



PROTEST AND DEMOCRACY

Edited by Moisés Arce and Roberta Rice

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“You Taught us to Give an Opinion, Now Learn How to Listen”:¹ The Manifold Political Consequences of Chile’s Student Movement

Sofia Donoso and Nicolás M. Somma²

William Gamson’s (1975) path-breaking study conceptualized the political impact of social movements in terms of new advantages (new policies) and/or acceptance by the authority that the movement is challenging. In the last two decades, however, there has been an upsurge of literature that seeks to explain the outcomes of social movements beyond these two dimensions (Amenta et al. 2010; Bosi and Uba 2009; Bosi, Giugni, and Uba 2016). Movements can shape public policies and institutions (Amenta and Caren 2004; Giugni 2004; Uba 2005); the public agenda (Baumgartner and Mahoney 2005; Burstein and Linton 2002; Burstein and Sausner 2003); elections (McAdam and Tarrow 2010); and political parties (Glenn 2005; Heaney and Rojas 2015; LeBas 2011; Piccio 2016; Schwartz 2006; Schlozman 2015). In this way, over the past ten or so years, we have gained purchase on the question of how social movements impact politics in a broader sense. Despite these significant advances, however, extant research often focuses on one of these different outcomes. The links between the different types of social movement impacts thus remain unspecified. This overlooks how various outcomes relate to each other, and above all, how they often are part of processes of scale shift that we commonly observe when examining the development of social movements.

This chapter analyzes the interactive relationships between social movements, policies, and political opportunity structures throughout successive protest waves, and how these relationships, in turn, shape social movements' political impact. We do so by focusing on the student movement in Chile. Since the mid-2000s, protest waves spearheaded by high school and university students have put education at the top of the policy agenda. After massive protests in 2006, the first administration of President Michelle Bachelet (2006–10) reformed the Constitutional Law of Education, bequeathed by the military regime, and introduced new institutions to improve the quality of education. The pressure exerted by students in the 2011 nationwide protests then broadened the scope of the student movement's demands. After regaining power in 2014, part of President Bachelet's policy agenda, which was backed by a broad coalition of center-left political parties, included an overhaul of the education system, a tax reform to make the proposed education reforms financially sustainable, and a new constitution to replace the one left by the military regime.

The student movement in Chile sheds light on the processes of scale shift, which McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly define as the “change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions to a different focal point, involving a new range of actors, different objects, and broadened claims” (2001, 331). For example, a scale shift has occurred when an issue, tactic, or frame that had its origins at the local level is adopted at the national level (Soule 2013, 2). The case study analyzed in this chapter also invites us to think dialogically about the impact of social movements. Movements influence policies, and policy changes alter the conditions under which activists mobilize. As Schattschneider famously argued, “new policies create a new politics” (quoted in Pierson 1993, 595).

Yet, as we show in this chapter, the political impact of the Chilean student movement goes beyond its policy outcomes. In line with recent literature that seeks to bridge the relationship between social movements and political parties (Goldstone 2003; Heaney and Rojas 2015; McAdam and Tarrow 2010), we argue that the protest waves led by the student movement have also polarized the dominant center-left coalition internally, and motivated the creation of new political parties and coalitions. In doing so,

student protests in Chile have shifted both the content and the terms of the political game.

This chapter draws on interviews with student activists, organizational documents, newspaper accounts, secondary literature, and an original database on protest events for the 2000–12 period. We structure our account as follows. In the first section, we briefly review the literature on the political impacts of social movements. We then analyze the interactive relationship between education policies, shifts in the political opportunity structures, and student protests in Chile since the reinstatement of democracy in 1990. Depicting the growth of Chile's student mobilizations into a nationwide social movement with demands that go beyond the field of education, we analyze the impact of education policies on the student movement and vice versa. At the high school level, successive reforms produced patent inequalities among school types in terms of educational achievements. In higher education, education policies introduced by the military regime and continued by democratic governments increased enrolment rates in higher education, but also produced high levels of indebtedness and discontent. Since the mid-2000s, the articulation of this disgruntlement by student organizations, in turn, put pressure on the political system, gaining important allies within the center-left, who then introduced new education policies.

The last section examines the political impact of the student movement after the 2011 protest wave, and especially beyond its policy outcomes. The center-left coalition, in power between 1990 and 2010, moved to the left when it regained power in 2014 by integrating the Communist Party. We suggest that student mobilizations during 2011 and afterwards were one reason for this move, which ended up polarizing the newly created coalition and contributing to its defeat in the 2017 national elections. Furthermore, student leaders took on the challenge of disputing the center-left coalition's policy agenda from within the political system by competing for parliamentary positions and creating their own political parties. In 2017 a leftist coalition of social movement organizations and political parties, the Frente Amplio (Broad Front), participated in parliamentary and presidential elections. The coalition enjoyed a resounding success for such a novel force: it earned twenty deputies, one senator, and 20.3 percent of

the vote for their presidential candidate, Beatriz Sánchez, who was very close to making it to the second round of the elections.

