

Becoming “Like Skin”:  
The Chilean Student Movement and the Making of Radical Student Subjectivity

An Honors Thesis for the Department of Sociology

Lucas M. Koerner

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## GLOSSARY

ACES: “Coordinating Assembly of Secondary Students”

Cabros: Informal Chilean expression meaning “kids”.

Cachai: Informal Chilean expression meaning, “you got it?”

Carabineros: Chile’s militarized national police force.

CONFECH: Coordinating assembly of the Chilean university student federations

CRUC: “Counsel of Rectors of the Chilean Universities”; term denoting group of elite public and private universities, including the University of Chile, University of Santiago, and Pontificia Catholic University

FECH: “Student Federation of the University of Chile”; oldest and most prestigious student federation in the country

Jota: Informal name for the Communist Youth [*Juventudes Comunistas*, J.J.C.C.]

LGE: “General Law of Education” enacted to replace the LOCE

Liceo: Term for the Chilean equivalent of a four-year high school

LOCE: “Organic Constitutional Law of Education”

MAPU: “United Popular Action Movement”; Marxist splinter faction from Christian Democrats

MIR: “Revolutionary Left Movement”, most radical member of Popular Unity coalition

O sea: common expression meaning “in other words”

Pacos: Informal, highly derogatory expression for the Carabineros of Chile

PC: “Communist Party”

Peña: grass-roots community meeting place where popular folklore (usually Nueva Canción) and other artistic expressions accompanied by food and drink are showcased

PDC: “Christian Democrat Party”

PPD: “Party for Democracy”, a political vehicle created by the Socialist Party in the context of the 1988 plebiscite, but would subsequently an independent political party within the Concertación

Pingüino: Term for Chilean secondary students because of their black and white uniforms; I will use this term only to refer to the generation of secondary students that participated in the Penguin Revolution of 2006

Población: Chilean version of informally constructed community or shantytown; many were formed in the 1950s and 1960s through illegal land occupations

PS: “Socialist Party”

Secundario: A term for secondary students

SurDa: autonomist political movement founded in Chilean universities in the 1990s

Toma: “Occupation”, in this context referring to schools

Universitario: A term for university student

UDI: “Independent Democratic Union”; far-right party formed under the military dictatorship to carry forward the agenda of Pinochet in the electoral arena

## INTRODUCTION

The year is 2011. Hundreds of thousands of students are mobilized throughout the country. Hundreds of high schools and universities have been *tomados*, occupied for months at a time. Weekly marches through downtown Santiago draw tens of thousands. The Chilean students have revolted. Yet only eighteen years prior, the movement was in total disarray. The chief university student federation in the country, the FECH, passed out of existence for the year. Pinochet was still commander-in-chief of the armed forces and a climate of fear pervaded Chilean society. Social movements appeared non-existent. What changed over those eighteen years? How did the Chilean student movement reconstitute itself as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century social force that it is today? The answer is the subject of this thesis.

In the pages that follow, I will argue that the Chilean student movement reconstituted itself by developing a grassroots “assemblist” logic that while drawing on the legacy of the traditional Left as a critical ideological referent, nonetheless marked a departure from the more hierarchical, vanguardist organizational forms that characterized the latter. Throughout, I underscore the role of popular culture, particularly punk and hip hop subcultures, as an alternative “circuit of socialization” for this new popular Left. I contend that popular culture, oral tradition, and direct experience form a kind of “organic ideology” that provides the scaffolding for more systematic political critique. In this vein, I argue that the key protagonists in this process are grassroots *colectivos* that often emerge from these subcultures and are critical in synthesizing this “organic ideology” with elements of radical Left theory to form new forms of political praxis.

## Data

I conducted a total of twenty-four interviews during my year abroad in Chile. I recruited these subjects through a combination of personal networks and snowball sampling. I drew most of my *pingüino* interviewees from the following places: students I met at Campus Juan Gómez Millas of the university of Chile, my personal friend group of students from Pudahuel, students whom I met through a salsa class at the Metropolitan University of Pedagogical Sciences, as well as students I worked with at my internship with the Center of Studies of the CEFECH. In the case of my subjects who were secondary students in the 1990s, I recruited the majority through Pia Lombardo, the head of International Studies at the University of Chile as well as through my host family. In many of these cases I found additional subjects through snowballing. Given that this was largely a convenience sample, it is in no way representative of the Chilean population. My sample for *pingüinos* probably over-represents working class people with political backgrounds, while my sample for people who were secondary students in the 1990s over-represents middle class people with university degrees. Given the constraints of the latter and the fact that most of these subjects did not have histories of comprehensive political involvement, I ultimately decided not to use all but two of this second set of interviews (i.e. my interviews with Luis Thielemann and with Victor Orellana).

For the *pingüinos* that I interviewed, the majority are students at the University of Chile or the Metropolitan University of the Pedagogical Sciences who studied at *emblemáticos* or charter schools. Most come from working class and lower middle class backgrounds and live in municipalities to the south or west of Santiago such as Pudahuel, Cerro Navia, la Florida, Maipú, Renca, Quinta Normal, among others. Under ideal circumstances, I would have done 50-100 in depth interviews of *pingüinos*, recruiting students from all the schools in the Santiago

metropolitan area that had a *toma* in 2006. I similarly would have done 25-50 in depth interviews of university student leaders in the '90s, including people like Rodrigo Rocco, as well as the other secondary student leaders who founded the ACES such as Julio Reyes.

In addition to my primary sources, this thesis is informed by three main bodies of literature, namely gramscian theory of social change, social movements literature, and literature specific to Chile, which I will review in the next chapter. As I also note, I also draw on some “non-academic” sources such as the booklet produced by the CEFECH’s School of Student Action, for whom I interned in Spring 2013.

### **Chapter Outline**

Chapter I is a literature review of the three bodies of literature mentioned above. In Chapter II, I will look at the reconstruction of the university student movement over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s, contextualizing its rise in the history of the Chilean transition and highlighting the progressive radicalization of its demands. Chapter III will examine the reconstitution of the secondary student movement from the late 1990s through the Penguin Revolution of 2006. I will pay extensive attention to the new youth subcultures that form the foundation for the ACES’ unique organizational logic whose development I will trace through the *mochilazo* of 2001 to the Penguin Revolution of 2006. In the final chapter, I will discuss the mass student revolt known as the “Chilean Winter” in 2011, analyzing it in the context of the overall trajectory of the movement.

### **Acknowledgements**

First, I want to express my deep gratitude to Luis Thielemann, a colleague and comrade at the University of Chile, for all of his patience and solidarity in helping me to develop my ideas regarding the history of the movement. Next, I want to deeply thank all of my interviewees,

especially Nicole, Harry, Camilo, María Paz, Roberto, and Santiago who are the flesh and blood of this thesis, to whom I owe everything. I also want to thank Gonzalo Winter, Camila Fernanda Miranda Medina, and all of the people at the CEFECH for their enduring, comradely support, both during the time of my internship and beyond. Lastly, I want to thank all of my thesis advisors for their immense patience and support, without which, there likewise would be no thesis.

## CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this thesis, I draw on three principal bodies of theory to ground my arguments. First, my work is informed by the Gramscian theory of social change, which includes various concepts such as “common sense” and “good sense”, “hegemony” and “counter-hegemony”, as well as Althusser’s notion of “Ideological State Apparatuses”. Second, my arguments are shaped by social movements theory, including the work of Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, Robert Benford, and David Snow from whom I draw such concepts as “social appropriation”, “identity shift”, “collective framing processes”, “tactical innovation”, and “tactical adaptation”. In a similar vein, I also draw on Michele Lamont’s concept of “symbolic boundaries”. Lastly, this thesis is heavily indebted to scholarship specific to Chile both by Chileans and others, including social history, sociology, and political economy. In the pages that follow, I will review these branches of literature, focusing on the concepts that have supported my work.

### **Gramscian Theory of Social Change**

Gramsci’s (1971) theory of hegemony must be situated in the context of the post-World War I failure of socialist revolution in Western Europe. In the 1920s and 1930s, numerous theorists, including Lukacs, Korsch, Reich, and the early Frankfurt School, working under the rubric of “neo-Hegelian Marxism” sought to develop explanations for the lack of revolutionary consciousness among the Western European working class (Boggs, 1984, p. 155). However, in contrast to these other theories that employed a negative concept of ideology as “false consciousness” to explain the complacency of the proletariat, Gramsci redefined ideology as a field of contention where class struggle first unfolds before it becomes manifest at the political and economic levels. Gramsci (1971) argues that the answer lies in the fact that the bourgeoisie in the West has imposed its hegemony in the ideological arena, enabling it to rule through the

“‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses”, whereas the more backwards autocratic states of the East govern through “direct domination” (p. 145).<sup>1</sup> This “consent” must be continually reproduced by a series of institutions—the parliament, the mass media, the family, churches, and the school, among others—which Althusser (2014) would later term “Ideological State Apparatuses” (ISAs). Gramsci (1971) compares these institutions to “the trench-systems of modern warfare” in their role of maintaining bourgeois class power, rendering it “resistant to the catastrophic ‘incursions’ of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc.)” (p. 235). However, Gramsci (1971) stresses that these spaces are always dynamically contended<sup>2</sup> and that the only viable revolutionary strategy in the West is, following the military analogy, a “war of position” in which the subaltern classes set about building alternative institutions capable of generating revolutionary consciousness that forms the foundation for a counter-hegemonic project. If bourgeois hegemony is successfully eroded, the power bloc—Gramsci’s term for the faction of the dominant classes that controls the state—is increasingly forced to resort to “direct domination”, which can take the form of “passive revolution”, namely “elite-engineered social and political reform” (Adamson, 1980, p. 186). For instance, the neoliberal counter-revolution instituted under Pinochet in Chile might be considered a “passive revolution” that responded to the “crisis of authority” of the Chilean ruling classes.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebdige (1979) offers a more comprehensive definition of hegemony: “The term hegemony refers to a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert ‘total social authority’ over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by ‘winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural’” (p. 16).

<sup>2</sup> “Hegemony . . . is not universal and ‘given’ to the continuing rule of a particular class. It has to be won, reproduced, sustained. Hegemony is, as Gramsci said, a ‘moving equilibrium’ containing relations of forces favourable or unfavourable to this or that tendency” (Hall et al., 1976 cited in Hebdige, 1979).

Unlike most orthodox Marxist theorists who relegate political education to a task for after the revolution, Gramsci (1971) by contrast emphasizes the building of revolutionary consciousness as an indispensable antecedent to the revolutionary seizure of political power (Adamson, 1980). Moreover, unlike Lenin, Gramsci (1971) does not endorse an ironclad binary between “trade union consciousness” and socialist consciousness, the latter necessarily introduced “from without” by a revolutionary vanguard party. Rather, Gramsci (1971) employs the more dynamic concept of “common sense”, which he defines in the following manner:

Every philosophical current leaves behind a sedimentation of “common sense”: this is the document of its historical effectiveness. Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. “Common sense” is the folklore of philosophy, and is always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science, and economics of the specialists (p. 326).

Therefore, unlike Lukacs’ notion of “false consciousness”, “common sense” is not a priori identified with bourgeois hegemony, but itself constitutes an open field of struggle, containing both ideas, images, and symbols that legitimate the dominant order as well as others that are potentially subversive. Gramsci (1971) distinguishes “common sense” from “good sense”, which is the capacity for critical reflection grounded in empirical reality and informed by elements of “formal” ideology. However, unlike the concepts of class consciousness/false consciousness and trade union consciousness/socialist consciousness, the distinction between “common sense” and “good sense” is not a straight-jacketing dichotomy. Rather, these concepts simply denote fluid moments in a dialectical process of politicization: “it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone’s individual life, but of renovating and making

‘critical’ an already existing activity” (p. 330-331). In this way, revolutionary change is not an eventuality projected to some distant horizon identified with the appearance of the vanguard, but is a praxis in the here and now:

The emphasis on counter-hegemony as a transcendent project involves a line of thought which does not negate that which exists, but strives to construct, in Gramsci's terms, “good sense” from “common sense” and in this way to prioritize or valorize those elements or features which are (Hunt, 1990, p. 314)

Throughout this work, I employ these gramscian concepts precisely in the historicist sense of the two forming moments in the same dynamic praxis.

