward socialist ideas.⁴⁸ Indeed, as the literature review in Section 2.2 has shown, this is what is typically meant by those terms. However, as discussed earlier, a right-wing party may, for instance, lean more toward liberalism than conservatism; and conservative and liberal ideas may, in some instances, emerge within left-wing parties. The latter has, for example, been demonstrated by the recent debate over the British Labour party's future under the term "Blue Labour" (Geary & Pabst, 2015; Glasman et al., 2011). Thus, Haidt's (2012) liberal and conservative moral matrices are not unequivocally analogous to the terms left-wing and right-wing.

Instead, the two moral matrices could be employed as novel analytical tools for examining arguments and policies of the Left and the Right, and even uncovering unexpected relationships between them. Indeed, policy debates in Sweden (and elsewhere) in recent decades, e.g., concerning family policy issues and military conscription, suggest that applying the liberal and conservative moral matrices to the traditional left–right political spectrum may well prove to be a fruitful line of research. Ultimately, it may lead to a deeper understanding of why certain policies were put in place.

While not explicitly stated, this interpretation of the potential uses of MFT has been a major inspiration for the studies presented here. In the concluding section of this dissertation I will attempt the kind of analysis suggested above, supported by the other two theoretical frameworks. As previously mentioned, if Fleck's theory of thought collectives and associated thought styles is useful for observing the Left and the Right, then MFT may contribute to an understanding of *what* these groupings think or believe. The third and final theory discussed here may, in turn, shed light on *how* the Left and the Right think.

48 It is, in this context, noteworthy that the U.S. has never had a significant socialist movement or labor party. The reasons for this have been explored, e.g., by Werner Sombart in his book *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?* (1906/1976), and, more recently, by Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks (2000).

3.3 FOXES AND HEDGEHOGS

The third theory is drawn from the social psychologist Philip E. Tetlock's (2005) seminal work on "expert political judgment," conducted for more than 20 years. By soliciting thousands of predictions from several hundred political experts working in academia and government, Tetlock studied the ability of such experts to forecast future events. He found that experts in general are remarkably inaccurate in their political and macroeconomic forecasts. "Taken as a group, they were not able to outperform simple guessing, let alone more sophisticated statistical procedures" (Buturovic, 2010, p. 390). However, some experts performed better than others and had, for example, come closer to the mark on the future of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. To investigate this difference in performance, Tetlock administered a set of questions from personality tests. On the basis of the experts' answers, and drawing on Isaiah Berlin's famous essay on Lev Tolstoy's vision of history, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (1953),⁴⁹ Tetlock classified them along a continuum between "foxes" and "hedgehogs."

Foxes, Tetlock found, produce far better predictions than hedgehogs. This is because foxes have a more balanced style of thinking about the world.⁵⁰ They believe in "taking a multitude of approaches toward a problem" and "tend to be more tolerant of nuance, uncertainty, complexity, and dissenting opinion" (Silver, 2012, p. 54).⁵¹ Foxes are, for example, skeptical of claims that deep laws govern history, and tend not to reject unpalatable truths to maintain "moral purity" (Tetlock, 2005, p. 106). In contrast, hedgehogs believe in big ideas and governing principles, and stick to the same approach in all circumstances. Close-minded and more ideological in their thinking, hedgehogs "rarely hedge their predictions and are reluctant to change them" (Silver, 2012, p. 54). To use Berlin's (1953, p. 1) terminology, hedgehogs are governed by a "single central vision." Not knowing "when to apply the mental breaks" (Tetlock, 2005, p. 103), hedgehogs are also more likely than foxes to be swept away by their own rhetoric and more prone to making extreme predictions of radical negative or positive change. Nonetheless, or for

49 The title is drawn from a fragment from the archaic poet Archilochus: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing."

50 The fox/hedgehog metaphor refers to two different cognitive styles. Timo Meynhardt et al. (2017) have situated Tetlock's work in the wider context of research on cognitive styles and offered some nuances to his model of predictive styles.

51 See Nate Silver's book *The Signal and the Noise* (2012, p. 54) for a pedagogical overview of the attitudes of foxes and hedgehogs.

that very reason, hedgehogs are much more in demand as experts in the public arena and the television studios (Silver, 2012; Tetlock, 2005).

In summary, Tetlock's innovative research offers a theoretical approach for understanding why some political experts have greater predictive skill than others. However, the fox-hedgehog continuum is readily applicable to the study of other actors as well. Gregory Mitchell and Tetlock (2010) have, for example, used it to analyze judicial decision making; and in his book *Economics for the Common Good*, the Nobel Laureate Jean Tirole (2017) discusses foxlike and hedgehog-like economists with reference to Tetlock's work. Hence, the fox/hedgehog model could also be used to study political behavior.

This is attempted in Essay IV, where Öner and I suggest that this model may be useful for understanding why local politicians in rural and peripheral Swedish municipalities have voluntarily accepted large per capita numbers of refugees. In the final section of the dissertation, I will return to Tetlock's research, and, as suggested above, integrate it with Fleck's theory and MFT, in a multifaceted analysis of policy convergence between the Left and the Right. But first, I will in the next section take an analytical step back, to each of the four essays that provide the basis for the dissertation and explain the material and methods used in those studies.

4. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This section introduces the empirical material that was drawn upon in the four essays: books, public documents, interviews, and quantitative data. In the present section, I also discuss how the material was collected and by which methods it was analyzed. Neither the material nor the methods employed are naturally “given” by the theories discussed in the previous section, particularly not the theories of Haidt (2012) and Tetlock (2005), which both build on different kinds of personality tests that I am not able to conduct within the scope of this dissertation. Rather, and in line with Alvesson and Kärreman’s (2011) imaginative approach, I have assembled the empirical evidence in an explorative—yet, importantly, theoretically congruent—manner.

4.1 INFLUENTIAL BOOKS (ESSAY I)

As mentioned above and discussed in greater detail later (see Section 5.1), the hypothesis presented in Essay I is that both the Left and the Right paved the way for the introduction of NPM in the Swedish school system in the early 1990s. To explore this hypothesis, as noted, I make use of Fleck’s (1935/1979) theory of thought collectives and associated thought styles. In the essay I investigate and compare the thought styles of the Left and Right thought collectives with regard to NPM, or NPM-like,⁵² policies in teaching and education, extending as far back as the late 1960s. The empirical material consists mainly of written sources, specifically critical books about teaching and education by Swedish and (translated) non-Swedish authors who, in my analysis, can be grouped into either one of the two thought collectives, centered on the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party.

A focus on texts seemed appropriate to capture the thought styles of the two thought collectives (more on this in the section on ideational analysis). Books, in particular, are an important institution of

52 A term capturing policies similar to but not necessarily identified as NPM.

intellectual debates (Mike, 2017). Indeed, books can be considered one of the main “forums of controversies where persuasion takes place” (p. 904). Thus, critical books about teaching and education seemed to offer fertile resources for my research. Moreover, many other forms of public debate, e.g., parliamentary debates, have already been extensively analyzed in political science.

The most important selection criterion for sources was that they were known to have influenced public debate on teaching and education in Sweden, and, therefore, likely also the creation of policy. Assignment to the different thought collectives was then carried out on the basis of the ideological content of the arguments and the authors’ political orientation.

This source selection approach is in keeping with similar previous studies, in which the objects of analysis were selected based on their significant influence on public debate and policy. Examples of such studies include David Brolin’s (2015) study of the ideological trajectory of Swedish public intellectuals who were on the far-left side of politics in the 1970s and then switched to a center-right position in the 1980s; Henrik Berggren’s and Lars Trägårdh’s (2006) seminal study of Swedish authors and social reformers who were instrumental in developing the Swedish doctrine of “state individualism;”⁵³ and Diane Ravitch’s book *The Troubled Crusade* (1983) about the decline in quality of American education. Ravitch, in fact, devotes a large portion of her study to describing “a substantial body of educational protest literature” (p. 235), published in the 1960s and 1970s, which came to influence education policy.