The Political Impact of Social Movements beyond Policies

Social movements can have different types of impacts. These can range from both cultural (e.g., changes in practices or in public opinion) and biographical outcomes (e.g., a lifelong political engagement in the personal life trajectories of activists) to longer-term effects on politics—for example, by creating new values and personal predispositions to participate in collective action throughout life trajectories (Giugni and Grasso 2016). Yet, in this chapter, we focus on the political impact that social movements have on policy and institutional change.

In Gamson's (1975) influential work, this type of outcome is assessed according to two dimensions. First is the acceptance of the social movement by its antagonist, which involves "a change from hostility or indifference to a more positive relationship" (Gamson 1975, 31). Second, Gamson proposes to assess the impact of social movements by identifying the existence of "new advantages"—that is, the reception of the challenging group's claims by the authorities.

While Gamson's proposal paved the way for a comprehensive research agenda on social movements' interaction with the political arena and the resulting political outcomes, several shortcomings have been highlighted. To begin, the idea of acceptance overlooks the fact that social movements might be listened to and then ignored again as the negotiations with state institutions unfold. The proposed notion of new advantage is also problematic. There may be a time lag before a social movement's impact is apparent, and a movement could be considered successful due to a policy change, which then is reversed (Kolb 2007, 22). Conversely, one might reach the conclusion that the movement has not obtained a new advantage, overlooking the long-term impact that an analysis close in time to the movement's emergence could not identify. Moreover, by categorizing the adoption of a particular policy as a new advantage gained by a social movement, there is less attention on the *processes* that led to that outcome. As Soule and King cogently argue, "the final passage of a bill is not the entire story and . . . a more nuanced approach to the study of state policy

change necessitates an understanding of the ‘prepolicy’ period” (2006, 1,872).

Accordingly, recent research has stressed the importance of studying the impact of social movements on various stages of the policymaking process. Differentiating between setting the agenda, shaping public policies, and obtaining access to government is important because social movements’ capacity to influence each of these stages varies. Focusing on the legislative process, King, Cornwall, and Dahlin (2005) noted that each succeeding stage has increasingly stringent rules that make it more difficult for social movements to pass petitions. In their study of state-level women’s suffrage legislation, they find that while women’s organizations might be successful in introducing the issue into the legislative debate, this does not necessarily entail a favorable vote. Similarly, Soule and King (2006) examine the legislative process of state ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States and show that the civil rights movement’s impact was greater in earlier phases of the legislative debate. Again, the reason is that while social movements might convince a single or a group of legislators to introduce a bill, to have it passed requires a far greater commitment on the part of parliamentarians.

Consequently, understanding social movements’ political impact also requires analyzing how they are able to forge alliances and build political force by creating their own political parties. Both of these processes will impact later stages of the legislative process that ultimately will define the fate of their agenda.

Electoral campaigns are particularly fruitful for both setting the agenda and building alliances. As noted by McAdam and Tarrow (2010), during electoral periods social movements might introduce new forms of collective action that influence election campaigns. These involve both specific repertoires and frames. Social movements might also engage in proactive or reactive electoral mobilization. In the former case, social movement organizations actively participate in favor of a political party or coalition during the electoral campaign. In the latter case, instead, social movements escalate protests in the context of an election in order to avoid the coming into power of routine political actors that oppose their demands.

Additionally, movements can affect the political process by joining political coalitions beyond electoral periods (McAdam and Tarrow 2010). Schlozman (2015) shows that both the Christian right and organized labor in the United States have forged long-lasting alliances with the Republicans and the Democrats, respectively, which influenced the parties' basic priorities. Heaney and Rojas (2015) argue that movement activity is a vital part of party politics. Their study, centered on how the antiwar movement in the United States influenced the Democratic Party, shows that while the Democrats were in opposition, intersecting movement and party identities helped fuel the growth of the antiwar movement. Once the Democrats regained power under President Obama, however, the party identity was stronger than the movement identity, which partly explains the movement's decline.

Furthermore, movements may turn into parties themselves—or give rise to new parties that join the movement's cause. Party families such as labor parties and ecological parties are deeply rooted in, respectively, national trade union movements and ecological movements. Schwartz's (2006) study, focused on the United States and Canada, shows that what he names "party movements" persist over time either through the political party that is created, or by the tenacity of principles that continue to undergird political actors. More recently, in countries such as Spain, Greece, and Chile itself, the failures of traditional socialist or social democratic parties to address the concerns of their constituencies left a vacuum on the left of the political spectrum that allowed the formation of new parties such as Podemos, Syriza, and the Frente Amplio, respectively.

In addition, movements might affect party dynamics by introducing new issues into the public debate that polarize political parties internally (McAdam and Tarrow 2010). This can happen during as well as between electoral periods. In the 1960s, European and Latin American social movements engaged in debates on issues such as agrarian reform, or the discussion about undertaking a reformist or a revolutionary path to social justice, which created wedges among factions of the principal socialist parties. As we will show in this chapter, political parties and coalitions can incubate internal tensions as a result of the stands taken on the issues that social movements have put forward.