Moreover, as the “folklore of philosophy”, “common sense” consists both of what Rude (1980) terms “popular ideology”, namely beliefs shaped by “direct experience, oral tradition or folk-memory” as well as itinerant fragments of ideology in the traditional sense of “structured system[s] of ideas” (p. 28). In this thesis, I pay special attention to the role that popular ideology, particularly music and popular culture, plays as a kind of scaffolding for elements of more formal radical Left ideologies. In other words, I argue that punk and hip hop youth counter-cultures form, in the words of one of my interviewees, a kind of alternative “circuit of socialization” in which elements of radical Left ideologies are distilled as part of a hybrid cultural praxis that forges “good sense” out of “common sense”. Critical to this cultural praxis are “organic intellectuals” whom Gramsci (1971) defines in the following way:

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals to give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields (p. 135).

Every class therefore produces its own “organic intellectuals” who play an instrumental role in forging “good sense” out of “common sense”. However, following Marx’s maxim that the “educator must also be educated”, “organic intellectuals” are not divorced from the masses but rather “the two elements can coalesce into what Gramsci calls an “intellectual/moral bloc” (Adamson, 1980, p. 145). In the context of this politico-cultural praxis, we might think of “organic intellectuals” as cultural workers in the freirean sense who might be organizing students as part of a *colectivo* in a peripheral high school, or playing in a band for a *población*, or organizing a community assembly. We might even view *colectivos* as “crucibles where the unification of theory and practice, understood as a real historical process, takes place” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 335). That is, like the Turin factory councils that inspired Gramsci, the *colectivos* are spaces where the distinctions between the “intellectuals” and the “masses” wither away, giving way to an “intellectual/moral bloc” (Adamson, 1980, p. 145). These gramscian concepts will prove a useful lens for evaluating the transformation of Chilean student consciousness over the past two decades.

### **Social Movements Literature**

This work is also informed by social movements theory, particularly the model of “contentious politics” developed by Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly in their ambitious revisionist work *Dynamics of Contention*. Seeking to radically revise the fundamental premises of their “political process model”, these theorists endeavored to rethink the relationship between structure and movement identity, discarding their prior more uni-directional, structuralist approach for one that emphasizes reciprocal construction. At the center of their older model was the concept of “political opportunity structure”, namely the existing political climate with its concomitant, historically-shaped opportunities and threats, which can vary on a

spectrum from “open” to “closed” (Johnston, 2011). In the political process model, it was generally assumed that the possibility of contentious political action was determined by the threats and/or opportunities present in the given conjuncture. Conversely, in their later work, McAdam et al. (2001) argue that these threats and opportunities are only determinate inasmuch as they are *perceived* by social movement actors and are in this way socially constructed just like the movements themselves. Therefore, the “objective” fact that the return to civilian rule has dramatically reduced the costs of mobilization for Chilean secondary students under the age of 18 is not in itself consequential unless these same actors perceive this changed political opportunity structure and take advantage of the new opportunities for contentious mobilization.

Another important concept developed by McAdam et al (2001) is the notion of “social appropriation” in which “would-be activists (members no less than challengers and subjects) must either create an organizational vehicle or utilize an existing one and transform it into an instrument of contention” (p. 47). We will see this concept in action in the case of the formation of *colectivos* or in the takeover of student federations by these same *colectivos* who subsequently transform them to suit their purposes. Central to the process of social appropriation is the drawing of “symbolic boundaries”, which are “tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality” (Lamont & Molnar, 2002, p. 168). That is, the very process of forging an “instrument of contention” presupposes the construction of a group identity, which necessarily implies the drawing of a distinction between “in-group” and “out-group”, between “us” and “them” (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). McAdam et al. (2001) call this procedure of constructing movement identity through the drawing of boundaries, “category formation”. As we will see later, the Chilean university movement constructed its identity by

drawing strong boundaries with the Concertación, which was delegitimized by virtue of its association with the constructed category of *pinochetismo*.

The drawing of symbolic boundaries is implicitly bound up with the process of collective framing (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). Snow and Benford (1992) define frames as “an interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (p. 137). In this way, demands must be framed in such a way that they resonate with how the bases of the movement conceive of their group identity. For instance, to continue with the example offered above, without the process of category formation in which the university students defined themselves as *anti-pinochetista*, they would not have been willing to march against the LOCE, the neoliberal educational law dictated by Pinochet on his last day in power, which was framed as the pillar of *pinochetismo* in the university.

However, the framing of demands can also shape the construction of movement identity. The introduction of a new movement demand can take the form of a “master frame” that functions as “an interpretive medium through which collective actors associated with different movements within a cycle assign blame for a problem they are attempting to ameliorate” (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 139). At the opportune moment, a new master frame can offer “a simple but concrete solution” to what is perceived to be a problem, which in turn can pave the way for collective action (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 143). We might, for example, regard the demand for the derogation of the LOCE in 2006 as such a master frame that placed systematic reform of the neoliberal educational system firmly on the agenda in such a way that galvanized students across the country to take to the streets. However, these students would not have been receptive to this demand if it were not for the bottom-up processes of identity construction in which they developed some level of consciousness of neoliberalism in the context of their own lived

experience. Thus, collective framing practices and the processes of group identity construction must be seen in dialectical inter-relation.

Lastly, I borrow from McAdam's (1983) concepts of "tactical innovation" and "tactical adaptation". In "tactical innovation", movements seek to "bypass routine decision-making channels and seek, through use of non-institutionalized tactics, to force their opponents to deal with them outside the established arenas within which the latter derive so much of their power" (McAdam, 1983, p. 735). The idea then is for movements to develop tactics that "disrupt their opponent's realization of interests to such an extent that the cessation of the offending tactic becomes a sufficient inducement to grant concessions" (McAdam, 1983, p. 735-36). We can consider the student movement's explosive use of the *toma* in 2006 or weekly mass marches through the business district in 2011 as instances of tactical innovation. Evidently, elites constantly seek to develop new repressive repertoires that effectively counter the tactical innovations employed by social movements, in what McAdam (1983) terms "tactical adaptation". For instance, the Chilean Carabineros increasingly frequent and violent practice of evicting students from occupied schools represents a conscious strategy to reduce the costs associated with student *tomas*. Tactical innovation and tactical adaptation must be seen as always acting in concert in what McAdam (1983) terms "tactical interaction" in which elites and social movements attempt to counter each others' moves "in chess-like fashion" (p. 736).

### **Literature on Chile**

First, I draw on Chilean social history, particularly the work of Gabriel Salazar, who was one of a number of radical Leftist militants that were exiled in Britain and learned from the approaches to social history developed by E.P. Thompson and others, which they subsequently brought back to Chile. In particular, I utilize Salazar's (2002) concept of "autonomous processes of cultural identity creation" in which the subaltern develop their own cultural practices of

resistance to the hegemonic culture (p. 238). Salazar (2002) develops this concept in the context of his discussion of the role of “New Song” and subsequently punk and hip in articulating resistance to the Chilean state on the part of *pobladores* and other groups. I aim to extend this line of inquiry by looking at the role of autonomous cultural practices in the construction of the Chilean student movement. More specifically, to what extent does the Chilean student movement grow out of a new Left popular culture that is different from that of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Left?

Second, my work is also deeply indebted to Chilean sociology. My chapter on the university student movement of the transition would have been impossible without Victor Muñoz Tamayo’s (2011) seminal work comparing the university youths and political Lefts of Chile and Mexico. In *Generaciones*, he traces the evolution of the FECH from its refounding in the 1980s through the early 2000s, distinguishing between the different political generations on the basis of their demands, strategic repertoires, and constructed identities. For instance, he contrasts the Concertación-dominated movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s with the Communist-led movement of the late 1990s, while underscoring the continuity in terms of the historic demand for differential tuition. Muñoz Tamayo (2011) similarly contextualizes the abandonment of this historic demand in 2005, which provides a valuable point of departure for discussing the Penguin Revolution and the “Chilean Winter”. I adopt his generational approach in order to compare the university Left of the 1990s with new generation of secondary student politics in the early 2000s, which I in turn compare with the generation of the *pingüinos*. In this endeavor, I also drew heavily on the work of Moraga Valle (2006), who offers an incredibly rich history of the university movement of the 1990s, which proved especially helpful in contextualizing this movement in the broader historical and political contexts, namely the neoliberal educational model inherited from Pinochet and the role played by the Concertación in administering it.

Moreover, this work also draws on the work of Chilean sociologist Carlos Ruiz whose work on the class composition of the student movement is indispensable. He demonstrates that in contrast to the elite traditional universities of the CRUC, non-selective private universities, professional institutes, and technical centers take on students from lower middle class backgrounds, most of whom are first-generation college students. Ruiz (2014) makes the case that these students represent a “new middle class” in contrast to the old middle class linked to the state bureaucracy and public universities. I argue that, for this reason, these students do not respond to the cultural pattern of the traditional Chilean Left and are therefore drawn to the new “circuit of socialization” developed by the Chilean student movement, a latter concept which I draw from one of my interviewees Victor Orellana.

Though an academic at the University of Chile, Ruiz is himself a longtime political militant and is considered the principal theoretician of the SurDa whose tradition lives on today in the form of the Izquierda Autónoma [Autonomous Left]. In fact, the only reason I acquired Ruiz’s latest book is because it was spontaneously emailed to me by one of my comrades within the Izquierda Autónoma. For this reason, these sources cannot be viewed as strictly academic in some insulated, ivory tower sense, for these individuals, though affiliated with the academy, are totally immersed in radical politics. Without doubt, I would have no thesis without the various concepts that I borrow from my interviews with Luis Thielemann and Victor Orellana, both of whom are also academics as well as former militants of the SurDa. These individuals also shaped my thinking in the course of my engagement with their lectures delivered at the School of Student Action operated by the Izquierda Autónoma out of the Center of Studies of the FECH, for whom I interned in Spring 2013. In particular, Luis Thielemann’s lecture periodizing the student movement between 1990 and 2011 proved incredibly helpful, which was published in the

School of Student Action booklet that I cite in my work. In this same vein, my work is informed by the many good Chilean friends I made who are militants in anarchist *colectivos*, many of whom ended up serving as interview subjects. In particular, I am indebted to Nicole, Camilo, and others for introducing me to Chilean underground hip hop, which itself forms a text that is indispensable for understanding the autonomous cultural processes of the student movement.

In the domain of anthropology, Clara Han's (2012) *Life in Debt* offers an important ethnographic window into how marginalized people make sense of the neoliberal system that overdetermines every aspect of their existence. I particularly draw on her description of *pobladores'* use of the word "torture" in everyday speech as a means of politicizing their seemingly apolitical social conditions in order to reveal the structural violence of neoliberalism. I argue that students similarly become radicalized by politicizing their conditions of daily life. I ground this argument in Hernandez Santibañez's (2013) interviews with secondary student leaders, drawing especially on their descriptions of the processes of establishing *colectivos* in schools on the periphery of Santiago, which I substantiate with my own case studies.

Lastly, this work depends heavily on the immense scholarship on the Chilean transition and neoliberalism. First, I draw on Fazio (1996, 2010), Petras et al. (1994), and Taylor's (2006) political economic work on the appropriation and reinvention of the neoliberal model inherited from Pinochet by the Concertación. Following the ideological conversion of their leaders, I will show that the parties of the Concertación sought to implement neoliberalism with a human face. Moreover, I also heavily consult Felipe Portales' (2000) work on the political pacts negotiated by the Concertación, in which it consented to govern with the constitutional framework bequeathed by Pinochet, resulting in a "protected democracy". Please refer to the beginning of the next

chapter for a more comprehensive discussion of these authors' work in the context of the history of the period.