Similar to Ravitch’s approach,⁵⁴ my search for sources can most aptly be described as a cumulative “snowball” process, analogous “to a snowball increasing in size as it rolls downhill” (Morgan, 2008, p. 815). Snowball sampling is a common method in respondent research and uses “a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study,” typically when “there are no lists or other obvious sources for locating members of the population of interest” (Morgan, 2008, pp. 815–816). The same method can also be used for collecting other types of sources that are difficult to find, and this is what I did in Essay I.

53 Meaning that the Swedish welfare state is in a reciprocal relationship with the individual and does not favor—in effect, undermines—families and other social collectives.

54 See Ravitch’s note on sources (pp. 366–369).

To determine what books were important in the discussion on teaching and education in Sweden from the 1960s to the 1990s, I first relied on the late teacher-trained literary scholar Göran Hägg's published recollections (2005) and his suggestions of titles to me (personal communication, November 5, 2013). From the sources that I gathered in this way, I proceeded to find additional books that were accounts of the discussion on teaching and education during the relevant time period. For example, Arne Helldén's (2002) book detailing 30 years of school policies in Sweden and Kerstin Vinterhed's (1979) journalistic book about Swedish schools in the 1970s proved useful both for confirming that I had made appropriate choices of sources, particularly in regard to the Left thought collective, and for finding additional ones.

Two interviewees,⁵⁵ independent of each other, pointed me to a source that proved particularly important for the understanding of the reasoning of the Right thought collective: Milton and Rose Friedman's seminal book *Free to Choose* (1980), which was also drawn upon in Essay II. In addition, the librarian at the market-liberal think tank and publisher Timbro provided me with a list of their books that were critical of public education and the public sector at large, as well as a collection of press cuttings from the late 1970s. These items offered further suggestions for sources that could be relevant for capturing the thought style of the Right thought collective.

It could be argued that a more extensive and systematic search for sources was called for. However, as the topic of Essay I was largely unexplored, an exploratory approach with a limited set of ideal sources—which could be corroborated as influential in the discussion on education and teaching in Sweden—was considered the most appropriate means of testing the hypothesis that both the Left and the Right paved the way for NPM in the Swedish school system.

4.2 PUBLIC DOCUMENTS (ESSAYS I–IV)

Public documents were used as empirical material in all four essays. Documents (e.g., government bills, policy statements, public enquiries, reports, and other forms of communication from government and regulatory agencies) are important to study and analyze. Unlike books, they do not express utopian visions that may or may not be adopted by policymakers, but concrete plans to put ideas into practice (Millares,

⁵⁵ See Section 4.3.

2015). Even so, the literature on qualitative policy studies has, according to the researcher Dan Gibton (2016), often treated document analysis with skepticism, and judged this method unfavorably in comparison with interviews and observations. (Gibton's book on qualitative research methods pertains specifically to the kinds of studies of education policy that make up the larger part of this dissertation, and has, therefore, been heavily relied upon.)

According to Gibton (2016), documents have several key strengths. They provide essential context and valuable additions to the researcher's knowledge base, "a means to track [the] change and development" of policies (p. 60), and, perhaps most importantly, summarize "the essence of policy, often more so than the spoken or observed word" (p. 61). Indeed, "documents are often *the* policy, the heart of policy, and the result of the policy process" (p. 62). Therefore, Gibton argues (p. 68), studying documents is an important complement to interviews and observations (e.g., as in Potterton, 2018), even suggesting that it can be "a stand-alone pathway to understanding policy."

There were two primary uses of documents in the four studies, reflecting the advantages of documents that Gibton discusses. First, documents were in all four essays included for descriptive purposes to provide information on, for example, the decentralization reform of the Swedish school system (Lewin, 2014), teachers' attitudes toward their profession and workplace (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014b), historical grading practices (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2005), the historical trajectory of the Swedish school principal (SOU 2004:116), the mental health and wellbeing of Swedish children and adolescents (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2017), and the reception of refugees in Sweden (e.g., SOU 2018:22).

Second, documents were used, in Essays I–III, as complements to critical books to uncover underlying ideological assumptions of policymakers and regulatory agencies (i.e., the thought styles of different thought collectives), and, in Essay II and IV, to reveal gaps between intentions and implementation or results. Both of these uses of document analysis are explicitly suggested in Gibton (2016). For these purposes, documents such as government bills,⁵⁶ opinion pieces by, and published interviews with, policymakers drawn from

⁵⁶ For example, the government bill introducing the school voucher system in the early 1990s (Government Bill, 1991/92:95) and the bill that regulated the placement of refugees in Sweden during the early 2010s (Government Bill, 2010:197).

the digitized archive of the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*,⁵⁷ national curricula (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1994, 2011; Swedish National Board of Education, 1962, 1969, 1980), official commentaries to national curricula (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1996, 2017), and inspection reports of schools (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2015, 2017) provided rich information.

4.3 IDEATIONAL ANALYSIS (ESSAYS I AND III)

The method used to analyze critical books and public documents, mainly in Essays I and III, is ideational analysis (Swedish: *idéanalys*; Beckman, 2005). This is an old method customarily applied in Swedish political science, which extends back to what Mats Lindberg (2018a, p. 280) calls the “Uppsala school of idea-analytical political science,” whose prominent members included, among others, Elvander (1961) and Herbert Tingsten (e.g., 1933). Indeed, according to Evert Vedung (2018b, p. 156), this method constitutes a “Swedish tradition in political science through and through,” which, for a long time, did not even have a translated term in English.⁵⁸ For a few decades after the late 1960s, the method was also marginalized in the Swedish context when the study of politics, broadly conceived, “were to become a science in same sense as the natural sciences, and defer particularly to physics as the model of science” (Vedung, 2018b, p. 161). Today, however, *ideational analysis* (as it is now called, e.g., in Béland, 2009), has received both a renaissance in Sweden and an international standing; according to Vedung (2018b), this development is largely due to the recent “turn to ideas” in political science more generally (e.g., Blyth, 2003).

Ideational analysis can be applied for several purposes (for a summary, see Beckman, 2005). However, the kind of ideational analysis that I have conducted is called *descriptive ideational analysis*, the purpose of which is not merely to describe the content of sources, but to interpret and organize the content in new and previously unexplored

57 The choice to use the digitized archive of *Svenska Dagbladet*, as opposed to the archive of some other Swedish newspaper, is explained and justified in Essay II.

58 It should naturally be noted that the method of ideational analysis bears strong resemblance to other methods of textual analysis that are more commonly used by political scientists in other countries (for an overview of such methods, see, e.g., Bergström & Boréus, 2005). Ideational analysis simply represents how textual analysis was first developed in Swedish political science.

ways (Beckman, 2005, pp. 48–54).⁵⁹ In the case of Essay I, I wanted to test whether influential left and right leaning critical books, whose content was ostensibly restricted to teaching and education, could be interpreted to reflect NPM, or NPM-like, policies. I did this by comparing the views expressed in the books to the principles that the political scientist Christopher Hood (1991, pp. 4–5) lists as the seven defining elements of NPM.⁶⁰ It was then natural to extend the analysis by comparing the two different thought styles expressed in the books and, in congruence with Fleck’s (1935/1979) ideas about inter-collective communication of thoughts, determine whether and how the styles converged. This descriptive ideational analysis was also an instance of inference to the best explanation. Indeed, in line with Alvesson and Kärreman’s (2007; 2011) abductive research strategy, I mobilized empirical material to challenge the established theory of the ideational origins of NPM (i.e., neoliberal ideas in isolation; see Section 5.1) and suggest a new interpretation that accounts for all the facts, namely, that both the Left and the Right paved the way for the introduction of NPM in the Swedish school system.