In sum, then, scholarship on movements' political impact shows that the boundaries between social movements and institutional actors are not as clear-cut as earlier assumed. As Giugni (2004) and Giugni and Yamasaki (2009) assert, the impact of social movements is often indirect, first influencing external dimensions, which then allows for the impact on the policymaking process, or obtained by the joint effect of political alliances and public support. As we show in the case of Chile, these alliances and public support are constructed over time through an interactive process in which the student movement and political authorities respond to each other.

The Interactive Relationship between Education Policies, Shifts in the Political Opportunity Structures, and Student Protests

Return of Democracy and the Education System Bequeathed by the Military Regime

Fighting alongside the political parties of the center-left, student politics were deeply intertwined with party politics during the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet (1973–89) (Carolina Tohá, interview with author, 2 January 2012; Yerko Ljubetic, interview with author, 16 November 2011). As democratic rule was reestablished in 1990, there were high expectations about the influence that the student movement would have on the country's development in general, and the education agenda in particular. Indeed, many members of the student cadre joined the government led by the Coalition of Parties for Democracy (Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia, henceforth Concertación) (Roco 2013, 2). Yet, this did not entail a structural reform of the education model bequeathed by the military regime in the decades to follow.

The reasons for this are multifold. Although democratic rule undoubtedly involved more opportunities to mobilize and open a policy debate, the Concertación adopted a wary approach to policymaking, and a cautious relationship to social movements. Too much mobilization on the streets was in general considered to be a threat to democratic stability (Drake and Jaksic 1999, 34). This belief was deeply rooted in the experience of political

polarization that preceded the military coup. During much of the 1960s and early 1970s, political parties on the center-left actively fostered social mobilization to extend their constituencies and attain power on their own (Roberts 1998, 89). After the traumatic experience of the democratic breakdown in 1973, many political leaders reached the conclusion that social mobilization, and the ensuing political polarization, had paved the way for the military takeover. This motivated the Concertación to prioritize a moderate route to policy change, and the construction of a stable center-left coalition that could guarantee governability (Roberts 1994).

The institutional setting also motivated this governance formula. For one, after seventeen years of dictatorship, General Pinochet left power in a strong position. He not only kept a seat in the Senate until the early 2000s, when he resigned due to health reasons, but he also enjoyed wide public support: 44 percent of Chileans voted for the continuation of the authoritarian regime in the 1988 plebiscite that allowed for the reinstatement of democracy. In addition, the Concertación was left with a constitution enacted by the military in 1980. Besides defining the rules of the political game, the constitution “locked in” the majority of the sweeping reforms introduced during the 1970s and ’80s, all of which were based on neoliberal principles. The Concertación also inherited a binomial electoral system, especially designed by the military to favor the construction of broad political coalitions to the detriment of smaller parties such as the Communist Party, which had a close relationship with social movements (Pastor 2004, 39). Together, these institutional constraints reinforced the Concertación leaders’ belief in the need to build consensus with the right-wing opposition on all important legislation (Huber, Pribble, and Stephens 2010, 78).

Despite its historical strength, the student movement emerged from the throes of authoritarian rule in a markedly weakened position. This was the result of long years of military rule, during which student leaders were persecuted, and universities were “purified” by the dismissal of left-leaning academic and administrative staff (Garretón 1985, 105). Moreover, while expectations for the return to democracy were high, and the university system faced significant challenges in relation to both its finances and internal democratization, student leaders disagreed about the agenda for change. The blurry boundaries between movement and party identities often meant that the goals of the political parties were echoed

by social movements (Hipsher 1996, 274). Consequently, many student leaders accepted the gradual approach to policymaking undertaken by the Concertación governments.

As a result of the aforementioned constraints, structural reform was a seemingly unsurmountable task. As Pribble notes, “while important changes were enacted, there was never an attempt to alter the general structure of the education sector” (2013, 97). Instead, during its first three consecutive governments the Concertación undertook gradual reforms to the education system left by the military regime. These reforms allowed for significant progress at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education, especially in terms of enrolment rates (Cox 2005). Yet, they were not enough to counteract the vast inequalities that were reproduced by the education system bequeathed by the military regime.

At the level of primary and high school education, this education model was the first in the world to adopt the voucher system at the national level (Cox 2005, 25). Drawing on Milton Friedman’s neoliberal thinking, the military regime’s introduction of the voucher, paid by the Ministry of Education, sought to increase consumer choice over education alternatives. Hence, in practice, the voucher is a form of subsidy subject to demand. Driven by the “Chicago boys,” the military regime’s civilian arm, the aim of the education reform was to augment competition between private and public schools, and thereby drive down the costs of education (Carnoy 1998, 309). The value of the voucher is based on average monthly student attendance, and it can be paid to both public and privately administrated schools.

This introduced strong incentives for the expansion of a private education market (Cox 1997, 3). During the first five years of its implementation, more than a thousand new privately administrated schools were created (Kubal 2003, 6). These state-subsidized private schools, concentrated in the urban areas, attracted middle-income families that could not afford private schools without the voucher (Torche 2005, 322). Moreover, the education system was decentralized and the municipalities, which had neither the organizational nor the financial capacity to run the schools, were given a key role in the administration of schools. As a result, public education suffered. While student enrolment in state-subsidized private schools increased from 15.1 to 32.4 percent between 1981 and 1990—a

boost of approximately 50 percent—enrolment in public schools dropped from 78 to 57.8 percent in the same period (MINEDUC 2003–2004, 35).