CHAPTER II: RESURGENCE AND REBELLION IN *LA UNIVERSIDAD PINOCHETISTA*,  
1990-2005

Before narrating the rebirth of the Chilean student movement in the 1990s, it is critical to situate it in the context of a transition to civilian rule led by the parties of the Concertación. Here I will begin by underscoring the fact that the Chilean transition was a “pacted” one insofar as it represented the outcome of negotiations between the “reform elites” of the Concertación and the military junta, culminating in the plebiscite of 1988, which preceded the first free election in seventeen years in 1990 that heralded a new epoch of civilian rule (Petras et al., 1994; Ruiz, 2014). These compromises represented an abandonment of the commitment to convene a constituent assembly to form a new constitution articulated by the parties of Acción Democrática (later Concertación of Parties for Democracy) upon its formation in 1983 at the height of the anti-dictatorial protests of that epoch (Portales, 2000). This rightward shift of the Concertación of course only came after the 1986 defeat both of the radical Left parties in their strategy to overthrow the dictatorship through armed struggle<sup>3</sup> as well as of the popular social movements attempting to force a democratic transition from below, which arguably left the Concertación with no choice other than to accept a negotiated transition (Petras et al., 1994; Winn, 2004). The first of these “pacts” was of course political: the Concertación consented to govern within a political framework inherited from the military dictatorship, namely the Constitution of 1980, which contained many authoritarian provisions designed to circumscribe the powers of the new civilian government, producing a “guarded democracy [*democracia tutelada*]” or “protected

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<sup>3</sup> The failure of the strategy of armed struggle was evident after the twin events of the discovery of a large Communist arms cache in the northern desert by the regime as well as the failed assassination attempt on Pinochet’s motorcade by the Manuel Rodríguez Popular Front (FPMR) in September 1986 (Winn, 2004). These defeats and failures “spelled the end of armed struggle as a realistic political alternative in Chile” (Winn, 2004, p. 45).

democracy” (Moulian, 2002; Portales, 2000). The Constitution of 1980 contained various “authoritarian enclaves” (Garretón, 2003), which include the presence of nine “designated senators” appointed by the military and other non-representative bodies intended to “assure the integral *pinochetista* composition of the upper house” (Article 45) as well as the unremovable status of Pinochet as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and after his retirement senator-for-life, (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011; Portales, 2000, p. 40, translation mine).

The Concertación did nonetheless obtain some important victories in its negotiations with the Right, such as the reform of Article 45 increasing the number of elected senators from 26 to 38, the repeal of the article barring Marxists from politics, the elimination of censorship restrictions, the dismantling of many authoritarian powers possessed by the President of the Republic such as the power to “restrict the freedom of information” and power to expel people from the country, the elimination of restrictions on political party militants serving as union leaders, as well as parity of civilians and the military in the National Security Council (Portales, 2000, p. 41, translation mine; Winn, 2004). However, none of these reforms fundamentally altered the “authoritarian enclaves” that form the foundation of a constitution that is inherently “authoritarian and pseudo-democratic” (Portales, 2000, p. 40; Winn, 2004). Moreover, in the course of these negotiations, the Concertación inadvertently contributed to the limiting of its powers, accepting the repeal of Articles 65 and 68 of the Constitution of 1980, which together specified the conditions for the passage of a law, namely a simple majority in one house and a third of the other house. These articles were written with the expectation that Pinochet would win the plebiscite of 1988, enabling him to govern with a majority in the Senate thanks to the presence of designated senators and a third of the deputies. With the victory of Concertación in the plebiscite and assured victory in the 1990 election, these constitutional provisions threatened,

rather ironically, to empower the future Aylwin government. The Concertación consented to the reform of these articles in what amounted to an enormous political concession (Portales, 2000). In sum, the plebiscite of 1988 and subsequent transition represented a kind of “devil’s bargain” in which the Concertación was allowed to govern in exchange for accepting the Constitución of 1980 as well as all of the presidential decrees issued by Pinochet during his final days and weeks in office, including the Organic Constitutional Law of Education (LOCE) governing the privatization of education, the Bank Law guaranteeing the autonomy of the Central Bank, and the binomial electoral law designed to facilitate the overrepresentation of the rightwing parties (Portales, 2000; Taylor, 2006; Winn, 2004, p. 49).

In the judicial arena, “the institutional weight of the armed forces limited the advance of human rights causes,” which was manifested in the upholding of all of the decrees of the junta, including the Amnesty Law of 1978 that secured the immunity of the entire military establishment from prosecution (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 120, translation mine; Portales, 2000). Nonetheless, the Concertación did achieve a substantial advance with the publication of the Rettig Commission’s report on disappearance and execution that for the first time confirmed the political killing of 2,279 persons by the military junta (Han, 2012). However, at the behest of the military, the names of the perpetrators of state repression were not released, which in the context of the Amnesty Law and *pinochetista*-controlled judicial system, “added to the criminal impunity, the moral impunity, and also very probably the administrative impunity” (Petras, et al., 1994; Portales, 2000, p. 89, translation mine). This was a powerful illustration of the policy of “justice within limits” upheld by the government of Patricio Aylwin (Taylor, 2006, p 118). Nonetheless, another important stride in human rights came in 2005 with the publication of the

Valech Report that documented the detention and torture of 38,254 people during the dictatorship (Han, 2012).

Whereas it has been argued that the above “authoritarian enclaves” were forced upon the Concertación as inescapable consequences of transition in the context of a “strong” authoritarian regime, there can, however, be little doubt that in the area of the economy, Concertación elites willingly embraced the neoliberal model forged under military rule both on its own terms (Fazio, 1996; Fazio & Parada, 2010; Petras, et al., 1994) and as a strategy to retain investor confidence and thereby stave off the threat of authoritarian reversal encouraged by the business elites (Winn, 2004). This new-found celebratory acclaim of the model by leading intellectuals of the Socialist and Christian Democratic parties, such as Alejandro Foxley, Edgardo Boeninger, and Eugenio Tironi, among others, can be traced to a process of ideological “renovation” undergone by the leadership of the former as well as the leftwing splinter factions of the latter, particularly in the context of their exile in Europe (Hite, 2000; Motta, 2007; Petras, et al., 1994). Caught in the midst of the decline and eventual collapse of “really existing socialism” as well as the crisis of the Western European radical leftwing parties, especially the Communist Party of Italy, a great many of these intellectuals abandoned their Leninist convictions and affiliations and embraced a more reformist brand of parliamentary consensus politics inspired, in the words of former Communist intellectual and PPD deputy Antonio Leal, as much in Gramsci as in “Gorbachev, Brandt, Blair, and in some ways, Clinton” (Hite, 2000, p. 144). Moreover, faced with the undeniable success of Chile’s neoliberal model after its post-1983 recovery from economic crisis, these intellectuals were gradually won over to the “modernizing” vision of the Chicago Boys they had previously condemned so vituperatively (Petras, et al., 1994).

However, as Taylor (2006) notes, this pledge to maintain continuity with the neoliberal model did not entail a carbon copy of Pinochet-style neoliberalism” (p. 114). Rather, as captured in the slogan of “Growth with Equity”, the Concertación sought to practice a kind of neoliberalism with a more “human face” (Petras, et al., 1994). That is, like Tony Blair’s “New Labour” in Britain, they sought to chart a “third way” between free market capitalism and social democracy, combining a commitment to neoliberal reforms promoting sustained economic growth with “focalized” welfare programs designed to correct “market failures” by assisting the most marginalized sectors of society (Hernandez Santibañez, 2013; Taylor, 2006). In negotiating this “third way”, the governments of the Concertación were largely successful, at least initially. In addition to maintaining an average annual growth rate of 7.7 percent and lowering inflation to 6.1 percent annually, the Concertación also managed to reduce unemployment to 6.1 percent as well as slash the 45 percent poverty rate inherited from Pinochet in half (Winn, 2004).

Nevertheless, the shock waves of the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, the Brazilian crisis of 1998-99, and the Argentine crisis of 2000-01 represented a rude awakening that marked the unceremonious end of the “Chilean miracle”, revealing the deep contradictions of the model (Winn, 2004). Indeed, while it did successfully reduce poverty to a record low, the Concertación’s macroeconomic policy increased social inequality to levels outstripping those of the Pinochet era, making Chile the second most unequal country in the region, whereas in 1972 it occupied the position of most equal (Fazio & Parada, 2010; Winn, 2004). As Aylwin’s Minister of Finance Alejandro Foxley explains, this stems from the fact that, “although the condition of 20% of the poor improved substantially in those years, there was no substantial transformation in the distribution of income in the country, that continued to be fairly concentrated” (Fazio & Parada, 2010; translation mine). In other words, the returns on Chile’s stellar economic growth

were not redistributed, but were concentrated at the top, producing a situation of “Two Chiles” (Winn, 2004, p. 56), in which the Chilean economy “is split between a high technology, oligopolistic export sector that is controlled by the large Chilean economic conglomerates and foreign transnational corporations; and a low technology, low wage competitive sector of small and medium firms in the Chilean industrial sector (Taylor, 2006, p. 133). This deepening inequality was in part the outcome of the Concertación’s compromise with the rightwing National Renewal (RN)<sup>4</sup> party on the maintenance of the highly regressive tax structure inherited from Pinochet, which justified on the grounds of staving off the menace of “populism”, the new bogeyman that had conveniently replaced “socialism” (Fazio, 1996; Fazio & Parada, 2010; Winn, 2004). This inequality also reflected the Concertación’s perpetuation of the *pinochetista* regime of “flexibilized” labor relations in which continued wage repression and precarious employment ensured that workers did not reap proportionate gains in productivity and draconian restrictions on labor organizing hindered the rejuvenation of the labor movement (Petras, et al., 1994; Winn, 2004).

The decision to embrace the neoliberal model as well as govern within the framework of the Constitution of 1980 produced a new technocratic “politics within limits” [*en la medida de lo posible*] in which politics was redefined as a “technical” activity of negotiating consensus among competing “experts” to the exclusion of any substantive debate of real sociopolitical alternatives to the neoliberal status quo (Mouffe, 2005; Moulian, 2002; Petras, et al., 1994; Taylor, 2006). The outcome of this “technocratization” of politics was of course a deep depoliticization in which the bases of society historically represented by political parties according to a traditional populist-clientelist logic found themselves increasingly alienated from

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<sup>4</sup> Whereas the RN represents big business, the other rightwing party, the Independent Democratic Union (UDI), has more of a rightwing populist orientation.

institutional politics (Ruiz, 2014). However, the immediate effect of the ascension of technocratic Concertación administration in the early 1990s was a near total demobilization of the social and political forces mobilized in the course of the struggle against the military dictatorship. First, the leftwing political parties of the Popular Democratic Movement, including the Communist Party (PC) and the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), were notably excluded from the intra-elite compromises that defined the transition. With this foreclosure on the possibility of a leftwing solution to the social and political crisis of the early to mid 1980s, the *poblador* social movement, which represented the most formidable grassroots force confronting the military dictatorship, demobilized in the course of the transition to civilian government in the 1990s. The last flickering ember of this movement was the Lautaro Youth Movement, which was an armed grassroots movement based in the *poblaciones* on the model of the Manuel Rodríguez Popular Front that refused to accept the outcome of pacted transition and continued fighting, only to be subsequently liquidated by the new Concertación government (Salazar, 2002).

It is critical to underscore that this demobilization was part and parcel of a strategy of “negotiated transition” undertaken by the Christian Democratic and Socialist Parties, who, after mobilizing the majority of the country to vote against Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite that stunned the overly confident regime (Winn, 2004, p. 45), sought to bring about stability by confining politics to formal institutional channels. Demobilization was thus viewed as a necessary step for restoring governability in a political context still dominated by the lingering presence of Pinochet, which served to produce a certain chilling effect, conjuring the threat of authoritarian reversal as a shadow hanging over the first two Concertación governments. For instance, in 1993, Pinochet mobilized the elite black berets and tanks in the streets for an impromptu “exercise” in response to inquiries into his son’s finances, and similarly made thinly

veiled threats of a coup if anybody “touched a hair on the head of his men” in the context of the discussion on human rights opened by the Rettig Report (Portales, 2000). Consequently, the Concertación desperately struggled to win the confidence of economic elites (Winn, 2004) and thereby stave off the looming menace of authoritarian reversal, seeking to maintain a tight lid on social demands from below, particularly from labor (Fazio & Parada, 2010; Petras, et al., 1994; Ruiz, 2014). Therefore, at least until 1997, social mobilization would be successfully repressed by the Concertación, delegitimized by virtue of its alleged association with *pinochetismo*. That is, those who continued to insist on extra-institutional mobilization from below were demonized as “Leninist” holdovers from a bygone revolutionary era that failed to appreciate the character of the “democratic game” as the “only game in town”, thereby endangering the fragile democratic “consensus”.