A similar approach as in Essay I was taken in Essay III (the main results of which are detailed in Section 5.3). Here, a postmodern, social constructivist thought style with regard to the nature of truth and knowledge and desirable pedagogical practices in schools was first discerned. On the basis of central texts on these topics (e.g., Doll, 1993) and other, secondary sources (e.g., Ferraris, 2014; Linell, 2006), the main manifestations of the thought style could be teased out. The thought style was then compared to the content of the governing documents of the Swedish school system in the vein of a descriptive ideational analysis.

It is a matter of course that ideational analyses, in practice, are never conducted in such a “clinical” and structured fashion that the above account suggests (Vedung, 2018a). For example, as observed by Robert Merton and Elinor Barber (2004, p. 141), there is a “serendipity’ component in research,”⁶¹ meaning that valid results are

59 For an illustrative example of such an analysis, see, e.g., Johan Tralau’s (2002) study of the utopian vision in the writings of the young Karl Marx.

60 See footnote 6.

61 Serendipity—“the art of being curious at the opportune but unexpected moment” (Merton & Barber, 2004, p. 210)—is explicitly embraced in the research approach advocated by Alvesson and Kärreman (2007), as was suggested in the introductory section.

sometimes discovered “by chance or sagacity.” This is, indeed, true of the interpretive enterprise of ideational analysis. However, given that this fact highlights the limits to, rather than provides guidance for, reproducibility, I will not delve into the complexities of the analyses here. Nonetheless, just to give an example, it is worth mentioning that the discovery in the first study of the striking similarity in the view of what motivates (or should motivate) public-sector employees, such as teachers, between the Social Democrats and the public-sector trade unions, on the one hand, and public-choice economists, on the other hand, was an occasion of serendipity that turned out to provide a central piece of the analysis.

4.4 INTERVIEWS (ESSAYS I AND II)

Interviews conducted with three senior policymakers served as a complement to critical books and documents in the first two essays. The policymakers were Odd Eiken and Anders Hultin, who served as State Secretary and political adviser, respectively, in the Ministry of Education under the center-right coalition government of 1991–1994 (Essays I and II), and Ulf P. Lundgren, who was Director General of the Swedish National Agency for Education from 1991 to 1999 (Essay II). In his capacity as head of a parliamentary commission that was given the task of drafting a new national curriculum in 1991, Lundgren was also an instrumental figure in the creation of the 1994 curriculum, which features heavily in Essay II (and in Essay III). As previously noted, Eiken and Hultin should both be considered as esoteric members (Fleck, 1935/1979) of the Right thought collective, while Lundgren should be viewed as an esoteric member of a postmodern, social constructivist thought collective whose thought style is studied in Essay III. Thus, interviewing them provided direct access to the thought styles of the different thought collectives.

The interviews had to be conducted by email (Eiken) and by telephone (Hultin and Lundgren), which is not uncommon in the context of interviewing senior policymakers (Gibton, 2016), and does not preclude the possibility of asking probing questions (Leavy, 2017). The telephone interviews were documented in writing; no audio recordings were made. The main purpose of the interviews was to gain further insight into the reasoning of the architects of the policies discussed in the essays at the time of their introduction, and Eiken, Hultin, and

Lundgren were three of these central actors.⁶² As observed by Gibton (2016, p. 50), “[r]etirees are especially valuable informants as ... they are [often] open, critical, and willing to share information.” In line with this observation, and with the concept of the “analytical interview” (Kreiner & Mouritsen, 2005), I wanted to engage the interviewees in a collaborative analysis and production of knowledge. An ancillary purpose was to verify certain claims made in the essays. Eiken answered specific questions that were emailed to him in the style of a structured interview. The interviews with Hultin and Lundgren were conducted in a semi-structured fashion, in which a pre-determined set of questions was combined with a discussion of topics that came up during the interview (see, e.g., Teorell & Svensson, 2007).

Compared to written material interviews may have many biases. For instance, the interviewee’s memory may falter. He or she may also opportunistically present him or herself in an all-too favorable light (e.g., Kreiner & Mouritsen, 2005). However, I did not perceive any such signs in the interviews I conducted, at least not with Eiken and Hultin. Lundgren had a tendency to distance himself from any personal responsibility for the outcomes of certain policies he was instrumental in creating. Nonetheless, the interview with Lundgren was valuable and served its purpose.

4.4 QUANTITATIVE DATA (ESSAYS II–IV)

Strictly qualitative methods are not always suitable. Indeed, certain research questions demand several types of data to be addressed. Hence, qualitative studies sometimes also need to include analyses of quantitative data (Gibton, 2016). Such an analysis was performed in Essays II and III. To demonstrate a significant decline in knowledge among Swedish elementary and secondary school pupils, and the existence of grade inflation in both public and independent schools, both essays drew upon data collected in the two recurrent international knowledge surveys PISA (OECD, 2013, in particular) and TIMSS (Beaton et al., 1996; Mullis et al., 2012; Mullis et al., 2016). However, it should be noted that none of the essays are “mixed methods” studies. Instead,

62 As suggested by the research of Ben Yong and Robert Hazell (2014), “special advisers” such as Eiken and Hultin are an essential part of government and the policy process. Special advisers help ministers prioritize, contribute expertise in policymaking, and implement the policy agenda within the civil service machinery.

they are qualitative studies that, among other objectives, “[analyze] quantitative data via qualitative methods,” in the vein of the examples of such studies that Gibton (2016, p. 128) refers to.

A more mixed-methods approach was taken in Essay IV. Here, we begin the study by identifying the municipalities in Sweden that have accepted the largest number of refugees per capita. This was done by the use of *economic base analysis*, which was first used by Robert Murray Haig (1927) in his studies of the city of New York. A critical step in economic base analysis is calculating a so-called *location quotient* (*LQ*) to determine the concentration of a specific feature (e.g., a particular branch of industry) in a geographically defined area in relation to the national average. Using this tool, it is possible to gauge whether the specific feature is under- or overrepresented, given both the area’s economic size and the national average of the feature under discussion. It also becomes possible to identify the areas, or, as in our case, municipalities that diverge from the national average.

In Essay IV, using location quotients, we studied the concentration of received refugees who had been granted permission to stay in Sweden in relation to the population of each municipality and the national average regarding refugee reception per capita. Hence, the values for *LQ* in our particular study represent the share of refugees a municipality has received in a given year with respect to its population the year before, divided by the total number of refugees the country has received in the same year relative to the county population the year before.⁶³ If a municipality’s *LQ* value equals 1, this means that the number of refugees the municipality received per capita is exactly equal to the national average. An *LQ* equal to 2 implies a reception double the national average, and so forth, while *LQ* values smaller than 1 indicate that the municipality received fewer refugees per capita than the national average.

LQ values were calculated for all municipalities in 2016 using data from Statistics Sweden (RAPS, *Regionalt analys- och prognosystem*) and the Swedish Migration Agency. As mentioned above, this analysis revealed a pattern of rural and peripheral municipalities with rapid population decline receiving larger numbers of refugees per capita than urban and metropolitan municipalities, which we present in the

63 Formally, $LQ_i = (\text{No. of refugees in year } t \text{ in municipality } i / \text{population in municipality } i \text{ in year } t - 1) / (\text{Total number of refugees in the country in year } t / \text{Total country population in year } t - 1)$.

form of a scatter plot and maps. We then extended the initial analysis by performing regression analyses of the relationship between refugee reception at the municipal level, municipal population size, and the municipal employment rate as a proxy for labor market prospects for four different time periods. We performed both ordinary least squares (OLS) estimations, in which we pooled our data from different years, and municipality-year fixed-effects (FE) estimations to capture the variation between, as well as within, municipalities.