Moreover, the three-tiered education system created by the military junta, with private schools without the voucher, state-subsidized private schools, and public schools, produced significantly different educational outcomes. About 55 percent of state-subsidized private schools applied some process for selecting students among their applicants (García-Huidobro 2007, 74). Accordingly, the worst students were left at the public schools, which could not deny them access. In turn, this produced a “de-creaming” effect: the most talented students and those with highly motivated parents went to state-subsidized private schools to the detriment of the more academically weak students, who stayed in the public schools and were left without the positive incentive of the good students (Arenas 2004, 382). This peer effect, in turn, influenced public schools’ test scores, which fell in both math and Spanish between 1982 and 1988 (Carnoy 1998, 320). As the student movement would repeat throughout various protest waves, conditioning access to higher education, the education system thus produced a mechanism for the reproduction of inequality.

The reforms undertaken by the Concertación from 1990 onwards focused on improving existing financing and management schemes. In addition, a comprehensive curricular reform was undertaken and the number of hours at school was extended through the “full school day” reform. Public schools with the most vulnerable student populations were also supported through various programs. These reforms involved an increase of public expenditure on education. Between 1990 and 2012, it rose from 2.4 percent (Mineduc 2006, 39) to 4 percent of GDP (OECD 2015, 260). However, the Concertación also introduced new policies that ended up deepening the gaps produced by the education system. A notable example is the 1993 cofinancing scheme of private state-subsidized schools, which aimed at increasing private contributions to the education system.

Educational inequalities were soon apparent both in terms of funding patterns and in educational outcomes. While the working classes have increased significantly their access to upper-level education, they do not arrive on the same footing as the more advantaged students. There are important differences in academic performance (measured by the Test of University Selection, or PSU) within the three-tiered Chilean high school

system. Fully private high school students achieve higher average scores in academic tests than the rest. This is especially the case compared to (poorer) municipal-school students, whose average scores are about 25 percent lower—and with the gap growing over time between 2004 and 2016.³ Additionally, students from state-subsidized private schools score higher than students from municipal schools, and the average score of the latter has declined slightly across time. Since tertiary institutions select students based on these scores, working-class students tend to attend lower-quality institutions, while their upper-class counterparts attend the more prestigious ones, which provide further access to better jobs.

These differences do not go unnoticed among the student population. The Chilean mass media recurrently reports rankings about the “best” and the “worst” high school institutions in the country according to their average standardized score tests. Analysis of these results often emphasized the gaps between the three high school types, and the fact that students from municipal schools barely reached the most prestigious universities, which were populated by better-off students from fully private high schools. Such contrasting comparisons in the media and public debate, alongside students’ everyday experience of educational inequalities, created grievances that nurtured the student movement.

The 2006 Protest Wave

While both university and high school students staged sporadic student protests during the 1990s and early 2000s, it was not until 2006 that social mobilization shifted the policy agenda in significant ways. What became known as the *Pingüino* movement—due to the students’ black-and-white school uniforms—spearheaded protests and school sit-ins across the country for several weeks, something unheard of at the time (Donoso 2013). Spurred by specific demands, such as the improvement of school infrastructure and ending the authoritarian style of many school directors, the students also set in motion a national debate on educational inequalities and the neoliberal education model that sustained them.

The timing of the protests was not a coincidence. Just a couple of months before the movement took off, the Concertación began its fourth consecutive government under the presidency of Michelle Bachelet. Not

a member of the party elites, and an untipped presidential candidate, Bachelet had gained popularity as minister of health and minister of defense. She campaigned on a discourse that underscored the importance of citizen participation. In doing so, she was implicitly acknowledging the need to revise the top-down approach to policymaking that had characterized the previous three governments of the center-left. As her slogan—"I am with you"—signaled, her government would be different, with a closer relationship to civil-society actors in an effort to address their concerns.

After fifteen years of democratic rule, in 2006, the year the *Pinguino* movement arose, democracy had become consolidated, and the fears of an authoritarian reversal were more a memory than anything else. In this way, there was arguably a more favorable political opportunity structure for educational reform than the country had seen in the previous decades.

"Bachelet, are you with me?" could be read on the banners at protest events, making direct reference to the pledge made by the president during her campaign. Other recurrent rallying cries, expressing the students' discontent with the education model, read: "education is not for sale," "we are students, not clients," and "no LOCE [Constitutional Law of Education]; a ghost from the dictatorship." Student grievances were thus rooted in discourses linking the current state of the educational system with Pinochet's dictatorship, a "dark age" for most Chilean youngsters.

After several weeks of street rallies, followed by school takeovers across the country, which virtually paralyzed the school system, President Bachelet announced, through a televised speech, that she was going to institute a presidential commission tasked with proposing educational reforms. Specifically, her aim was to replace the Constitutional Law of Education, which was passed by the military right before leaving power as a way of "locking in" the numerous education reforms of the 1970s and '80s.