#### **Transition as Continuity and the Crisis of Leadership, 1990-94**

In the context of the student movement, demobilization entailed a depoliticization of student politics in which the youth wings of the ruling Concertación parties remained at the helm of student federations throughout the country, which were transformed from battlefields in the struggle against the dictatorship to mere stepping stones for career politicians seeking positions in the governments of the Concertación (Moraga Valle, 2006). Owing to their historic role leading the student movement after its reemergence in the course of the anti-dictatorial struggles from 1984 onwards, the Christian Democratic Youth (JDC) retained control of the FECH and other major university federations during the first two years of civilian rule (Moraga Valle, 2006). In 1992, the leadership of the student movement was captured by youth wing of the PS, the center-left coalition partner of the DC, which reflected the increasing weight of the former vis-à-vis the latter in the coalition government and also coincided with the ascension of the

socialist Ricardo Lagos to the post of Minister of Education. However, this shift did little to ameliorate the pending crisis of legitimacy faced by the university student leadership whose lack of autonomy from the ruling parties was evident in its subordination of student social demands to political imperatives based on party loyalty (Moraga Valle, 2006). A similar strategy of cooption was employed against the labor movement, in which all of the leadership of the CUT [*Central Unitario de Trabajadores*] was “drawn primarily from the Concertación parties, embedded in those political networks, and strongly in favor of the new regime’s moderation” (Petras, et al., 1994; Taylor, 2006, p. 108).

This delegitimation of Concertación student leaders must, however, be viewed in the context of the neoliberal turn of the Concertación and the betrayal of its commitments to overturn the neoliberal educational model installed under Pinochet. The neoliberal educational program of Pinochet rested on a pair of laws, the General University Law of 1981 and the Organic Constitutional Education Law (LOCE), which had three important implications for Chilean universities (Moraga Valle, 2006). The first of these reforms was the breaking up of the University of Chile, which under the Popular Unity (UP) government had become a truly *national* university with campuses in major urban centers throughout the provinces, providing higher education virtually free of charge to an unprecedented proportion of the youth of the nation. The Pinochet regime converted these satellite campuses into autonomous sub-universities, while “at the same time leaving this institution [the University of Chile] with a ‘historic debt’, comprising the total debt accrued by these sub-campuses [*sedes*] which found

themselves in a period of growth and institutional consolidation” (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 186, translation mine; Muñoz Tamayo, 2011).<sup>5</sup>

Hand in hand with carving up the public university system, the military regime went about transforming the role of the state from public benefactor to *subsidizing state* [*Estado Subsidiario*], which was tasked with financing private educational establishments designed to “compete” with the public sphere (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 186). This form of private educational entrepreneurship is of course enshrined both in the Constitution of 1980 and under the LOCE as the “freedom of instruction”, which, unlike “freedom of education”, is protected by juridical appeal (Mayol, 2011; Moraga Valle, 2006; OPECH, 2010). Lastly, this expanded subsidizing of privatized education in turn coincided with drastic cuts to public universities that effectively “ended free education and imposed [a new regime of] self-financing by establishing a system of fiscal credit in which students that entered public universities had to pay for education or become indebted to the State” (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 186; translation mine).

These “mercantile counter-reforms” were imposed by means of an authoritarian restructuring of university governance designed to roll back the “democratizing university reforms of 1967 and 1968” (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 97). Under this new structure, the military regime appointed all rectors, who in turn concentrated all decision-making power in their hands, which represented the overturning of these democratizing measures that enshrined the participation of

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<sup>5</sup> “The University of Chile lost its regional campuses at the same time that it was separated from its schools in Santiago that had been particularly active in democratizing student governments and realizing acts of protest against the government. From this point on, two new centers were created in the capital: the Superior Academy of Pedagogical Sciences that would constitute what was the Pedagogy School [*el Pedagógico*]; and the Professional Institute of Santiago plus the departments of Library Sciences and Social Work. These policies were accompanied by repressive measures that meant the expulsion and detention of dozens of students” (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 97; translation mine).

academics, students, and staff in university governance under the banner of “co-government” [*cogobierno*] (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 97).

In this vein, the university student movement of the dictatorship period set itself the dual tasks of resisting “the military intervention in the university and the authoritarian mercantile modernization of the dictatorship” (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 102). In the first instance, the movement demanded “autonomy<sup>6</sup> and the end of delegated rectors”, which was eloquently captured by Carolina Tohá in her vision of a “university governed by university students and not by solidiers” [*una universidad gobernada por los universitarios y no por los militares*] (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 106). On the second count, the student movement demanded “differential tuition” [*arancel diferenciado*] in place of the new privatized system, in which tuition would correspond to ability to pay. Interestingly, this demand was judged to be not only more “concrete” and “realistic” than a return to the free education of the UP period but also more *just* given the “growing elitization of the university” and that “[a system of] no student paying tuition would go against an income redistribution policy, subsidizing in the majority those sectors that could afford to pay for all or part of their studies” (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 105, translation mine).

Nonetheless, it soon became evident from the outset that the new Concertación government had no intention of conceding these historic demands of the student movement. Seeking to maintain the “fiscal discipline” believed to be behind Pinochet’s “economic miracle”, the Concertación did not substantially alter the inherited “subsidizing state” model in which private universities received state subsidies, while public universities ran chronic deficits forcing

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<sup>6</sup> There is a long Latin American tradition of autonomous university governance going back to Cordoba, Argentina. For this reason, the military junta’s measures were perceived as such a violent imposition by the students.

students to take out loans or put their studies on hold (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 121). Moreover, the new Concertación government did not fundamentally alter the authoritarian university governance structure:

Apart from the election of the rector, deans, and directors, the university continued to operate according to the same anterior logic, namely, implementing partial democratic transformations that were not considered [*contempladas*] in the organic statutes of the institutions nor in the legislative agendas of the Congress that recently began to function, where the *pinochetista* Right had great power (Moraga Valle, 2006 p. 192, translation mine).

In fact, under the aegis of the “Marco Law of Universities”, the government not only failed to alter the neoliberal privatized model of self-financing [*autofinancimiento*], but sought to impose new statutes on the public university that did not overturn the prior authoritarian restrictions on the democratic participation of the community in university governance (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011). The political economic status quo of university financing left intact, this deepening of state intrusion into the university would represent a serious source of grievance for the student movement, as powerfully captured in the following slogan written on a 1995 student banner: “Mr. President, if you don’t put up money, don’t ask for shit” [*Señor presidente, si no pone plata, no pida huevás*] (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 121).

In 1992, public university students throughout the country mobilized in a “National Day of Mobilization” demanding the increase of state funding, which was the first in a series of protests on a national scale that would recur annually (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 121). It is important to note that the University of Chile was notoriously the *least* mobilized university in the country during this period due to the fact that it was least hit by state budget cuts (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011), which represented part of a strategy on the part of the State to “avoid problems

with the most conflictive, most organized, and most conscious part of the national student movement” (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 193, translation mine).

In the midst of the mobilization of 1992, it became readily apparent that the youth wings of the Concertación political parties that controlled the provincial student federations hardest hit by the budget crisis were beholden to the political interests of their parties such that they were “incapable of representing the demands of the students” (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 195, translation mine). Luis Thielemann further contextualizes this political schism in the movement:

Look, until 2006 I believe, the student movement divides into great currents; the Concertación would win votes, could win a federation every once in a while but it was not a political current, it didn't have a political proposal. What the Concertación would say depended on the party of the activist. There was no political unity. There wasn't a common discourse. *O sea* [“In other words”], one would take a Christian Democrat from Antofagasta and you put him next to a PPD activist from Valdivia and they say totally different things. The only thing that united them was a defense of the government. They were student organizations that when the CONFECH would call a strike, they would end the strikes but without demanding anything in exchange [*ellos bajaban los paros pero no hacían nada a cambio*]. There wasn't a *concertacionista* proposal for the student movement. It hasn't existed and it doesn't exist up to the present. The two currents with political proposals for the student movement...were the Communist Youth and the SurDa, or more than the SurDa, the Autonomist current...the two were about returning to the public system of education, reinforcing it. The two are anti-neoliberal organizations. The two are organizations critical of the Concertación.

This political schism in the context of the delegitimation of the Concertación student leaders produced a leadership vacuum into which stepped radical left student *colectivos* associated precisely with the above two currents, who “introduced new forms of political-corporate organization, that were less vertical than parties and more transversal in decision-making” (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 195, translation mine). In this moment of dual power in which student federations throughout the country became contested terrain disputed by the radical left and the Concertación youth wings, the “crisis of leadership” was resolved in favor of the former, as Concertación student leaders throughout the country were voted out of office by the student bases (Moraga Valle, 2006, p.198, translation mine). In the case of the University of Chile, the delegitimation of the Socialist Youth’s leadership of the FECH was so great that in the elections of 1993 “almost the entirety of the parties withdrew their lists and there was not a minimum quorum to hold the elections,” causing the leading student federation of the country to literally cease to exist for the 1994 academic year (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 121, translation mine).

### **Revitalization, Resistance, and Rupture, 1995-1997**

By the mid-1990s, we begin to see the configuration of a political scene that is quite different than the first years of the transition. In contrast to the period of 1992-1993 when Pinochet openly deployed the black berets in the streets and issued coup threats, by the second half of the decade public fear is increasingly replaced by social discontent with the neoliberal model, gradually eroding the Concertación’s capacity to hold in check demands from below by pointing to the exigencies of “democratic consolidation”. By 1997, this discontent explodes in the first significant social mobilizations of the transition, which comes in the midst of the Asian financial crisis that produces Chile’s first major economic crisis since 1982, marking the end of the so-called “Chilean miracle”. This sentiment of profound dissatisfaction with the Concertación and

with the depoliticized, market-dominated society that it helped introduce was powerfully expressed in Tomás Moulian's (1997) *Chile Actual La Anatomía de un Mito* [*Contemporary Chile The Anatomy of a Myth*] published the same year, which was the first best-selling book to call into question the Chilean model of neoliberal, "protected democracy". With this context in mind, we will now look at the student struggles of this period.

As we saw above, the crisis of legitimacy of the Concertacionista student leadership reached a kind of zero point by the end of 1993, resulting in the disappearance of many student federations, including the FECH, for the duration of the 1994 academic year. Into this leadership vacuum entered the *colectivos*. In a process of "social appropriation" (McAdam et al, 2001), these radical left *colectivos* took control of student federations and transformed them from political pawns of the Concertación into instruments of struggle in defense of student social demands. However, it must be noted that this did not come about suddenly through elections, in which these *colectivos* took charge of the federations and attempted to insert a new political content into the same organizational form. Rather, this process of "social appropriation" began with the transformation of the organizational form itself with the introduction of new, more horizontal practices of decision making in the heat of the struggle. Luis Thielemann notes,

For me the vision of the student movement is that it was between more or less '93 y '94 when the Concertación leadership collapses in the FECH and when all of the old student movement collapses due to corruption, for a thousand reasons, that the universities begin to be constructed according to a different format [*con otro formato*]. *O sea*, the change of the statute of the FECH is very indicative of the change from the old student movement, from a political roundtable to a more democratic, more democratized, more diverse student movement.

One of the most salient democratizing changes to which Thielemann alluded was the restructuring of the system of student representation which would no longer represent the spectrum of student political factions, but would consist of *consejeros* tasked with representing “the faculties, in accordance with the number of students in them and not with the political forces,” thereby producing a “territorialization of power and with it a greater proximity of student political leaders to the social bases of the movement” (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 199-200, translation mine). This nascent democratization of organizational structures and practices emerged in dialectical relation to a transformation in framing processes in which “corporate, protest demands [*demandas gremiales y reivindicativas*] gained preponderance over political motivations” (Moraga Valle, 2006, p. 194). In other words, those at the helm of the movement began to see themselves increasingly as organic intellectuals, as leaders of students as a *social movement* in lieu of political party leaders who happened to be students, which had become the norm for most of the 20th Century until the crisis of 1993.

As the university student movement begins a slow process of reconstruction in 1994 with the capture of student federations throughout the country by the radical left led initially by the Communist Youth, the Concertación further deepened its neoliberal educational policies. For instance, faced with the chronic deficit that represented the living legacy of Pinochet’s university reforms, the rector of the University of Chile began charging payment on student debts as well as agreed to sell the university’s Channel 11 public television network, which sadly was only the latest addition to the long list of assets stripped from the public university that included its satellite campuses, the professional soccer team, to name a few (Moraga Valle, 2006). In 1995-96, the new Communist-led FECH mobilized to successfully oppose the latest round of neoliberal privatization measures that included the proposed sale of the university radio (Muñoz

Tamayo, 2011). It is important to underscore that the student movement, despite its radical leadership, was not anti-capitalist per se, but anti-neoliberal, seeking to “defend the university of the Welfare State, of the Development State” (Luis Thielemann). Rather, according to Luis Thielemann,

The Left at least until 2004, 2005 takes charge of the *concertacionista* program, of the program of 1990, which is afterwards known as the “abandoned program”. There were people who were *concertacionista*, who worked with the student Left, because the student Left was the only one with whom they could work. For us, this radicalization was, more than radicalization, it was sincerity [*sinceramiento*], it was a kind of pure *concertacionismo*...a kind of intermediate demands, carrying intermediate demands that the Concertación abandoned in the ‘90s [*una especie de banderas intermedias, de tomar banderas intermedias que la Concertación abandono en los 90*].