In brief and somewhat simplified, our results showed a negative association between refugee reception and both population growth and employment rates. Thus, municipalities with population decline and/or high non-employment received more refugees per capita—particularly after 2010, i.e., during the period that the influx of refugees to Sweden increased each year and eventually reached an unprecedented level. After establishing this fact with quantitative methods, the remainder of the essay attempts a qualitative understanding of the motives of local politicians in rural and peripheral municipalities to accept these disproportionately large numbers of refugees per capita. The results of this analysis are summarized in the next section.

5. SUMMARY OF THE ESSAYS

5.1 ESSAY I: A LEFT/RIGHT CONVERGENCE ON THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT? THE UNINTENDED POWER OF DIVERSE IDEAS

This essay explores the political prehistory of NPM. Previous literature has made the case, or taken for granted, that only neoliberal ideas inspired NPM (Bevir, 2010; Boston, 2010; de Vries, 2010; Greenaway, 1995; Guerrero-Orozco, 2014; Leicht et al., 2009; Lorenz, 2012; Marobela, 2008; Ranson, 2003; Rhodes, 1996; Savoie, 1994; Ventriss, 2000). Even in case studies of countries where left-wing or Social Democratic governments have applied NPM reforms, scholars claim that neoliberal ideas have been highly significant causal forces (Dale, 2001; Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 2004; Mascarenhas, 1993; Robertson & Dale, 2002). Keeping in mind that NPM is a set of market-oriented strategies for public sector reform (Hood, 1991), it is perhaps not surprising that this assumption regarding the ideological roots of NPM has been made. However, the introduction of NPM in the Swedish school system suggests that this is a myopic view that neglects the involvement of the Left. This essay suggests that the antecedents of NPM, in fact, extend back to the 1968 movement, and that both the Left and the Right contributed to the rise of NPM in the Swedish school system by weakening intrinsic motivation among teachers.

In the 1960s, the Left claimed that teachers had an authoritarian style of teaching, to the detriment of children's learning and wellbeing. Moreover, it was suggested that teachers have personal political agendas that need to be curbed by employing techniques similar to NPM, such as financial incentives, increased demands on documentation of what goes on in the classroom, and limiting the teachers' professional autonomy. This critique neglected a well-established ethos among teachers, which emphasized such virtues as duty, dedication, and self-sacrifice, and which was considered the reason why they could be trusted to perform to the best of their abilities with little or no explicit top-down

monitoring. Nevertheless, translated books by, among others, the left-wing pedagogues Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner (1969), the socialist theorist Paulo Freire (1970), and the Austrian anarchist Ivan Illich (1971) claiming that teachers are authoritarians with personal political agendas influenced public debate and policy at the highest level in Sweden.

The works and ideas of these thinkers were in congruence with the school-reform ideas of the Social Democrats. The Social Democratic Party, too, favored techniques in line with NPM principles to monitor the teachers' work. Together with the public-sector trade unions, the Social Democrats also denounced public-sector ethics and the professional ethos of teaching in favor of a more materialistic view of work. The main purpose of such rhetoric, and of new legislation that eroded the imperative for public-sector employees to view their jobs as a vocation, was likely to increase identification among electoral groups in the middle class with the Social Democrats' political agenda. However, ultimately, it contributed to weakening the public-service ethos of teachers, and other public servants, even further. Yet, the essays suggests that something more was needed to pave the way for NPM in the Swedish school system, namely, a parallel undermining of intrinsic motivation among teachers from the Right.

During the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, a neoliberal criticism of the public sector emerged in many Western countries. The school of public choice economics, the ideas of which were imported into the Swedish debate by the think tank Timbro, crystallized this criticism in its claim that all public servants are "budget-maximizing" bureaucrats (Niskanen, 1971), motivated by material gain.⁶⁴ Therefore, they must be controlled with NPM methods (Tullock, 1976). This reasoning mirrored the Social Democrats' and the trade unions' view that vocation and professional ethos were a faulty or antiquated motivation for work, and that extrinsic rewards were far more important.

In a book about choice reforms that had a significant influence on the Right in Sweden, Friedman and Friedman (1980) specifically

64 As explained by Geoffrey Brennan and Buchanan, public-choice economists consider narrow self-interest to be a significant, but not the *sole*, motive of political agents. "This differentiates our approach from the alternative model, implicit in conventional welfare economics and widespread in conventional political science, that political agents can be satisfactorily modeled as motivated solely to promote the 'public interest,' somehow conceived. *That* model we, along with all our public choice colleagues, categorically reject" (Brennan & Buchanan, 1988, p. 181).

applied the public choice theory of the motivations of public servants to teachers. For purely selfish reasons, the Friedmans argued, teachers had acquired power over elementary education while parents and pupils had lost theirs. Consequently, a voucher reform in the school system (i.e., steering through financial incentives) was needed to force teachers to work in the interests of the “consumers” of education. Directly inspired by the Friedmans, such a reform was advocated, and later enacted, by the Swedish Moderate Party in the 1980s and 1990s.

After the Left and the Right, in effect, had engaged in a joint effort to undermine intrinsic motivation among teachers, the essay suggests that the professional ethos of teaching was dismantled and that the way for NPM to enter the school system was cleared. As teaching in Sweden became less of a vocation and more of a regular job, there was a need for NPM to replace the old management principles based on professional ethics and intrinsic motivation that were no longer viable.

Following calls for “assumption-challenging research” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011) and a “return to meaning” in social science (Alvesson et al., 2017), the essay contributes to the existing literature by challenging the assumption that only neoliberal ideas inspired NPM reforms. Thus, it opens new avenues of research into the prehistory of other cases of NPM reforms in other countries. The analysis suggests a proclivity for unintended policy convergence between the Left and the Right.

5.2 ESSAY II: MARKETIZED EDUCATION: HOW REGULATORY FAILURE UNDERMINED THE SWEDISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

This essay explores the effects of Sweden’s system of school vouchers and school competition on knowledge attainment. Introduced in 1992, this system is unparalleled internationally in its market-liberal design (see Section 2.1 above). The school voucher reform was meant to encourage choice among pupils and competition among schools, which its architects in the Moderate Party, and its supporters on the right more generally, believed would increase the level of knowledge among pupils in both independent and public schools. As shown both in Essay I and in this essay, the rationale for this belief came from Friedman and Friedman (1980).

Previous studies on the effects of school competition seem to have confirmed the belief that both independent and public schools would benefit from the reform. Concentrating on easily measured outcomes, i.e., teacher-assigned grades and the results of Swedish standardized

tests, these studies find that the expansion of independent schools after 1992 has improved results in both independent and public schools (Ahlin, 2003; Björklund et al., 2004; Böhlmark & Lindahl, 2015; Sandström & Bergström, 2005). However, as this essay demonstrates, these results are impossible to reconcile with the long and significant decline of Sweden's results in international knowledge assessments. The fact that grades have improved sharply since the late 1990s, while results on objectively graded tests of Swedish pupils' knowledge and skills have continuously deteriorated, instead provides compelling evidence of grade inflation in both independent and public schools.

In the essay it is argued that this phenomenon should be understood as a consequence of school competition, or, more precisely, as a "hazardous adjustment" of behavior (Lindbeck, 1995) on the part of schools, parents, and pupils to the lax institutional framework of the voucher system. From its inception, the framework has allowed for competition based on phenomena that are unrelated to educational quality, including grading and material and other hedonic rewards.

The center-right coalition government that enacted the reform in 1992 allowed independent schools into a debilitated institutional setting that had been inherited from the previous Social Democratic government, which had decentralized the school system to the municipal level and replaced the old regulatory agency with a new body that renounced regulation of schools (see Section 2.1.1 above). The remaining impediments to grade inflation were then weakened or eliminated by the Moderate Party, which was the party in charge of education policy within the coalition government. Where there had previously been a common core curriculum, schools and pupils were now, in effect, allowed to decide for themselves on the importance of teaching according to a knowledge-based curriculum. And where there had previously been standardized tests carrying high stakes for pupils, teachers were now given full autonomy to assign grades.