The Presidential Commission on Education gathered eighty-one experts and civil-society actors, including several high school and university student leaders. On the one hand, the commission's weekly meetings and national discussion on the education model was a way for the Bachelet administration to demobilize the *Pinguinos*. On the other hand, the commission allowed the students to impact the public agenda. After six months of work, a final report outlining a set of proposals was submitted. Drawing on these proposals, the government sent four bills to parliament,

one of which constituted a replacement to the Constitutional Law of Education. During the next four years this bill was promulgated along with bills that created the Agency of the Quality of Education (which addressed the lack of oversight over public and state-subsidized private schools) and the School Inspectorate, and the bill on the increment of subsidy for more vulnerable students.

Each of these bills, however, had to be negotiated with the political right after the Bachelet government realized that it could not count on the necessary votes from among the Concertación parties. The bills were particularly criticized by the Christian Democrats, one of the coalition partners who feared that removing school authorities' right to select students among applicants would threaten religious schools. Christian Democrats also disagreed on the elimination of profit-making among state-subsidized private schools. In addition to the opposition among the Christian Democrats, Concertación parties such as the Party for Democracy had vested interests since some of the party members were managers of state-subsidized private schools (Burton 2012, 38).

High school students and other social actors that had mobilized alongside the *Pingüinos* were not satisfied with the resulting policy reforms, which they considered insufficient to eliminate market mechanisms from the education model. Crucially, both the massive protests in 2006 and their aftermath marked a turning point. The protests created a wedge between the Concertación and student organizations, boosted the consolidation of a broader movement for educational reform, and helped frame this movement's demands in new ways.

For one, distrust with the Concertación grew, and the student movement started to highlight the collusion between advocates of the present education model and the Concertación. The distance between Bachelet's promises of substantial reforms (or the way students interpreted her discourse), and the reality of the changes made, added a new layer of grievance to those that had already been levelled at the educational system inherited by the dictatorship. Secondly, high school and university students started to mobilize together. Before 2006, as one university student leader expressed, "there had never been a platform that was not sectorial. They [high school students] fought for their school passes, for scholarships, and

we [university students] mobilized for our equivalent; our pass and our scholarships” (Giorgio Boccardo, interview with author, 17 August 2009).

Finally, as Francisco Figueroa, former vice-president of the student federation of the Universidad de Chile, states: “the secondary school demonstrations were already the precedent of what was about to happen in 2011. It was the student protests in 2006 that managed to call the attention of society on pending and broken promises from the period of democratic transition” (quoted in Hernández 2016, 62). The 2006 protests thus constituted the base for the massive protests of 2011, which became known as the Chilean Winter of Discontent.

The 2011 Protest Wave

The 2011 student protests erupted as a reaction not only to the educational model but also to the first right-wing government since the reestablishment of democratic rule in 1990. Many things had changed since 2006. By any means, the coming into power of President Piñera involved having less political allies in government. Also, it was clear that the new government of President Piñera was not going to be too responsive to any student demands that addressed the education model as a whole. The country had elected as a president a multimillionaire who thought that “education is a consumer good just like anything else” (Radio Cooperativa 2011a). At the same time, student organizations were more consolidated as a result of the sedimentation of lessons that previous protests waves had left (Donoso 2017). Moreover, the main student federations had decided to make 2011 the year of student uprising (interviews with Miguel Crispi, 1 March 2014; Camila Cea, 4 March 2014; and Joaquín Walker, 28 January 2014).⁴

Spearheaded by university students this time, the system of higher education and its financing mechanisms became the focal point of the 2011 protests. The military regime had built a system along neoliberal lines. Strong incentives for the expansion of a private market of education were created and state funding to higher education was slashed, which translated into a sharp increase in university fees (Austin 1997, 39) that tightened the budgets of those working-class students enrolling in universities. The number of private universities and technical professional institutions mushroomed. This resulted from the reduction in the

requirements to create new education institutions, as well as from access to indirect state funding (competitive research funds and subsidies based on demand) (Bellei, Cabalín, and Orellana 2014, 428).

While the Concertación governments increased the amount of funding to higher education, they kept its structure, including its coordination and finance mechanisms. By decreasing state funding to the “traditional” universities, which combine public and private universities that receive state funding, the Concertación not only maintained the system created by the military but also deepened it by forcing institutions to compete for subsidies on the basis of demand. Between 1990 and 2011, state subsidies to universities increased from 44 to 74 percent of the total public expenditure on higher education (Bellei, Cabalín, and Orellana 2014, 428).

At the same time, although private universities increased in number, their students could not access private loans to finance their education. For this reason, in 2005, with strong opposition from university students, President Ricardo Lagos introduced a state-guaranteed credit. While this amplified access to higher education, it did so by relying heavily on household resources as households had to pay the loans. About 52 percent of tertiary education expenditures in Chile come from households, the highest figure for OECD countries—whose average is 21 percent (OECD 2015, 220). As Chile also has very high educational fees, households need to rely on loans provided by the banking system through state arrangements. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of young people with educational loans almost quadrupled, and the total value of such loans tripled (Kremerman and Páez 2016). Of such loans, 85 percent come from the state-guaranteed student loan program, the Crédito con Aval del Estado (CAE) introduced by President Lagos (Kremerman and Páez 2016, 21–2).