That is, the student movement of the 1990s took up the banner of anti-neoliberal, social democratic reform that the Concertación abandoned upon coming to power in 1990. In the context of the reconstitution of the movement amidst the near total social demobilization of the transition, the university Left sought to appropriate for itself the historic mantle of *concertacionismo* as a movement frame that would resonate with its student bases which were not radical Left, but “much more concertacionista”. And since the Concertación had abandoned its own program, this “pure concertacionismo”, or social democratic ideology, became what Ernesto Laclau might call a “floating signifier” that could be appropriated and subversively resignified in the context of a radical Left political agenda. As Luis Thielemann explains, this subversive appropriation of *concertacionismo* would “produce... a slow politicization of the student movement on two counts”:

A democratic count, which is a critique of the Chilean transition, of democracy in which one would only have to go vote every so many years, but was not a democratic country, and even up to today, Chile is a country with formal institutions and everything, but it's not a democratic country; your opinion ultimately doesn't matter. And on the other hand, [there's] an anti-neoliberal critique that will [eventually] be captured in the phrase "no profit" [*no al lucro*].

Here we observe a process of "identity shift" (McAdam et al., 2001) in which student leaders redrew "symbolic boundaries" (Lamont & Molnar, 2002) vis-à-vis the Concertación and the neoliberalized public university, identifying the latter as part of the "educational system of *pinochetismo* which [the former] administrated" (Luis Thielemann). That is, we observe the beginnings of a process of "category formation" (McAdam et al., 2001) in which the Concertación (and its youth wings) is delegitimized by virtue of its symbolic as well as material association with *pinochetismo* in the sphere of education. However, this "boundary work" (Lamont & Molnar, 2002) does not just happen, but represents a dynamic process of elaborating categories on the part of movement actors. Thus, the movement on the one hand seeks to cast itself symbolically and ideologically in the tradition of the anti-dictatorial struggles of the 1980s by taking up the "flag" of this *concertacionismo puro*, and on the other, it attempts to redraw symbolic boundaries, underscoring the continuity of the Concertación with the Pinochet dictatorship.

In this respect, the mobilizations of 1997 were critical insofar as it constituted the first ever instance in which the student movement managed to articulate a collective frame that successfully critiqued the *pinochetista* model of education and the role of the Concertación in sustaining it, without "being catalogued as a 'fifth column of *pinochetismo*'" (Thielemann, 2012,

p. 41, translation mine).<sup>7</sup> That is, during the earlier years of Concertación administration, the government sought to delegitimize the student movement as well as all social actors by claiming that they were infiltrated by “Communist” subversives who refused to adhere to the new “democratic game”. By 1997, however, the Concertación was losing its hegemonic capacity to frame all opposition to its rule as either “Leninist subversives” or *pinochetistas*. During that year, students again mobilized on a national scale this time with a more radical, far-reaching platform: The “end of the model of education of the Dictatorship, enshrined in... the LOCE, signed by Pinochet the last day that he was in power, in March of 1990” (Thielemann, 2012, p. 41, translation mine). Unlike prior cycles of mobilization that were largely framed in terms of the demand for more state credit and resources directed towards public universities and their students (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011), 1997 marked a crucial turning point in which the student movement introduced a new master frame (Snow & Benford, 1988), namely the categorical rejection of the *pinochetista* educational model embodied in the LOCE. This demand would anticipate the clarion call of the secondary student mobilization of 2006.

Nonetheless, despite this important breakthrough, the mobilization of 1997 concluded in defeat with the major university student federations, the FECH and the FEUSACH, coming to local agreements establishing new statutes of university governance replacing those imposed under Pinochet that were still in force (Thielemann, 2012, p. 42, translation mine). This demobilization on the part of these leading student federations was widely viewed as a “betrayal”

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<sup>7</sup> In 1997, the Christian Democrat rector of the University of Chile attacked the student mobilization, labeling it “infiltrated by the PC [Communist Party] and the FPMR [Manual Rodriguez Patriotic Front\*]. “At the same time,” writes Muñoz Tamayo (2011), “the right-wing opposition press, while it was no partisan of the student movement, in the context of the rector being a member of the party of President Frei, did not attack [the movement] in a ferocious way, and there were not a few times that [FECH president] Roco appeared photographed smiling...in *El Mercurio*” (p. 130, translation mine). \*The FPMR began as the formerly autonomous military arm of the Communist Party, formed in 1980 under the “party line of popular mass struggle”.

by the smaller federations throughout the country, especially in the provinces (Thielemann, 2012, p. 42; Muñoz Tamayo, 2011). Luis Thielemann explains:

The reform of the LOCE was abandoned, the demand for university credit was abandoned. Then all of the small universities ended up hating the Communist Party because they saw themselves abandoned in a struggle that was national and suddenly were left alone because...without the Santiago federations, there's no press, no one cares, the minister doesn't negotiate.

In this way, 1997 represented an important moment of truth for the movement, revealing both the continuity with the “old student movement” in terms of organizing practices as well as the points of rupture from which the “new” was emerging. While the “great banner of struggle” of the movement of the ‘90s was the “democratization of university government” (Munõz Tamayo, 2011, p. 125, translation mine), this did not imply that the organizational structures and practices of the movement itself were democratic. On this point, Luis Thielemann argues that the defeat of 1997 resulted from the “political practice” of the Communist Party, which retained the organizational logic of the top-down political parties dominating the old student movement of the 1990s “where assemblies don't exist” and political decisions take the form of closed-door compromises between leaders of competing factions, excluding the participation of the bases. This more “verticalist” organizational praxis of the Communist Party of course contrasted with the autonomist SurDa, whose organizing principle was inspired by the Italian autonomist slogan of the ‘70s: “the proletariat decides the strategy, the party the tactic” (Luis Thielemann). According to this logic, it was up to the student bases to decide the objectives of the movement, which by 1997 centered on the reform of the LOCE, as reflected in the national petition formulated in 1996 (Thielemann, 2012). In imposing a “national policy of concrete advances”

that culminated in the defeat of 1997, the Communist Party effectively betrayed the strategic consensus reached by the bases of the student movement throughout the country. Consequently, by 1999, the Communist Youth had lost its hegemony in the student movement, losing dozens of federations over to the autonomist SurDa, which “had the idea of reforming the LOCE, [ideas] of much deeper reforms” (Luis Thielemann).

Here we see the contradictory character of the dialectical relationship between organizational form and collective framing: a movement that is unable to maintain internal unity and coherence, between its leadership and bases as well as between its periphery and center, will face trouble sustaining a collective frame. That is, in marginalizing the will of the bases, the Communist Party ensured the impossibility of articulating a collective frame that could unite the movement. For this reason, a movement frame cannot be imposed by the leadership from the top down without regard for the bases but must emerge organically from the dialectical interplay of the two: like the old Italian maxim adopted by the SurDa, the strategic vision must gain resonance among the bases and only then can it be translated into a series of tactical repertoires by the leadership. Thus, in failing to adhere to the demand for the derogation of the LOCE espoused by the bases, the Communist Party proposed tactics that were inappropriate for the conjuncture, namely the policy of local “concrete advances”, that ultimately ended in division and defeat. However, the true test of a successful frame is its capacity to resonate with and transform the “common sense” of the masses of people who do not consider themselves “bases” of a movement. In the 1990s, Luis Thielemann notes, there were only fifteen to twenty thousand students mobilized throughout the country, who were ideologically “leftwing”, operating within the defined ideological coordinates of the university that was dominated by historic political organizations with established discourses, organizing practices, and collective action repertoires.

As we will see in the following chapter, these conditions were unique to the Chilean university insofar as secondary students encountered neither the advantages nor the inevitable fetters associated with organizing within such an established contentious space. Lacking the entrenched political culture and organizational memory of their university counterparts as well as the defined ideological paradigms, secondary students had the opportunity and the challenge of building a movement that was almost entirely and radically *new*.

### **Demanding Debt as “Paradoxical” Anti-Neoliberalism, 1997-2005**

While the demand for the reform the LOCE represented an important moment of rupture that opened way for a new master frame that would prove a necessary precedent for the Penguin Revolution of 2006, it did not, nevertheless, overshadow the more concrete demand for more state credit, without which students could not continue studying. In other words, the annual battle over the chronic deficit in state financing and credit continued with renewed intensity, particularly in the context of the Asian Crisis of 1998-1999, which destroyed the myth of the “Chilean economic miracle”, leaving public universities extremely under-resourced. In prior years, Nicolás Grau explains, “there would normally be a mobilization of students at the beginning of March-April and part of the deficit would be covered” (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 136, translation mine). However, in 2005, in lieu of covering this deficit with public credit as in the past, the supposedly “leftwing” Lagos government proposed a law offering students private credit instead which was widely viewed as thinly veiled attempt to further privatize the educational system (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011). This initiative, known as the *Crédito con Aval de Estado* [Credit Guaranteed by the State], or CAE, offered university students private loans guaranteed by the state, which tended to come with egregiously high interest rates and penalties, contrasting starkly with the lenient conditions of state loans offered before. It must be

underscored that this proposed substitution of public for private credit was not a question of abstract moral grievance, but it represented a tangible accentuation of the brutality of neoliberal social relations as intimately experienced by ordinary students:

I owe about 10 million pesos [\$20,000] to the State for my undergrad, but I'm not going to pay, because these debts are very soft...But when this is turned over to the...private bank, the Chilean bank that isn't regulated, they charge you usurious interest and they pursue you infinitely unless you pay (Luis Thielemann).

Not surprisingly, this proposed privatization of student credit provoked another round of national student mobilizations, in the course of which students employed new forms of “innovative action” (McAdam et al., 2001) to call attention to their demands. For instance, in addition to mass marches of five and ten thousand people, the movement employed other “novel methods” such as showing up en masse at a Rodin exhibit and “refusing to leave until the journalists arrive”, “taking over the movie theater where the [new] Star Wars episode 3 was being screened in order to talk about their demands in front of the cameras”, and temporarily occupying the headquarters of political parties as well as “important economic centers” (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 137, translation mine). According to Muñoz Tamayo (2011), the strategy was “to go out in the streets, not to close oneself off [*encerrarse*] in occupations [*tomas*], do fast and effective actions calling the attention of and obliging the media to cover the university conflict” (p. 137, translation mine).

Although the students in 2005 ultimately failed to defeat the law, they did, however, succeed in securing an agreement with the government whereby the latter pledged to provide scholarships for students from the bottom two quintiles of the population who are enrolled in elite public and private universities (CRUC), as well as credit for the middle quintile. This

victory signaled a tacit recognition on the part of the State of the students right to education, thereby marking the “close of a cycle” in the university student movement, during which the struggle was directed against the further privatization of the “public” university as well as against Pinochet-era university statutes (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 141, translation mine). This state recognition of education as a social right, albeit only for those from among the bottom three quintiles of the population who were fortunate enough to be accepted into the traditional elite universities, nonetheless established a key precedent for future struggles to come: According to Nicolás Grau,

...[I]f the student is of the three first quintiles, she is always going to have credit and a certain level of scholarship, it’s a question of right, your right isn’t defined according to the budget, but rather, rights determine [*definen*] the budget (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 141).

Thus, a crucial precedent is established in which, for the first time since the UP, students have substantial incidence on state policy, shaping it to reflect their social demands. Paradoxically, differential tuition, “the demand sustained for 20 years” (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011, p. 138, translation mine), is abandoned in favor of the “right to study” implicit in the right to public credit, namely, the right to go into debt (Luis Thielemann). In this way, we see that the “conservative” orientation of the movement in defense of “the university of the Welfare State, of the Development State” embodied in the historic demand for differential tuition gives way to a more radicalized critique of neoliberalism that subversively appropriates the existing system of public credit as a condition of possibility for an alternative educational system premised on the “right to study...without profit, without the bank, without usurious credit” (Luis Thielemann).