Economists, particularly of the new institutional economics school (e.g., Hodgson, 2013), have long argued that markets cannot and should not be left alone, but require appropriately designed institutions to function well. Since institutions shape moral habits (Ratnapala, 2006), they are needed to limit the negative effects that markets may have. This is particularly important in markets where users do not pay for the service themselves and it is difficult for users to assess the quality of the provided service. However, regulation of the (quasi) market for

school competition in Sweden was never seriously considered. It was more or less assumed that market forces would strengthen educational quality. But, combined with the nature of the quasi market, in which the only way for schools to boost profits is to attract more students, and a developed preference for inflated grades among parents and pupils, the above-mentioned changes to the school system made it rational for both independent and public schools to compete in dimensions other than educational quality. Instead of an institutional framework encouraging moral behavior, the center-right government created a framework that provided incentives for unsound competition, inviting comparison with the hazardous incentives and lack of appropriate regulation that spawned the U.S. financial crisis of 2008.

These shortcomings could potentially have been rectified when the Social Democrats returned to power in 1994. However, they, too, believed that competition between independent and public schools would improve educational quality and did not take any major steps to reform the system. To improve conditions for independent schools, the Social Democratic government raised the vouchers to the full average cost per pupil in public schools. Furthermore, the Social Democrats enacted a policy that made certain that grades became a tool for selection into higher levels of education without simultaneously functioning as a motivational incentive to promote diligence and hard work. This resulted in a substantial weakening of the moral dimension of education; grades were reduced to a kind of currency, the main purpose of which was competition with others. In combination with changing social norms regarding the value of education, and the market setting itself,⁶⁵ the Social Democratic grading policy likely played a significant part in creating a preference among parents and pupils for high grades in return for little effort.

By analyzing the framework of Sweden's voucher system, this essay contributes to the existing literature by helping to nuance the claim that the effects of school competition on educational outcomes have been largely beneficial. It also draws an important general lesson from Sweden's experience that might inform policymakers about the adoption of school vouchers and other policies of privatization and co-production elsewhere, namely, that market reforms of tax-financed service production must account for the manner in which institutions

65 Experiments in economics suggest that "moral disengagement" occurs when human activities are placed in a market setting (Bowles, 2016).

and incentive structures affect behavior. Moreover, the essay supports and extends the observation of Hylén (1991) that the Moderate Party's emphasis on individual choice in education has ultimately led the party to a kind of relativism. While Hylén calls attention to the party's de facto turn to moral relativism in its attitude to religious and moral education in schools in the late 1970s, this essay suggests that the Moderate Party's school voucher reform has inadvertently undermined the value of knowledge in the school system.

5.3 ESSAY III: "POST-TRUTH" SCHOOLING AND MARKETIZED EDUCATION: EXPLAINING THE DECLINE IN SWEDEN'S SCHOOL QUALITY

This essay is a joint work with Magnus Henrekson. It is an analysis of the effects on quality of elementary and secondary education of combining a postmodern, social constructivist theory about the nature of knowledge and reality, and about learning and teaching, with extensive marketization. No previous study has examined such an idiosyncratic combination of trends in education, which, nonetheless, is a key characteristic of the Swedish school system. Previous attempts to explore the impact of social constructivist learning theories on quality of education, for example, in the Canadian province of Québec (Haeck et al., 2014), the UK (Christodoulou, 2014), Finland (Heller Sahlgren, 2015), and France (Hirsch, 2016), have studied this topic in non-market contexts. However, as this essay suggests, the interaction of market-based school reforms and social constructivism may produce particularly adverse effects.

In the essay social constructivism is understood as a philosophical claim, heavily influenced by postmodern discourse and power analysis, contending that knowledge and reality are entirely subjectively constructed (e.g., Elder-Vass, 2012; Ferraris, 2014; Linell, 2006).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ It could be argued that this description misconstrues social constructivism. However, we are careful to distinguish between an uncontroversial form of social constructivism and a radical variant that is influenced by the more extreme claims of postmodernism (or poststructuralism). The existence of radical forms of social constructivism has been acknowledged by Peter Berger (1992, p. 2), who, together with Thomas Luckmann (1966), originally coined the term: "I have not paid much attention to the currents of thought that, in recent years, have taken or been given the label 'constructivist.' What I have come across under this designation has not exactly evoked sentiments of kinship rediscovered. ... The notion of the social construction

This implies that basic knowledge cannot be transferred from teacher to student, and that objectively measuring academic ability and achievement should not be attempted. Knowledge imparting, or the very claim that something is universally true, may be tantamount to indoctrination and oppression (e.g., Apple, 1979; McLaren, 1988; von Wright, 1998). Instead, students should be given freedom of choice in their learning and work independently to acquire creativity and critical thinking, which are considered to be general skills that are more durable than “facts” arbitrarily arranged in core subjects (e.g., Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Doll, 1993).⁶⁷

In the essay it is argued that this social constructivist theory constitutes the ruling paradigm in the Swedish school system, and that the historical roots of the paradigm extend far back. Similar ideas were expressed when the unitary school system was designed in the years between the late 1940s and the early 1960s (see Section 2.1.1). For example, the abandonment of teacher-led instruction was strongly supported by the school commission that was appointed to draw up the framework for the new school system, which included prominent Social Democratic thinkers. The practice was described as “authoritarian to its core” (SOU 1948:27, p. 5). Instead, methods that would promote students’ independence and critical thinking abilities were recommended.

The first national curriculum for the unitary school system, enacted by the Social Democrats in 1962, thus stressed that schools “should work from norms that the pupils accept and rules that they help to develop” (Swedish National Board of Education, 1962, p. 16). The second curriculum, enacted in 1969, then called for a breakup of the structure of the traditional subject disciplines and discouraged all types of knowledge measurement. The third curriculum, enacted by a center-right coalition government in 1980, had a more clearly expressed social constructivist underpinning. The government bill that proposed the curriculum called for schoolwork to reflect “the pupils’ view of reality,” which it claimed to be inherently different from adults’ perception of reality, and “build on their curiosity and their questions” (Government Bill, 1978/79:180, p. 80).

Thus, governments of various political shades embraced social

of reality is here reinterpreted in neo-Marxist, or ‘critical,’ or ‘post-structuralist’ terms, and it is radically altered in this translation.”

67 As is discussed in the essay, creativity and critical thinking presuppose a well-rounded knowledge base (e.g., Larkin et al., 1980; Simon & Chase, 1973; Willingham, 2010).

constructivist views, or antecedents of such views; yet, the teaching methods used in schools changed very little between the 1960s and 1980s. In the essay it is suggested that this was because more senior teachers upheld a traditional teaching culture, guided by a theory of knowledge characterized by a combination of empiricism and rationalism. It was not until the early 1990s when the last teachers trained in the previous system retired, we argue, that this traditional culture was displaced in schools and teacher-training programs by the social constructivist paradigm. At the same time, the then center-right coalition government, in effect, the Moderate Party, enacted a fourth curriculum that built on an even more explicit social constructivist view of schooling (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1994).

A committee comprised mostly of pedagogues and staff from the Ministry of Education who drafted the curriculum stated that “what is knowledge in one place is not necessarily knowledge in other places” (SOU 1992:94, p. 63) and that the only facts that exist are those that take on meaning from what we can see or detect.⁶⁸ In line with these arguments, the committee suggested that the selection of facts could vary locally and that not all pupils everywhere needed to work with the same subjects and materials. Therefore, the curriculum did not come to include a prescribed content to be covered in the form of detailed course syllabi; it merely established a number of goals and objectives that it expected schools to concretize at the local level. The goals were unspecific and open to interpretation. This, in effect, transferred the responsibility for determining the content of and methods for elementary and secondary education from the state to the individual schools and their pupils. Indeed, the pupils were expected to assume successively greater responsibility for the planning and content of

68 It could be argued that the quotations from Swedish educators that we include in the essay do *not* indicate that they believe that there is no such thing as truth, but rather that they accurately observe that the truth is hard for people to agree on. In that scenario, the decline in educational performance might be explained by the fact that abstract epistemological questions are introduced to children and adolescents who are not cognitively mature to wrestle with such questions. However, quotations from the curriculum committee, in particular, seem to support our interpretation that schooling in Sweden rests on a “post-truth” philosophy. Aside from the quotation above, the committee’s report explicitly states (SOU 1992:94, p. 65) that “there are no ‘pure’ facts,” and that knowledge is “not true or untrue but something that can be argued for and appraised” (p. 76; emphasis omitted). These and other similar statements imply a view that there is no such thing as truth (cf. Wikforss, 2017).

their education, whereas the teachers' main priority was to support self-directed learning.