Yet the burden of this system fell on the shoulders of the less advantaged students and their families, creating deep resentment and anxiety towards the authorities that sustained it. According to the 2013 National Socioeconomic Characterization Survey, 70 percent of postsecondary students coming from the two lowest-income quintiles have educational loans, most of which are CAE loans (Kremerman and Páez 2016). However, the CAE plays a minor role in providing financing for members of the upper quintile, most of whom pay for their education out of their own pockets (Kremerman and Páez 2016, 24). Additionally, CAE students face

more pressures for producing economic returns on their educational investments in the future. This is because the households of CAE students are more likely to have unemployed or inactive members than other households, and their average income is lower. Among students currently working, CAE students earn about half of the earnings of students paying for their education from their own pockets (Kremerman and Páez 2016, 27). It is no wonder, then, that demands for reforming the education system resonated more heavily among working- and lower-class students (Disi 2018). Without a doubt, the extension of the CAE and the grievances associated with it signified that there was a large student population to mobilize.

The 2011 protests started out in April and continued throughout the year. Rallies, takeovers of both schools and universities, and other repertoires of action such as flash mobs and social media campaigns, were complemented by the strong leadership of the presidents of the main university student federations.

As an indicator of the exceptionality of the 2011 protest wave, our protest event data⁵ shows that during this year, 44 percent of the estimated number of participants in all protest events participated in protests with educational demands. The collective action frame diffused by the student movement centered on existing inequalities in access to higher education, the strengthening of public education institutions, and a more active role for the state in regulating and directing higher education. Our data further indicates that, in comparison to prior student protests, demands related to a structural change in the education model expanded in 2011. For example, 44 percent of the demands in 2011 were related to the education model in general, in comparison to 22 percent for the 2000–12 period. Free public education concentrated 12 percent of the demands in 2000–12, and 23 percent in 2011. By contrast, demands related to specific benefits such as the public transportation pass and free lunches, decreased in 2011 compared to the rest of the 2000–12 period.

The 2011 student protest wave quite likely contributed to a further increase in public acceptance of protest and educational reform. According to the Latin American Public Opinion Project, between 2010 and 2012, the percentage of the population that supported that people express their points of view through protest participation increased from 58 to 71

percent.⁶ This figure increased from 60 percent in 2006 to 71 percent right after the 2011 protest wave. Finally, the percentage of Chileans that considered education to be the country's principal problem increased from 2.6 percent in 2010 to 5 percent in 2012.

Despite the student movement's capacity to sustain protests throughout the year, and the considerable sympathy it garnered from the public, the Piñera administration refused to respond to its petitions. Many times, the riot police cracked down on the protests instead (Washington Post 2011). While frustration was growing among student leaders, the government's lack of responsiveness raised questions about the institutional frame that guides the political game. Many student leaders were convinced that in order to achieve a new education model, political reforms were needed first. Thus, a demand for constitutional change became a recurrent rallying cry in the demonstrations. In addition, the absence of any substantial response on the part of the Piñera administration inspired many movement leaders to continue their struggle from within the political arena by competing in the 2013 parliamentary elections. This strategy proved successful as several former student leaders currently (as of 2019) occupy a parliamentary seat.

The Impact of Chile's Student Movement beyond Education Policies

Internal Polarization in the Government Coalition

As in any multiparty coalition, the Concertación was forced to accommodate different stances on education. As stated by Ernesto Águila, education expert and director of research at the Ministry of the General Secretariat of the Presidency during the Bachelet administration, "the Concertación always had at least two souls in relation to education" (interview with author, 16 November 2011). While some figures of the coalition supported a more state-led form of education, others favored further promotion of market mechanisms in the field of education (Burton 2012, 38). Moreover, the most liberal sectors within the coalition favored the voucher system and did not want to push for a more centralized education system that privileged public education (Pribble 2013, 99). At the same time, many

Concertación leaders argued that the voucher scheme would introduce incentives for parents to control the quality of the education provided to their children and allow for the collection of fees from those who can afford to pay, which would then be redistributed to people that need them more (García-Huidobro 2007, 73). These differences in opinion were not the direct result of party affiliation. In the Christian Democratic Party, for example, there were prominent figures, such as former minister of education Yasna Provoste, who openly supported student demands both in 2006 and 2011. Conversely, in the Socialist Party, which historically had been a close ally to social movements, a former party secretary famously noted, in reference to the students' demands, that they "seemed to have smoked opium." (La Tercera 2012).

During the four consecutive governments of the Concertación, these divergent positions were evident in many policy fields. Yet, what has been called the Concertación's "transversal political party"—referring to the moderates in each of the coalition parties—tended to prevail in the debates. As one student leader expressed, "the Concertación has two souls but one always loses" (V́ctor Orellana, interview with author, 6 May 2011). In the field of education, two examples of the more moderate route, in which fiscal concerns were prioritized over a focus on equity, are the aforementioned copayment scheme in primary and high school education, and the CAE reform in higher education.