In *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, David Graeber (2012) debunks the myth of barter as the economic organization of pre-capitalist societies, arguing that these societies were gift economies predicated on mutual indebtedness as a communal social obligation that was never “paid off”. Only under capitalism has debt become reified as a monetarized relation governed by the logic of capitalist accumulation. In this way, perhaps we can see the student movement in 2005 as turning debt as a neoliberal capitalist relation on its head and resignifying it as a communal obligation that never arrives at the point of amortization. That is, the “right to study” is exercised in the form of a series of non-usurious public loans that students have no intention of ever repaying. Thus, as we will see later, this demand will be taken one step further, its neoliberal financialized character inscribed in the very notion of credit stripped away, to arrive at the twin slogans of 2012: “free public, quality education” and “no profit!” At this point, the content of “the right to study” will be freed from the fettering form of public credit and can be realized on its own terms as an unequivocal social right.

However, even though the traditional universities of the CRUC succeeded in winning a side agreement guaranteeing scholarships and credit for the bottom three quintiles of their student bodies, the CAE went into effect for private university students who, unlike their increasingly elitized counterparts at the CRUC, largely come from lower class backgrounds, especially those who study at the non-selective private universities, professional institutions, and technical centers (Ruiz, 2014). For them, the CAE represented a kind of rude awakening to the savage reality of neoliberalism in education:

I believe that from 2005 on, the idea that, “if you want free education, your enemy is the private bank and therefore the neoliberal system of education,” was much clearer. It wasn’t an ideological matter, it wasn’t a matter of reading books. It was super evident

that you would sign your credit with the bank, with CORBANCA or with Bank of Chile.

*O sea*, you understood clearly who made money from your studies, that it was the bank.

You didn't have to read Volume I of *Capital*, nothing, it was super clear.

As we will see extensively in the next chapter, it was precisely this direct lived experience with private banks that made painfully clear to university students the stakes of the struggle for free education in Chile. Neoliberalism is therefore not some intangible abstraction one encounters in reading Karl Marx or David Harvey but is made legible through daily social reality. Moreover, many these students who began studying with private credit after 2005 are exactly the same students and graduates who, under the burden of mounting debt, would participate in the student revolt of 2011 (Ruiz, 2014). For them, their lived reality of indebtedness was itself politicizing, offering a kind of scaffolding for the arming of more sophisticated critiques of neoliberalism informed by elements of radical Left ideology transmitted by *colectivos*.

In short, 2005 marks the end of the student movement of the transition symbolized by the historic demand of differential tuition. No longer will the student movement be committed to a nostalgic rearguard defense of the bygone university of the "Development State", which has ceased to be reality for the students of traditional universities, let alone the majority of students who now attend private, openly neoliberal institutions. From this point forward, the movement will struggle for a creation of a new educational system in the context of consolidated neoliberalism

## CHAPTER II: BECOMING “LIKE SKIN”: *SECUNDARIOS* AND THE MAKING OF A MASS MOVEMENT, 2001-2006

May 2006. Over 800,000 secondary students are mobilized throughout Chile, and 950 schools were either occupied or paralyzed (Ruiz, 2012; Ruiz, 2014, p. 57). This is the so-called Penguin Revolution, in which for a period of several months, Chilean secondary students captured national headlines, demanding the derogation of the LOCE, the cornerstone of the neoliberal educational system in Chile that was written into law by Pinochet literally on his last day in power. How did we get here from the university-centered movement of the 1990s, in which no more than twenty thousand students were mobilized in defense of the public university? The answer to this question is the subject of this chapter.

I will begin this chapter with a brief analysis of the political economy of secondary education in neoliberal Chile. I will then move to a discussion of the reconstitution of the secondary student movement with a focus on the role of popular culture in forging the “circuit of socialization” of a new Chilean Left. Here I contrast the *secundarios* and *universitarios*. As discussed in the last chapter, the university movement of the 1990s that was constrained by the immediate imperative of maneuvering within the existing organizational framework steeped in a long history of student politics which they endeavored to transform to fit their present needs. For the *secundarios*, in contrast, there was no inherited organizational framework in which they were compelled to work, given that the secondary movement as a social force had gone extinct in the early 1990s and that the historic FESES was a practically moribund organization. In this way, the *secundarios* were much freer to more radically rebuild the movement in their image, electing to dissolve the FESES and forge a new organization more attuned to their needs, which would have been impossible in the case of the FECH or the FEUCH. Nonetheless, I want to underscore that

while the *secundarios* were indeed less constrained by inherited organizational baggage, affording them greater flexibility, they did not construct their movement in a vacuum. That is, the “assembled” cultural logic of the ACES was not, strictly speaking, *new* insofar as it was elaborated on an ideological terrain inherited from radical Left movements like the MIR and the GAP, which, while effectively moribund in all practical organizational sense, constituted indispensable ideological points of reference for the student leaders (re)building the movement. We see precisely this in the case of the SurDa, which was inspired by Italian *obreroismo*, elements of which were adapted to the Chilean context, as we saw in the case of Luis Thielemann’s quoting of the Italian maxim, “The proletariat decides the strategy, the party the tactic,” to justify the “assembled logic” advanced by the SurDa. These historic revolutionary Left traditions represented an important ideological point of departure for Julio Reyes, Victor Orellana, and other leaders involved in constructing the ACES, which they applied flexibly and strategically with new purposes in mind. A case in point is the 1999 *Toma de Peñalolen*, the first major *toma de terreno* [land occupation] launched after the return to civilian rule in which 1750 families of *pobladores* in Peñalolen organized under the umbrella of the SurDa occupied a parcel of 23 hectares belonging to a wealthy businessman in an instance of grassroots mobilization that harkened back to the days of the MIR and would prove extremely referential for secondary student leaders in the same period. In sum, my point is that the language of “new”/“old” should not be taken as an essentialist binary, for the secondary movement, like their university counterparts, did indeed pragmatically forge new organizations with distinct, hybridized cultural logics, but they did so within the context of a revolutionary Left tradition that was an inescapable ideological point of reference. My argument is that the autonomist militants in the secondary movement embarked on this process of elaborating a hybridized cultural logic under different

conditions: they did not have to contend with reforming an historic bureaucratic entity like the FECH, which entailed both an opportunity and a challenge

In the next section, I will take my interviewees as case studies for examining the process of politicization among secondary students who participated in the Penguin Revolution. Specifically, I will look at the impact of the students' parents' generation on their own politicization, contrasting those families that had a marked leftwing political tendency with those that did not. However, in paying extensive attention to students with Communist parents, I do not mean to suggest that they in any way constitute anything more than a tiny minority of Chilean families, although they do probably comprise a larger proportion of leftwing families. Therefore, in methodological terms, I do not want to imply that the experience of these students growing up in Communist households is indicative of the experience of all students in a similar situation or of all students in general. Rather, since the Communist Party is a historic pillar of the Chilean Left that was very referential for many of the "generation of '68", I look at the case of Chilean "red diaper babies" in order to demonstrate that these students were not fundamentally different from their counterparts growing up in less ideologized contexts insofar as their politicization was not a function of the dogmatic adherence to Communist ideology, but was the outcome of their negotiation of their daily reality in dialogue with elements of radical Left ideology.

Moreover, the continuing presence of the Communist Youth as an important organization in the secondary movement in the mid-2000s further enriches our above discussion of the dialectic of the "old" and the "new". Like the SurDa, the founders of the ACES still had to contend with more traditional actors like the Communist Youth and the youth wings of other parties, but they were much *less* established than their counterparts at the university level. Nonetheless, particularly in *emblemáticos* like the INBA and the *Tajamar*, the Communist Youth

was a significant political force. Though, as María Paz and Raúl point out, the *Jota* operated under a more traditional Left organizational logic, namely that of a hierarchical “vanguard” party, which contrasted sharply with the “assemblist logic” that was increasingly prevalent in the movement. In fact, it was precisely due to their own qualms with the organizational structure that María Paz and Raúl ended up leaving the *Jota*. Therefore, the continuing presence of traditional party organizations like the *Jota* alongside the ACES does not contradict my argument of an overall trend towards the latter. In fact, as of the present, the Communist Youth is experiencing a steep decline in its influence in the Chilean student movement: just three years ago, Camila Vallejo was the face of the movement, and now the *Jota* has been largely outflanked from the left by autonomists and anarchists, at least in the FECH, the flagship student federation of the country.

In sum, the case of María Paz and others attests to the point that, just like in the university movement, *secondarios* in the *emblemáticos* were not always free to construct new *colectivos* and often had to “work through” existing organizational frameworks, undergoing personal ideological transformations in the process, although they certainly had more flexibility than their university counterparts. In contrast to the students of the *emblemáticos*, the students of the municipal and charter schools of the periphery of Santiago had even fewer constraints, for there was little or no tradition of student politics, especially for the schools that had recently been opened in the 1990s. Rodrigo and his friends were thus free form a *colectivo* that responded to their own needs and thus did not have to navigate the bureaucratic structure of an organization like the *Jota*. Of course, this lack of organizational memory and defined ideological points of reference meant that the building of the movement on the periphery was a much slower process that depended to some extent on territorial *colectivos* like CREA that would literally occupy

other students' schools in order to establish a tradition of *toma* where there was none prior. In short, I want to show that secondary students derived a certain degree of agency from the fewer existing organizational structures, allowing them more flexibility in crafting an organizational logic better suited to their necessities. But this was a kind of mixed blessing insofar as the less defined structures meant that these students had to undertake the monumental task of building new ones, which is a much longer process.

Subsequently, I will explore the generational politics of fear and historical memory, looking at how family experience with state repression during the dictatorship affected student participation in mobilizations. Here I argue that the *pingüinos*' lack of direct experience with dictatorial repression made them better able to perceive the transformed political opportunity structure heralded by the transition to civilian rule and accordingly seize the opportunity for mass social mobilization (McAdam et al., 2001). As a methodological parenthesis, I will note that I did not manage to interview students who were in fact deterred from participating in the student movement due to the fear of their parents, although Raúl does offer an anecdotal case of this. While these students were probably not extremely significant in number, their cases must be examined in order to fully understand this dynamic.

Lastly, I will conclude with a discussion of how these students themselves conceived of the demands they were fighting for within the local contexts of their different schools. I find that in the *emblemáticos* there tended to be higher levels of political consciousness around the movement demands. This is unsurprising because, as in the traditional universities in the 1990s, students at many of these schools drew on a long established tradition of student organizing, whereas at the newer charter schools of the periphery, the process of political construction was still at a much more embryonic stage. Therefore, in line with the discussion above, we see that

while students of the *embelemáticos* were indeed constructing a new movement that did not fundamentally resemble the secondary movement(s) of the past,<sup>8</sup> they indeed drew on the history and tradition available to them, whereas students in municipal and charter schools did not necessarily benefit from this resource.

Moreover, in addition to differences between *emblemáticos* and charter schools, I also find differences within the schools themselves. For instance, as we will see below, while most students supported the movement demands in the *Tajamar* and the INBA, only a fraction actually participated in the *toma*. Also, some students were more motivated by internal demands than by the national demands of the movement, as we see in the case of the INBA.

### **Contours of “Educational Apartheid” in Chile**

I will begin by laying out the dimensions of neoliberal restructuring as it relates to secondary education in Chile. As in the case of higher education, the Constitution of 1980 as well as the LOCE enshrine the “freedom of instruction”, which in practice means the right to profit [*lucro*] from educational entrepreneurship, as the fundamental ordering principle of secondary education in Chile to the exclusion of any “right to education” irrespective of social class (Mayol, 2011; OPECH, 2010). To this existing constitutional framework, we can add the Law of Educational Subsidies [*Ley de Subvenciones Educativas*] and the Law of Educational Municipalization [*Ley de Municipalización de la Educación*]. It is crucial to situate these measures within the context of the broader neoliberal “shock therapy” instituted by the Chilean military junta after 1976, inspired by the “supply-side economics” of Milton Friedman and the Chicago School (Klein, 2006; Moulian, 2002). In the educational arena, Friedman prescribed the

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<sup>8</sup> That is, the contemporary secondary student movement is defined by a greater autonomy in pursuing student social demands, whereas the movement of the 1980s was much more subordinated to political parties in the context of the struggle against the dictatorship.

privatization and decentralization of the educational system, which was to be subsidized by the State by way of vouchers provided to families, guaranteeing their supposed “freedom of choice” in the new educational market.