A new grading system was also enacted, and, as previously discussed in this dissertation, one of the system's defining features was that it eliminated the anchoring function of centrally administered standardized test scores and gave individual teachers full autonomy to assign grades. In line with the social constructivist theory that objectively measurable knowledge does not exist, teachers were then instructed to "utilize all available information about the pupil's knowledge" and arrive at "an all-round judgment" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1994, p. 16) when assigning grades, i.e., not just focus on test results and other traditional forms of assessment.

As we point out in the essay, it is an established fact that well-functioning systems of school choice and competition presuppose that the state holds schools accountable for their performance by measuring what knowledge their pupils have acquired—for example, through exit exams (Woessman, 2016). Thus, the new curriculum and grading system provided hazardous conditions for school competition between public schools and for-profit voucher schools, which had come into existence just a few years earlier (as addressed from another angle in Essay II). When school competition began in earnest, the regulatory documents issued by the Swedish state had already invalidated the very conception of objective knowledge. As a result, we argue, both "producers" and "consumers" of education became susceptible to fraudulent behavior, if not in a legal sense, at least relative to the fundamental purpose of elementary and secondary education.

Complementing my previous analyses, we thus argue that the highly irregular combination of what the essay refers to as "post-truth" schooling and marketized education is a contributing cause of the decline in pupils' knowledge and skills and the rise of grade inflation in Swedish schools since the late 1990s. We also point out that the development in later years has not been in the direction toward a greater emphasis on knowledge. Reports issued by the external evaluation body the Swedish Schools Inspectorate regularly express disapproval of schools that teach in a traditional manner and according to a classical view of knowledge. Moreover, a close reading of the latest national curriculum, enacted by a center-right coalition government in 2011, shows that it is as influenced by social constructivist theory as the previous one. In particular, the curriculum does not explicitly specify what knowledge pupils must acquire to be assigned a particular grade.

The essay also suggests that the social constructivist paradigm is a significant reason behind the widespread dissatisfaction among teachers in Sweden. We argue that the institutionalized attitude toward knowledge, resulting in a diminished role and influence for teachers, undermines the moral dimensions of the employment relationship that explain why workers commit to their job (Lopes, 2018). Finally, we maintain that the sharp rise in truancy (OECD, 2015), ADHD diagnoses, and mood disorders among children and adolescents in recent years (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2017) is not unlikely related to the social constructivist pedagogy of child-centered discovery and experiment, which eliminates the support of teacher instruction and adult intervention.⁶⁹ However, it can be inferred from our analysis that the broader problems of the Swedish school system that we identify in the essay are likely not intractable. A paradigm shift in the view of truth and knowledge has the potential to yield radical improvement.

As already noted, the essay contributes to the existing literature on the effects of social constructivist learning theories on quality of education by adding the novel perspective of marketization. The essay also suggests that caution is necessary for other countries, notably the U.S., that have a tradition of social constructivist pedagogy (Hirsch, 2016) and are now considering implementing or expanding market-based school reforms (DeVos, 2018).

5.4 ESSAY IV: POLITICAL HEDGEHOGS: THE GEOGRAPHICAL SORTING OF REFUGEES IN SWEDEN

This essay is a joint work with Özge Öner. It analyzes where in Sweden refugees who have been granted permission to stay in the country permanently have been placed. Our quantitative analysis shows that peripheral and rural municipalities with declining populations and high unemployment have received greater numbers of refugees per capita than growing urban municipalities offering better employment opportunities—particularly after 2010, when the total numbers of refugees coming to Sweden climbed to historically unprecedented

69 We are naturally aware that this is a research question that calls for other methods to be fully addressed. However, there is supporting evidence for our view in the study of Québec (Haeck et al., 2014). Hyperactivity, anxiety, and physical aggression increased among Québécois pupils relative to pupils in the rest of Canada following a pedagogical reform in the early 2000s that was similar to the Swedish reforms.

levels (see Section 2.1.2). Building on a vast body of literature on urbanization and social capital, the essay suggests that this placement policy is counterproductive from the point of view of economic and social integration.

Cities and urban areas are associated with economies of scale as well as more efficient uses of resources, a higher degree of specialization, higher productivity, and, therefore, better job opportunities. Crucially, from an integration point of view, urban centers are also associated with so-called *bridging social capital* (Putnam, 2000), which refers to the building of connections between heterogeneous (e.g., ethnically, culturally, etc.) groups. This kind of social capital provides an essential underpinning to the economic benefits of cities and urban areas, not least the increased employment opportunities. Indeed, it is through diverse social contacts and loose relationships known as “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973) that individuals, especially the urban poor and ethnic minorities, often find work. Thus, it is in the country’s urban centers that we would expect to come across the largest reception of refugees per capita.

The rural and peripheral communities that we, nevertheless, find have received the largest numbers of refugees per capita in recent years are instead characterized by *bonding social capital* (Putnam, 2000). This form of social capital, emanating from the “small worlds of kin, friends, and neighbors” (Zetterberg, 2011, p. 118), is associated with exclusivity, trust, and reciprocity, facilitating social cohesion rather than, for example, job-seeking. Thus, while having other qualities, smaller communities appear to be ill-suited to address the challenge of integrating refugees. In fact, the essay suggests that a large of influx of refugees who are unlikely to find work in rural and peripheral municipalities risks exacerbating already severe unemployment problems, fueling a growing sense of alienation between inhabitants of rural and urban areas, and creating an ethnic conflict over scarce resources between the native population and the refugees (Olzak, 1992).

The question is then why rural and peripheral municipalities in Sweden have accepted the largest numbers of refugees per capita. One answer has to do with the fact that Swedish municipalities have significant autonomy vis-à-vis the central government (Wollmann, 2004). Thus, and in the absence of legislation forcing municipalities to receive large numbers of refugees per capita, metropolitan municipalities have simply been able to choose to accept fewer refugees. But why would local governments of various political shades in rural and

peripheral municipalities then voluntarily accept a disproportionate number of refugees?

In the essay we approach answering this question by asking whether an existing theory that has been widely applied in studies of political decision-making can shed light on the motivations of rural local governments. This is rational choice theory. However, the various rational choice explanations for the erratic policy of refugee placement that we propose must be ruled out. Instead, we point to a sustained divide in opinion between elected officials at the national level, on the one hand, and the general public, on the other hand, regarding the issue of refugee reception.

While, as mentioned previously, roughly half the Swedish population has consistently favored accepting fewer refugees (Demker, 2017), typically, a mere 6 to 7 percent of elected politicians favored accepting fewer refugees during the period covered by our study (Ekengren Oscarsson, 2015). By 2010, all the mainstream parties from left to right had converged toward a liberal stance on asylum seekers and immigration in general. According to several parties on both sides of the political spectrum, including the Moderate Party, national borders were undesirable for the sake of migration. The then Prime Minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate Party (2006–2014), even claimed that Sweden lacks a national culture of its own that is worth preserving.