The student movement in 2011 shifted the power balance between the center and the left within the Concertación, resulting in a strengthened position for the latter. The protest wave spearheaded by students developed in the midst of the internal debate that the center-left coalition was undertaking after the electoral defeat of 2010. The Concertación was dispirited and in disarray. Naturally, after twenty years in government, there was a need for renewal and for a substantial discussion that could inspire a revised political agenda. In this debate, the Concertación acknowledged the need to reconnect to its social bases. In the words of Senator Fulvio Rossi, former president of the Socialist Party, "we are all responsible for not having been capable of reading the profound transformations that we as the Concertación fostered during the last 20 years. We departed from the people . . . and we forgot the citizen movements" (La Tercera 2010). In many ways, Sebastián Piñera's electoral victory in 2010 can be related to

the Concertación's growing problems, particularly the difficulty it faced renovating not only its policy proposals but also its leadership structures in order to be able to represent the ideas and interests of contemporary Chilean society (Luna and Mardones 2010).

In this context, the massive student protests in 2011 were regarded by many in the Concertación as an opportunity to redirect its policy agenda. The protests were therefore met with a lot of enthusiasm by the coalition's more left-leaning members. Crucially, in early 2013, former president Bachelet decided to run for president again in that year's presidential elections. The remarkably high approval ratings that she had enjoyed when leaving power four years earlier made her a very competitive candidate. Aware of the privileged bargaining position that this entailed, she promised to compete subject to a policy program that embraced many of the student demands. In her own words: "I understood the message of the youth very clearly" (La Tercera 2013). And: "thanks to this movement, which has been a serious movement that has a proposal, the country has better conditions to advance in what needs to be done" (Radio Cooperativa 2011b). Furthermore, Bachelet proposed to construct a broad sociopolitical alliance that could guarantee the implementation of her program. The Communist Party joined the former Concertación parties and founded the New Majority coalition, which defeated the rightist coalition by a wide margin (62 percent versus 34 percent) in the second round of the 2013 elections.

The electoral success of the New Majority meant that an ambitious reform agenda had to be implemented. Very soon, the different stances within the broad government coalition started to emerge. The proposed tax reform, which would be necessary to finance education reform, encountered opposition from both the Christian Democrats and the Socialists. The education reform, which aimed at eliminating profit-making from the education model, also met strong resistance both from within the coalition and from outside. The former became especially outspoken when President Bachelet's approval ratings plummeted in 2015 as a consequence of a corruption scandal involving her son and daughter-in-law. From this moment onwards, the more moderate factions within the New Majority no longer feared openly criticizing the government's course. In particular, Communists and Christian Democrats, both members of the

New Majority, clashed increasingly often in the debate on education, labor relations, tax reform, pension reform, and health.

The New Majority paid a high price for its internal polarization. In April 2017, the Christian Democratic Party announced that it would not compete in the primaries of the New Majority. Instead, it ratified its party president, Carolina Goic, as its presidential candidate—an unfortunate choice since Goic only obtained 5.9 percent of the vote in the elections. The remaining parties of the New Majority supported Alejandro Guillier. He lost by a considerable margin the presidential race that led the rightist leader Sebastián Piñera to La Moneda (seat of the president of the Republic of Chile) for the second time.

Creating New Political Parties and a New Coalition of Sociopolitical Forces

The student movement also impacted the political scenario in a second way—by fostering new, independent political forces. Although many Concertación leaders openly supported the student demands, there was a deeply rooted distrust against them among students. In the few occasions that Concertación leaders attended a protest event in 2011, participants signaled their discontent. For many, the continuation of the military regime's education policies under the democratic governments constituted a betrayal. Moreover, the experience of the 2006 *Pingüino* protests and its aftermath was fresh in their memory.

If anything, the 2011 protest wave convinced many student leaders that disputing power in elections was a central way to push for their agenda, and that this action complemented protests on the streets. Four former student leaders became members of parliament in 2013. Two of them (Camila Vallejo and Karol Cariola) were members of the Communist Party and thus supported the government coalition. The other two (Giorgio Jackson and Gabriel Boric) ran under their own political organizations.

From their first day in parliament, these former student leaders openly stated that although they now formed part of institutional politics, they would always have one foot on the streets. Since 2013, it has been common to see many of these members of parliament in rallies organized by the student federations.

The visibility of these former student leaders has been key in the creation of new political parties and organizations. In May 2016, *Revolución Democrática*, the political movement led by Giorgio Jackson, presented more than ten thousand signatures to the Electoral Service and officially became a political party. The *Movimiento Autonomista*, the political movement of another former student leader (Gabriel Boric), followed a somewhat different path. Although it has not founded a political party, the members of this movement have built a wide web across the country and organized thousands of people.