Chile was thus to serve as a critical laboratory for these neoliberal “reforms” (Klein, 2006), which established a parallel system of privatized charter schools [*colegios subvencionados*] that receive the same funding as public municipal schools, yet retain the right to discriminate on the basis of income, selecting wealthier students with fewer needs, as well as the right to profit from the administration of these schools (OPECH, 2010). Municipalization of education therefore “did not mean an effective decentralization, but a delegation of some administrative functions to the municipalities in a defunded way as well as privatization of schools” (OPECH, 2010, p. 21, translation mine). The outcome of this unprecedented neoliberal experiment in secondary education is a system of “educational apartheid”, which according to the OCDE is “consciously stratified by social class”: Chileans are segregated within “five closed and exclusive systems”, ranging from the elite private and charter schools<sup>9</sup> [*particular subvencionado*] to the municipal schools in poor districts, separated by an ever-widening quality and equity gap (OPECH, 2010, p. 18, translation mine). Thus, contrary to the neoliberal ideology expounded by Friedman and others, neoliberal educational reform did not entail greater local empowerment and freedom of choice, but served only to accentuate the reproduction of social

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<sup>9</sup> Chilean secondary education is broken down in the following way. At the top are elite private schools that often belong to religious orders and are generally unaffordable for most Chileans. Then there are publicly-subsidized private schools [*particular subvencionado*] or charter in US parlance, which are divided among an elite number which require monthly family financial contribution and those that rely entirely on state subsidization. Lastly, there are municipal schools, which are further subdivided between those in wealthy and poorer municipalities. Concerning this last point, another dimension of the neoliberal restructuring of Chilean education was the devolution of financing and administration of public schools to the municipal level [*municipalización*], which has produced a crisis of quality in public education, particularly in the poorer municipalities. See OPECH (2010).

class inequalities, condemning working class students to under-resourced municipal schools in low-income areas while tracking middle and upper class youth into more prestigious private and charter [*subvencionado*] schools.

### **Rebirth: Coordinating Assembly of Secondary Students (ACES)**

In contrast to the university student movement, which saw elements of continuity from the 1980s to the 1990s in terms of organizational actors, demands and objectives, as well as repertoires of contention, the secondary student movement effectively ceased to exist by 1992 and remained moribund throughout most of the 1990s (Luis Thielemann). Consequently, for Chilean secondary students at the close of the millennium, the task was not simply to appropriate existing movement structures, organizational and political cultures, and tactical repertoires and transform them with a new strategic purpose in mind. Rather, a radically *new* movement had to be constructed where none currently existed, although, as we will see below, this did not occur in a vacuum. In this way, the secondary student movement emerging out of the late 1990s cannot be analyzed as a phenomenon reducible to the “traditional Left” of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Victor Orellana explains:

There [in high school] I remember we formed a *colectivo* and I began to participate because all of these anarko punk groups caught my attention [*me llamaron la atención*], because to me the Left seemed like a thing of the ‘60s.

Here, following Salazar (2002) we observe a profound cultural shift from the “generation of ’68” to those of the ‘80s and the ‘90s, in which the latter, faced with the crisis of the historic Left embodied in the Popular Unity government, set out to construct a radically different political culture that was “more rooted in the present than in the present, more collective than individual, more artisanal than professional, and more participative than spectator” (p. 237, translation

mine). Embodying these characteristics, the punk rock of Los Prisioneros and others came to play the same politicizing role for these new generations as *la nueva canción chilena* [New Chilean Song] of Victor Jara, Violeta Parra, Quilapayun, Inti Illimani, etc. played for the generation of '68. Luis Thielemann similarly testifies to the role of music in this politico-cultural shift, describing those at his high school who listened to punk and hip hop<sup>10</sup> as a “kind of counter-culture” that “that in some way produced politics, but barely” [*que en algo producía política, pero muy escasamente*].

Moreover, hip hop and punk rock stood in fundamental continuity with original *nueva canción chilena* not only in terms of explicit political content but also in terms of artistic form.<sup>11</sup> Following the early *nueva canción chilena* performed by non-professional musicians in poor, marginalized communities in small gatherings known as *peñas* that functioned as indispensable venues for political discussion (Cifuentes, 1989), the new rock and hip hop were similarly created by “organic artists” who wrote and sang “in the same place where they live for the same people who live there” (Salazar, 2002, p. 278, translation mine). Like its folk antecedents, this “new popular music” thus entails not only a “democratization” of the artistic form, but also its content insofar as the lyrics “reflect in a more frank, descriptive, and emotive way the current reality of the ‘*bajo pueblo*’” (Salazar, 2002, p. 278, translation mine). As we will later, these new forms of artistic production and consumption would coincide with radically new ways of doing politics.

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the politicizing role of Chilean hip hop for the generations of the '80s, '90s, and '00, see: Posh (2009). *Del Mensaje a la Acción: Construyendo el Movimiento Hip-Hop en Chile (1984-2008)*. Informe final para optar al Grado de Licenciado en Historia. Universidad de Chile: Santiago.

<sup>11</sup> For an investigation of the development of Chilean popular cultural forms from the *Lira Popular* to *Nueva Canción* to hip hop, see: Ibáñez, F. (2008). *La Lira Popular, la Nueva Canción Chilena y el Hip Hop: la voz de un mismo pueblo. Aproximación de una poesía desde abajo*. Tesis para optar el grado de Licenciado en Literatura Hispánica, Universidad de Chile: Santiago.

Far from marginal, this new popular art and culture must be situated at the center of the process of elaborating a distinct generational political identity. For instance, as Victor Orrellana illustrates, Los Prisioneros was not merely popular music but represented an iconic politico-cultural referent for an entire generation that employs it as a heuristic tool to make sense of social reality:

What happens is that in Chile, Jorge González of Los Prisioneros puts it very well: “If here there is a battle between the good guys and the bad guys [*entre los buenos y los malos*], the bad guys have already won and imposed their society.

In other words, for Victor Orrellana and his generation, cultural icons like Jorge González communicated truths about Chilean society, namely the role of the Concertación in consolidating the political and economic model imposed by Pinochet, which were silenced for much of the ‘90s. This new politico-cultural milieu thus marked a new way of understanding politics in the context of a pacted transition to civilian rule largely shaped by the authoritarian forces that had ruled the country for seventeen years, in which the political discourses and cultural referents of the Popular Unity no longer held the same hegemonic meaning.

Popular art and music therefore represents a critical dimension of what Gramsci (1971) terms “common sense”, which is “the folklore of philosophy, and is always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science, and economics of the specialists” (p. 630). The “common sense” of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Left was thus much more than the explicit political discourse of class struggle popularized among generations of workers by the Communist and Socialist Parties as well as by trade unions and social movements, but it represents a *language* in the gramscian sense of “contain[ing] a specific conception of the world” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 323) that encompasses the full realm of popular culture and folklore. In fact,

this latter “folklore”, far from a mere accessory to political discourse, constitutes the all-important scaffolding by which ideas are rooted in the popular imagination. That is, class struggle was hardly some abstract discourse imposed from above by the vanguardist parties of the radical Left; rather it formed an organic part of the fabric of daily life of Chilean working people, which found voice at the level of political discourse and popular art. Following, Michele Lamont’s (2002) findings in the case of French workers, we might thus view the discourse of class struggle as a heuristic tool utilized by the Chilean worker class to draw symbolic boundaries vis-à-vis the upper classes and thereby construct a counter-hegemonic political identity premised on resistance. For instance, Victor Jara’s famous song “Preguntas por Puerto Montt” was the first song “in the [known] history of popular music that accused with first and last name the person responsible for a massacre” (Salazar, 2002, p. 161), and as such gave voice to the intensifying violence perpetrated against Chilean working people, as exemplified by the police killing of 10 squatters who had occupied a plot of land in Puerto Montt in 1969. In this way, *la nueva canción chilena* of Jara, Angel Parra, *Quilapayun*, and others, taking an increasingly radicalized tone in the midst of the intensified struggles of post-1968, became the “cultural blood” [*sangre cultural*] of the youth-led popular movements of the period (Salazar, 2002, p. 160).

However, in the wake of the traumatic political defeats of 1973 and 1986,<sup>12</sup> the “common sense” of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century revolutionary Left was thrown into crisis as its parties were defeated or “renovated”, its symbols lost much of their meaning and resonance, and its traditional

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<sup>12</sup> 1973 was the year of the coup d’etat that ousted Salvador Allende and marked the beginning of the seventeen year period of military rule. 1986 was the year of the failed attempt on Pinochet’s life, which represented the final defeat of the Communist-led military strategy to overthrow the dictatorship. This defeat signaled the inevitability of a pacted transition to civilian rule presided over by the “reform elites” of the Concertación. See Salazar (2002).

discourses rang increasingly hollow in the context of the collapse of “really existing socialism”. This crisis was particularly acute for a significant segment of secondary students coming of age in the ‘90s who did not have contact with the Communist Party, the MIR, or other radical Left parties through their family or direct experience and consequently for whom this traditional Left “was no more than a pure memory” (Victor Orrellana). Yet while the “traditional Left” would continue to serve as an ideological point of reference for these students in forming their *colectivos*, new organizing structures, collective action repertoires, and political culture would have to be developed that were distinct from those of the “traditional Left” and better adapted to the conditions of the here and now. Victor Orrellana, a former president of the center of students at the prestigious public high school, the School of Application, explains:

We did a *toma* in high school, because in that epoch the Left in the [secondary] student movement didn’t do anything, it was no more than a pure memory. They had an organization that was the FESES [Federation of Secondary Students of Santiago] that was an historic organization but didn’t have any anchoring [*anclaje*], nor any connection to the social bases, a dead organization [*un aparato muerto*], no more than bureaucratic. And there with some groups, we began to get involved, we achieved a mass mobilization in my high school that was very referential because it was the first *toma* since the ‘80s, and we didn’t have any memory of what had been the issue of the ‘80s, none whatsoever. Then, after this *toma*, we formed a kind of movement.

Here we note a marked contrast with the university movement of roughly the same period that enjoyed enormous continuity with the era of the military dictatorship in terms of organizational structures and memory, political culture and discursive frames, as well as strategic and tactical repertoires. For Chilean secondary students in the late ‘90s, there was no such organic continuity,

given that their movement had effectively died out by the early 1990s and that their historic organization was effectively an artifact of a largely forgotten past, rendering it incapable of keeping the movement alive. The task, then, for these students who were radicalized by this new “cultural blood” of punk and hip hop and who began to organize themselves in *colectivos* was to dissolve the FESES and build a new organization more organically adapted to their needs. This came about in the year 2000, when Victor Orellana, Julio Reyes, and others established the Coordinating Assembly of Secondary Students (ACES), which was, unlike the FESES, no longer a “corporatist bureaucratic student federation” [*federación de estudiantes gremial y burócrata*], but an “assembly of students in struggle” (Luis Thielemann). That is, paralleling certain democratizing reforms in the structure of university federations discussed above, secondary student organizations ceased to be a “political roundtable” for brokering between different political parties, but became a more democratic vehicle for promoting student social demands.

The ACES was composed of *voceros*, or spokespeople, chosen by the student governments or student assemblies of their respective secondary schools. These *voceros* were not leaders in the traditional, top-down sense, but acted simply as spokespeople tasked with publicly communicating the will of the assemblies. The strength of this organizational form was not the exclusion of political parties and collectives, but their broad, regulated inclusion. *Voceros* were drawn from a “rainbow” (Victor Orellana) of political tendencies from anarchists and communists to *Concertacionistas* and the far right; what mattered was the subordination of their ideological agenda under the banner of the movement’s “social” demands. On this point, Victor Orellana recalls that they were “happy” when one of the *voceros* in 2001 turned out to be a member of the far-right Independent Democratic Union (UDI), “because it let us show Chilean society that the ACES was something social, broad [*algo social, amplio*].”

The first instance of the “innovative action” of this new organization was the mobilization of 2001 known as the *Mochilazo* or “backpack”, in which thousands of secondary students engaged in strikes, marches, and *tomas* to demand changes to the national student transportation pass or *pase escolar*, which was administered by a private firm. It was precisely this bottom-up “assembliest” logic that, according to Luis Thielemann, underlies the ACES’ success in 2001:

It [ACES] was then capable of bringing together [*convocar*] students to defend their right to the *pase escolar* without having to conscript them into the Communist Party, to become a leftist militant, a hyper-bureaucratic thing in which one has to register, no, no. Here it was: “Go to the assembly, organize yourself, and fight,” super simple. “Your participation is to go to the assembly and march; you don’t have to do anything more than belong to this [the assembly]”. And this is what brought together [*convocar*] the masses of the country.