For reasons discussed in the essay it can be assumed that this large divide between elite and popular opinion at the national level was present at the local municipality level as well, in those municipalities that accepted the largest numbers of refugees per capita. It is, for example, noteworthy that we in a quantitative analysis observe a substantial positive effect of increased refugee reception in a municipality on the electoral support for the Sweden Democrats between the 2010 and 2014 national elections. For many years, the Sweden Democrats was the only party to adopt an immigration-critical position.

Tentatively, we explore the possibility that the local politicians' views explain the reception of disproportionate numbers of refugees in rural and peripheral municipalities. However, most existing theories within political science fail to offer an account of how ideas can cause such irrational behavior in politicians. The most promising attempt that we have encountered is Tetlock's (2005) fox/hedgehog model of predictive styles (see Section 3.3). Hence, we argue that this model may

be useful for understanding the actions of local politicians in rural and peripheral municipalities.

Determining what particular hedgehog hypothesis regarding refugee immigration that may have swayed the local politicians falls outside the scope of the study. However, we offer two competing suggestions (which are further developed in the essay). One possibility could be a belief that it is always right to choose the option that seems morally good and generous, perhaps supported by “positive asymmetry”—a common way of seeing that “foregrounds or underscores only the best characteristics and potentials of people, places, objects, and events” (Cerulo, 2006, p. 6). Given that different “thought communities prioritize and attend to different categories of people, places, objects, and events” (Cerulo, 2006, p. 12), depending on their goals and values, it is conceivable that the Left and the Right, having converged toward a liberal stance on asylum seekers, saw only the best in the refugees.

A different hedgehog hypothesis is that depopulating rural municipalities perceive that they must do whatever they can to reverse the trend and increase their populations, which is a widely shared goal among local politicians in Sweden (Syssner, 2014). Given that immigration has often been proposed as a panacea for an aging population in Sweden (Sanandaji, 2017), and elsewhere, it does not seem unlikely that a large influx of refugees, in this alternative scenario, seemed to offer a short-cut to reverse a negative population trend in rural and peripheral municipalities.

The essay makes a threefold contribution to existing literature. First, it provides a detailed presentation and analysis of the practices guiding the reception and geographical assignment of refugees in Sweden. Secondly, it complements previous studies on the effect of increased shares of immigrants on the electoral support for immigration-critical parties (Edo et al., 2018; Halla et al., 2017; Harmon, 2017; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Rydgren & Ruth, 2011). Thirdly, the essay contributes to more general discussions on the power and role of ideas in public policy and on how to understand political behavior beyond the analytical confines of rational choice theory.

6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

6.1 A PROCLIVITY FOR UNINTENDED POLICY CONVERGENCE

The four studies in this dissertation address major problems in the policy areas of education and immigration in Sweden. The first three essays address the significant decline in quality of elementary and secondary education since the late 1990s, and the fourth essay examines the irrational policy of refugee placement in recent years. Having in the previous section given a detailed description of these problems, and of how the four essays explain them, I will in this final section offer an overarching analysis of the results and suggest a deeper, underlying cause that connects the individual studies. This, I will argue, is a proclivity for policy convergence between the Left and the Right.

As already noted, the received wisdom in political science is that the Left and the Right are polar opposites with widely divergent policy agendas. However, the empirical observations in the four essays point toward a different conclusion. While the prevailing and intuitive view has been that only neoliberal ideas paved the way for NPM in the public administration systems of many Western countries in the early 1990s, Essay I suggests that its antecedents extend back to the 1968 movement and that both the Left and the Right contributed to the implementation of NPM in the Swedish school system. Essay II suggests that both the Left and the Right, also in the early 1990s, contributed to the shortcomings in the regulatory framework of Sweden's marketized education system. Essay III shows that both the Left and the Right for decades embraced postmodern, social constructivist views, or antecedents to such views, and furthered them in the school system. Finally, Essay IV calls attention to the Left's and the Right's convergence toward a liberal stance on asylum seekers and immigration in general during the height of the recent refugee influx into Europe and Sweden.

In abductive terms, these observations produce a theoretical break-

down when they are compared with the received wisdom about the relationship between the Left and the Right (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007, 2011). Thus, a new theory consistent with the empirical evidence provided in this dissertation has to be formulated. Inference to the best explanation suggests that the Left and the Right have a propensity for policy convergence in the two areas analyzed, but that it is unintentional and hard to detect for the actors themselves.

The Swedish Social Democrats and the Moderate Party have for a long time regarded each other as political adversaries. But the empirical evidence suggests that, in reality, there is not much divergence between the two, at least not in the policy areas of education and immigration. Their ideas and arguments have been strikingly similar, only couched in different terms, and ultimately only offered different routes to the same outcomes. By arguing, from different premises, that teachers have personal political agendas that need to be curbed through NPM, or NPM-like, reforms, the Left and the Right, I maintain, unknowingly both contributed to weakening teachers' intrinsic motivation to commit to their work.

In my judgment, the Left and the Right also unknowingly acted in tandem to create the hazardous conditions for school competition between public schools and for-profit voucher schools in Sweden. A key factor was that the Left and the Right both advanced, in several successive national curricula and other governing documents, a view of knowledge that makes subject expertise among both teachers and pupils secondary. These jointly enacted policies in teaching and learning then unintentionally resulted, I argue, in the decline in knowledge among elementary and secondary school pupils and the extensive grade inflation in Swedish schools that was documented in several of the essays. The convergence on the part of the Left and the Right toward a liberal immigration policy may have occurred more deliberately. However, the distancing from the position of large voter groups, and the substantial ceding of political territory to the Sweden Democrats, that took place was likely not intentional or calculated.

Given the general perception of the Left and the Right, these are, as already suggested, surprising observations. One would think that the Left would not contribute to implementing market-oriented NPM and school choice reforms in the public school system, and that the Right would not embrace social constructivist pedagogy or accept large-scale immigration. Yet, as the four essays suggest, the Left and the Right converged on these very policies. Therefore, the received

wisdom needs to be reconsidered. Widening our lens beyond the four studies in this dissertation, we might even find that the Left's and the Right's proclivity for unintended policy convergence is an important and underrated factor in the emergence of systemic policy shifts that create sweeping change and uproot previous institutions and policies—not just in education and immigration, but in other policy areas as well.⁷⁰ The effective absence of intellectual opposition may also explain why such policy shifts often appear to be insufficiently analyzed, and to have consequences that are unforeseen by the policymakers.

However, what, in turn, explains the proclivity for unintended policy convergence between the Left and the Right remains to be answered. It is beyond the scope of this introductory essay to offer a definitive explanation, but I will present a suggestion. To begin to explore this question, I have to return to the distinction made by Millares (2015) between policy convergence and ideological convergence. One does not necessarily hinge on the other, but abductive reasoning suggests that some kind of ideological affinity between the Left and the Right, perhaps unbeknownst to them, is the most coherent explanation for the policy convergence observed in this dissertation. In the next section, I will examine this hypothesis in greater detail.

6.2 A MORALITY FOR HEDGEHOGS

As previously noted, I have in this dissertation conceived of the Left and the Right as thought collectives with specific thought styles (Fleck, 1935/1979). The notion of “communication of thoughts between collectives” (Fleck, 1935/1979, p. 109; Mössner, 2016) has been of particular relevance, i.e., that ideas and concepts may pass from one thought collective to another, albeit translated into the language of the second thought collective. As discussed above, the empirical evidence in the four essays suggests that inter-collective communication is, indeed, occurring between the Left and the Right. But what, beyond the education and immigration policies already mentioned, is it that is being shared?

70 For example, in his doctoral dissertation, Mårten Lindberg (forthcoming) shows that both the Left and the Right, in the post-Cold War environment of the early 1990s, abandoned a collectivist ethos in support of universal (male) military service and a focus on national and territorial defense, and converged toward creating a defense organization marked by cost-efficiency and internationalism.