Preparing for the 2016 municipal elections, *Revolución Democrática* and the *Movimiento Autonomista*, together with the *Izquierda Libertaria*, *Convergencia de Izquierda*, *Nueva Democracia*, and the *Humanist Party*—all left-wing forces with a strong presence in the student movement—joined an electoral alliance. The most emblematic result of this joint effort was the electoral success of Jorge Sharp, member of the *Movimiento Autonomista*, and currently mayor of Valparaíso, Chile's second-largest city. This coalition-building expanded to include the fourteen organizations, which in January 2017 founded the *Frente Amplio* and organized programmatic meetings across the country.

The electoral success of former student leaders, both in parliamentary and municipal elections, certainly inspired other members of the *Frente Amplio*. For the 2017 general elections, the *Frente Amplio* competed for more seats in parliament across the country. In April 2017, it also announced that it would compete in the presidential elections, with the impressive results noted at the outset of the chapter. Currently, the *Frente Amplio* is the third largest political force in Chile. Through its many representatives it not only took the lead on some policy issues (educational reform, women's rights, the pension system, the creation of a new political constitution, and euthanasia, among others), but also became an important partner for the traditional leftist parties.

The considerable gains over a relatively short time period on the part of the political forces that have emerged from the student movement illustrate how social movements can contribute to realigning the political game. While it is too early to assess the longer-term impact of current developments, few would take exception with the claim that the student movement has paved the way for the emergence of a new political force

that has joined routine political actors to shape policy issues in important ways.

Conclusions

As argued in the introduction to this volume, social movements play an important role in democracies. Through an analysis of the Chilean student movement since the democratic restoration, we have illustrated some of the ways in which social movements can affect the political process by introducing new demands into the policy agenda, and how these movements in turn are shaped by the policies and politics they helped to promote.

We concur with Goldstone's (2003) criticism of the notion of social movements as "challengers" as opposed to "members" of a given polity. Rather than "insiders" versus "outsiders," there is indeed a continuum between different forms of contention (Goldstone 2003, 1–2). Social movements should, in other words, not be considered extra-institutional actors, as "there is only a fuzzy and permeable boundary between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized politics" (Goldstone 2003, 2). In keeping with this perspective, social movements should be conceived of as a vital element of normal politics in modern societies.

The emergence of a powerful student movement since the mid-2000s—deployed first in the *Pinguino* campaign of 2006 and by university students in 2011—is rooted in the reshaping of the educational system that took place during Pinochet's dictatorship and its consolidation under democracy. A secondary-school system of unequal academic quality, segregated by class and neighborhood, plus a postsecondary system with a booming enrolment based on heavy loans, incubated a growing mass of aggrieved students. These conditions may not engender grievances among every student population (see Simmons's approach to grievances in chapter 2 of this book). In the Chilean context, however, they activated meanings—such as the similarities between the current educational establishment and Pinochet's dictatorship, or the injustice of educational institutions profiting at the expense of the working classes—that fueled student discontent and motivated collective action. By taking to the streets

and seizing educational buildings, students shook a civil society that had remained quiescent since the time of the democratic transition.

While policy shaped the student movement, the opposite happened too. The 2006 campaign was one of the main drivers behind the approval of four bills that introduced some changes to the system, and the 2011 campaign forced President Piñera to correct the more abusive aspects, such as interest rates, of the educational loans policy. Perhaps more importantly, the three major reforms (education, tax, and the constitution) announced by President Bachelet during her second term (2014–18) stemmed, either directly or indirectly, from students' demands.

Yet the student movement also contributed to a major realignment of political forces. Its demands helped to push the Concertación coalition to the left through the incorporation of the Communist Party—thus giving birth to the New Majority coalition that ruled Chile between 2014 and 2018. Ranging from the centrist Christian Democrats to the Communists, the New Majority experienced internal polarization, and it formally disappeared by the 2017 elections, which were won by the political right. Perhaps more importantly, the entry of former student leaders into Congress after the 2013 election signaled the beginnings of a new political force, the Frente Amplio, which combines several small leftist parties and movements that oppose the neoliberal model, and which, as of 2019, stands as the third largest political force in Chile. Their ambition is far-reaching. In the words of Giorgio Jackson, former student leader and currently a member of Parliament: “for a long time, we were told that discontent should be expressed in the demonstrations, and that we could go home then . . . that they would undertake the changes that Chile needs. . . . But if they have not been able to address existing corruption and injustice, we have to take politics in our own hands” (El Mostrador 2017).

NOTES

- 1 This was the slogan of the 2006 student mobilization.
- 2 We wish to acknowledge the support of a FONDECYT grant (CONICYT FONDECYT Regular 1160308) and the support of the Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies (CONICYT FONDAP 15130009).
- 3 The evidence for this paragraph comes from Tele 13 (2015).
- 4 The original idea was, in fact, to mobilize in 2010, but an earthquake put a full stop to that plan.
- 5 This is a data set covering about 2,300 protest events that took place across Chile between 2000 and 2012. It is based on the Chronologies of the Protest of CLACSO (Centro Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales), which gathers protest news from multiple sources. See Somma and Medel (2018) for details.
- 6 See the Latin American Public Opinion Project, available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>.

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