It is at this level that Haidt's (2012) Moral Foundations Theory offers a useful framework. Examining the different moral foundations proposed by MFT, it seems clear that both the Left and the Right thought collectives have consistently and one-sidedly emphasized care, fairness, and liberty, i.e., the three moral foundations that comprise the liberal moral matrix. Indeed, what appears to have ultimately guided both the Left's and the Right's education policies are concerns over the wellbeing and rights of schoolchildren. For example, it was argued that teachers had an authoritarian style of teaching and selfishly had acquired power over education from the pupils. According to both the Left and the Right, these harmful conditions in schools called for steering of teachers through bureaucratic and financial incentives and greater freedom of choice in education, i.e., NPM, or NPM-like, reforms. Moreover, it was believed that a school system built on a classical view of knowledge and a traditional pedagogy of teacher instruction was not in the interests of pupils. Instead, children were to be given the freedom to explore on their own. Similarly, it was the Left's and the Right's concerns over the wellbeing and freedom of mobility of asylum seekers that led to the open borders immigration policy at the national level after the "Arab spring."

Correspondingly, it seems that that the Left and the Right thought collectives have been consistently (but unintentionally) blind to the remaining three moral foundations: loyalty, authority, and sanctity. When the Left and the Right described teachers as selfish and untrustworthy, and institutionalized a social constructivist theory of learning, they not only undermined the teachers' authority in my judgment, but, perhaps more importantly, also damaged the perceived meaningfulness of teaching and provided a basis for disloyalty toward the school system. It may, in fact, be the latter that is expressed in the materialistic view of work that is common among Swedish teachers today (Helgoy & Homme, 2007).

I would also argue that the rise of grade inflation, to which both the Left and the Right contributed, undermined the moral foundation of sanctity. According to this moral outlook, the functioning of institutions presupposes "purity," which in this context means showing reverence to their inherent purposes (Haidt, 2012). However, if the fundamental purpose of elementary and secondary education is knowledge imparting, then this purpose is corrupted or debased by grade inflation.

Analogous to what happened in the policy area of education, the Left's and the Right's immigration policy tested the authority of the central

state, particularly during the autumn of 2015 when more than 9,000 people applied for asylum each week. The establishment left and right parties, but particularly the Moderate Party, also questioned whether citizens owe allegiance and reverence to their country and national culture, thus demonstrating blindness to the moral foundations loyalty and sanctity (Haidt, 2012). At the local municipal level, both left- and right-wing politicians appear not to have understood that inhabitants of rural and peripheral communities that are characterized by social cohesion may value living in those communities for that very reason.

As discussed in the next and final section, this hypothesis requires both further theoretical development and other scientific methods to be properly tested. However, based on the empirical evidence presented in this dissertation, it appears that the Left and the Right thought collectives share a thought style that rests on a liberal “three-foundation morality” (Haidt, 2012, p. 208), emphasizing care, fairness, and liberty, and excluding loyalty, authority, and sanctity. Given that the moral profile of each individual is determined by genes, culture, and experience (Haidt, 2012), this suggests that the members of the Left and the Right thought collectives are drawn from the same, narrow social and professional circles. Thus, the thought style is not constructivist in nature, as Fleck’s (1935/1979) theory seems to suggest. Rather, it is likely that individuals with similar moral profiles sort themselves into either one of the thought collectives and, in that way, give rise to the thought style in an interactive manner. Whether one is sorted into the Left or the Right thought collective may, in that scenario, be determined by more superficial and haphazard factors (e.g., cultural aspects of party organizations; see Barrling Hermansson, 2004).

As suggested by Tetlock’s (2005) model of predictive styles, the members of the Left and the Right thought collectives may have cognitive traits in common as well. Again, this must be further studied and verified, but the empirical material presented in the four essays seems to support an interpretation that the Left and the Right both approach ideas and policies in a hedgehog-like manner. The Left and the Right apparently had only *one* view of teachers, *one* view of market providers of education, *one* view of knowledge, and *one* view of immigration and immigrants. If the Left and the Right had been more foxlike in their thinking about these issues, then perhaps the deficiencies and problems in the areas of education and immigration that have been discussed in this dissertation could have been discovered and remedied.

If my hypothesis is correct, then it is not surprising that the hedgehogs of the Left and the Right are immersed in the liberal moral matrix. As already mentioned, it is comprised of fewer moral foundations than the conservative moral matrix, which takes all the foundations into account, and is in this sense more hedgehog-like.⁷¹ This point has, in fact, already been famously made by the political and legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin in his seminal work *Justice for Hedgehogs* (2011), in which he (using other terms) defends a liberal moral order based on the three foundations care, fairness, and liberty.⁷²

Foxes, it would seem, move more readily in the conservative moral matrix, in which the six moral foundations are understood as balancing each other. However, if my conclusions are valid, foxes have, for a long time, lacked political representation in Sweden. This, in turn, yields many interesting (both theoretical and other) implications, of which I can only mention a few. Returning to the discussion about the ideological traits of the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party (in Section 2.2.2), it appears, first, that the established observation about Swedish Social Democracy's "fundamental consistency in values" (Tilton, 1988, p. 383) must be reexamined. Secondly, the view that the Moderate Party gradually abandoned its original and longstanding conservative principles and instead embraced a liberal understanding of human nature and morality (Hylén, 1991) appears to be the correct one in the scholarly debate about the party's ideological trajectory (e.g., Lewin, 1967; Ljunggren, 1992; Nilsson, 2004). Ample support for these assertions is found in the preceding analysis.

Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the electoral rise of the Sweden Democrats and similar new parties or movements in other countries in recent years, may potentially be understood in this

71 However, as suggested by Helena Rosenblatt in her study *The Lost History of Liberalism* (2018), liberalism can also allow for a more nuanced and foxlike morality. According to her, early liberals "had nothing to do with the atomistic individualism we hear of today" and "rejected the idea that a viable community could be constructed on the basis of self-interestedness alone" (Rosenblatt, 2018, p. 4). It was not until liberalism's "turn to rights" in the 20th century that it primarily came to be about individual rights and interests.

72 Dworkin's argument has been deftly summarized by A.C. Grayling (2011, p. 58): "[Dworkin] cites two fundamental conditions of legitimacy [for law and government]: a legitimate government must display equal concern for each individual under its sway, while at the same time recognizing the right and responsibility of all individuals to choose how to make good lives for themselves."

context. If foxlike voters do not perceive that the establishment left and right parties represent their (morally underpinned) views, then it is understandable, even legitimate, that they seek out parties that, rightly or wrongly, appear to be immersed in the conservative, rather than the liberal, moral matrix. A greater recognition of this potential gap in political representation could lead to a more conciliatory political climate.

6.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

My hypothesis about ideological, or rather *moral*, convergence between the Left and the Right needs to be thoroughly tested before the conclusions about the Social Democrats and Moderate Party, and about the rise of new political parties, suggested in the previous section can be firmly established. I leave this task to future research, but briefly propose two possible avenues here.

The combination of theoretical frameworks that I have employed in this dissertation appears to be a fruitful one, which can be used in future work as well. However, the relationship between Fleck's (1935/1979), Haidt's (2012), and Tetlock's (2005) theories could be examined and clarified further than what is possible within the confines of an introductory essay. There are epistemological and ontological differences between the three theories that I have only been able to address in a cursory fashion here.

As previously noted, Haidt and Tetlock both build on personality tests, which I have not been able to use in this dissertation. Future studies could administer these tests in the Swedish political environment, to politicians or voters, or to both groups. At least one of the tests, Haidt's *Moral Foundations Questionnaire* (MFQ), has been translated into Swedish and is thus readily available. It has, in fact, already been administered to a sample of university students in the social sciences, humanities, law, and engineering (Nilsson & Erlandsson, 2015). Extending this previous work to include politicians and a much larger sample of voters seems like a logical next step.

My hypothesis would be that there is a moral and cognitive divide between politicians and voters, but that is, of course, a question that remains to be determined.

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