Therefore, in contrast to the older tradition of leftist organizing that centered on hierarchical party organizations with formal membership and elaborate protocols, the ACES represented an entirely distinct vehicle of social mobilization whose informal “assembliest” structure dramatically lowered the barriers to participation for the middle and popular classes. These “new middle classes” (Ruiz, 2014) “did not respond to the cultural pattern of the [traditional] Left”, and for that reason, according to Victor Orellana, “had not protested in the 1990s.” This innovative bottom-up form of organizing around local, “social” demands characteristic of the ACES thus heralded a new “cultural pattern” that, for Chilean society, did not “appear like something of the Left” (Victor Orellana). It was precisely this non-traditional structure as well as non-political, socially inclusive image of a “rainbow” that undergirded the ACES’ success in

2001.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, it must be noted that the movement also benefited from a highly favorable political opportunity structure in which Lagos government was at odds with the private transport company and initially sided with the students, which was of course was perceived and exploited by the latter as an opportunity for contentious action (McAdam et al., 2001).

The basic units of this new “cultural pattern” were the *colectivos*. It must be stressed that while the ACES had the appearance of being a “rainbow” that encompassed a diverse array of political tendencies (Victor Orellana), it was founded by and remained a project of these various radical Left *colectivos*, of whom the autonomists, organized as Revolutionary Autonomous Student Coordinator (CREA), played a decisive role (Hernandez Santibañez, 2013). While these *colectivos* were originally founded by those comprising “what remained of the revolutionary Left” including factions of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), the Popular Action Group (GAP), and the Lautaro Youth Movement (Victor Orellana), they gradually developed a politico-cultural logic that was distinct from their more vanguardist origins. According to Victor Orellana:

These groups, as they were clandestine organizations, concealed the fact that they were leftwing and always appeared as social *colectivos*. They alluded to being a revolutionary entity but not a party [*hacían alusión a una entidad revolucionaria pero no partidista*] and they linked themselves to cultural practices like concerts [*toccatas*], like of punk music, creating a circuit of socialization that was more interesting than the circuit of socialization of the traditional Left. The latter I saw as more glued to the past, the former to me seemed more new, more vital [*Eso yo lo veía más pegado en el pasado, esto me*

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<sup>13</sup> Victor Orellana notes: “All of this logic of the ACES as a coordinating assembly that wasn’t a federation and therefore didn’t have a president and as a coordinating assembly could only have *voceros*, and the *vocero* says what the assembly says, that there wasn’t a leader. All of this was very culturally shocking for Chilean society.”

*parecía más nuevo, más vital*]. I was very much a fanatic in that era of La Polla Record, which is a punk group...that was the political formation that we had in that time, the letters of La Polla Record. I remember going to the *tocatas*, out of that world wandered [*desambulaban*] many of these *colectivos*... on the basis of which we formed the CREA and tried to produce political will.

Again, we observe the close link between new forms of bottom-up, “assembliest” organizational forms with alternative politico-cultural patterns, a new type of “cultural blood” flowing through the veins of these students, one that was more associated with local, autonomous cultural production inspired by punk and hip hop. Nonetheless, while these *colectivos* developed a cultural-organizational logic of their own that was distinct from the traditional Left they did not represent a definitive rupture with the latter, for they were operating on an ideological terrain bequeathed by their predecessors in the MIR, GAP, etc. In other words, the point of departure for these *colectivos* was the revolutionary tradition of the MIR, GAP, etc., which they proceeded to radically reinvent in their own context according to a new hybrid cultural-organizational logic that was more suited to their needs.

In 2004, many of these existing *colectivos* fused to form Rebel Cordon of Revolutionary Autonomous Students (CREAR), which “played a key role in building the political and organizational conditions for the emergence of the Penguins’ Revolution in 2006 by fostering political reflection within the movement and expanding its political articulation to schools from peripheral communes in Greater Santiago” (Hernandez Santibañez, 2013, p. 193). These grass-roots organizations would subsequently unite in 2005 to form the Coordination of Secondary Students from the Metropolitan Region (CEREM), which was instrumental in organizing the mass mobilizations of 2006 (Hernandez Santibañez, 2013). Secondary student leader and co-

founder of the ACES Julio Reyes notes that “students from peripheral schools became a political actor by not ‘politicizing reality from the politics, it is an actor that has followed a different way that is, this actor has politicized his [sic] own reality’” (Hernandez Santibañez, 2013, p. 193). In the following section, I will argue that this process by which students “politicized...[their] own reality” does not apply only to students of the periphery, but rather must be considered as the basis of a more general process of radicalization.

### **The Penguin Revolution: A New Generation of *Secundarios* Rebel**

In this section, I will look at the process by which the Chilean secondary students I interviewed constructed the political in their own lives. I will begin by noting that students undoubtedly followed vastly diverse paths leading up to their participation in 2006. These differences reflect the intersection of history and biography. On the one hand, the students that I interviewed were shaped by a plethora of often unique personal experiences. However, there are also some evident structural factors that allow for the consideration of generalities. First, the type of high school one attended represented a huge factor impacting participation in 2006. The Penguin Revolution was largely initiated and led by students of the elite public high schools in the center of Santiago with long, established political traditions, known as the *emblemáticos*. In these schools, political organizations like the Communist Youth (or “Jota” as it is commonly known) tended to be much more active with large membership. The experience of students who attended the INBA, the Tajamar, or the Instituto Camila Carvajal was likely very different from those who attended municipal or charter schools on the periphery of Santiago or in the provinces, where there were little or no established political organizations and where often times there was no tradition of student struggle or at least no memory of such.

Second, family political participation also proved important for shaping the experiences of the students that I interviewed. Some students were brought up in households with strong Communist Party affiliation, which proved important in their own political formation. In paying substantial attention to these cases, I do not at all mean to imply that they represent the norm. In fact, we can be quite certain that students growing up in Communist Party-identified households constitute a tiny minority. I dedicate extensive space to discussing these cases, because I want to demonstrate that even in the cases where students grew up in highly ideological environments, their processes of politicization reflect their own lived experience and not some dogmatically internalized ideology. I do nonetheless highlight the cases of these students as an example of a more traditional Leftist pattern of socialization that is still present, albeit probably for a scarce minority, that contrasts with the alternative cultural pattern discussed above.

Other students whom I interviewed grew up in relatively depoliticized households. In some of these cases, their families did not have a pronounced history of political activism or strong political affiliation. However, in other cases, there was an intense family history of political militancy as well as state repression that was intentionally concealed from these students until they were older. Interestingly, in at least one case, 2006 represented a moment of truth in which this history was revealed in the context of the mobilization of that year.

Both Raúl and Santiago come from homes strongly identified with the Communist Party. Raúl, whose father was a militant in the Party until 1973, recalls, “since I was little there were always political discussions, my parents always disillusioned with the Concertación”. He goes on to recount how his father “talked to us about how the neoliberal model was installed here” as well as discussing its consequences for “the system of health, the system of education, etc., etc.”

Santiago comes from an even more highly politicized family. His father was a lifelong Communist from a family with a long tradition of militancy in the Communist Party, and participated in the formation of the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front, the armed wing of the Communist Party active in resisting the dictatorship. Meanwhile, his mother was a member of the even more radical Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) until her self-imposed exile in Argentina. Santiago recalls that although his father died when he was five years old, he managed to “communicate [with him] through books,” which were omnipresent and included Russian novels as well as “compilations of Marx’s texts made for workers...so they were easier to read.”

Moreover, both Raúl and Santiago attended high schools characterized by high degrees of political militancy through which they found the Communist Youth. Raúl attended the emblematic Internado Nacional Baros Arana (INBA), which although it did not have the same unbroken history of political militancy as the Instituto Nacional and other *emblemáticos*, did indeed experience a more recent resurgence of student activism, much like the School of Application described by Victor Orellana. Raúl became the organic secretary of the Communist Youth within his high school, which was the number two position within the local organization of around one hundred members. Meanwhile, Santiago attended the historic Francisco Miranda charter school that was founded in 1969 and was distinguished for being one of the few openly leftist educational establishments allowed to operate through the military dictatorship. He was active in the territorial base of the Communist Youth within his neighborhood, in which he participated “as a *poblador*, not as a student”.

I highlight the personal histories of these two students with similar political upbringings, because I want to underscore the complex relationship between household exposure to political ideology and political militancy. It is often simplistically assumed that red-diaper babies become

politically active merely by dogmatically applying internalized political ideology to their social experience. To the contrary, I want to explore the dialectical process by which the political and the social mutually constitute each other. In this vein, Raúl narrates how his experience in the various schools he had attended informed his political perspective:

Before entering my [high] school, I went to school in the municipality of Providencia, and one noted the major difference in material conditions...I remember for example that in the school in Providencia...everything was very clean...they took care of the furniture...changed it every so often, they had a lot of people concerned with the adornment of the school. By contrast, when you go to the school in the municipality of Santiago for example, there were two functionaries for a school that was eight times bigger than the school I was at when I was little. The municipal school of Santiago was collapsing, we weren't receiving resources at the end of the day...And within the classrooms we had to, for example, worry about the order, the order and the cleanliness. *¿cachai?* ["got it?"]...From the material [conditions] emerges a critique...Like from the material [conditions] this inequality is reflected, and from there perhaps an extended critique regarding all of this difference in terms of the municipalization is born [*como desde lo material se reflejaba esa desigualdad y desde ahí quizás nace una crítica extendida respecto de toda esta diferencia en cuanto a la municipalización*].

Here we note that Raúl does not mechanically apply his father's critiques of the neoliberal model to his own circumstances. Rather, Raúl develops his own critique of the neoliberal model of municipalization on the basis of his own lived experience with social inequality. This is not at all to deny the fact that his family background likely informed his reading of his social circumstances, conferring upon him bits of theory that would be developed as indispensable tools

for comprehending that experience. Rather, the point is that those seemingly abstract, ideological critiques of neoliberalism only became legible for this fifteen year old through his own concrete social reality. These lived material circumstances thus represented the crucial scaffolding for this emergent ideological critique.

Santiago similarly contextualizes his decision to participate in the mobilization of 2006:

Q: What motivated you to participate in the mobilization?

A: To begin, my dad died due to the system. He was in a hospital and something got infected because the guys didn't maintain sterile conditions because they didn't have more implements [*se le infectó algo porque los tipos no mantuvieron las condiciones de asepsia porque no tenían más implementos*]. I then felt part of the injustices of this country, and I realized that the majority of the country feels the same. And the same with education. In Peñalolen for example, the municipal schools are like prisons. Next door is the Mariano Egaña school...That school is like a bunker, it has bars on the windows, because the *cabros*, the only thing they want to do is escape from the school. They are like prisons for children.

Again, we observe that it was not his reading of Marx nor his knowledge of his family's history of leftwing political commitment that proved central to Santiago's decision to participate in the Penguin Revolution. Rather, what motivated Santiago was his intimate personal experience with the savage inequalities of neoliberal Chile, which took the life of his father and condemned the children of his neighborhood to prison-like conditions of schooling. Thus, we see that the political is not some abstract political ideology through which all life experiences were dogmatically filtered, but rather a fluid and dynamic outlook on the world that was crystallizing in dialectical relation to lived social experience.

I will reinforce this point with one further anecdote. Martina attended a Catholic Montessori charter school in the center of Santiago, where she participated in the school's two and a half week *toma* during 2006. Like Raúl and Santiago, her family has a long history of Communist militancy, including imprisonment and armed resistance during the dictatorship, and she grew up with a "very marked leftwing discourse in her house." She describes how she became politically conscious:

In reality, from very young, from 13, 14 years, I began to have this sort of social consciousness, this class consciousness, that we in reality were below and they above, and we are the oppressed class, and of course I too felt oppressed in that I saw how my parents had to work very long work days, I found it totally unjust. From that point of view, I blamed the politicians, the Right for my family situation. My mom had a work day of approximately 10 hours, she took an hour to arrive at work and an hour to return so 12 hours in the street, 12 hours of 24 hours. Marx said it 150 years ago, and it's still happening, the people are still being exploited, and I saw how my mom was exploited.

We see here that Martina's politicization hardly stemmed from the rigid imposition of Marxist theory but emerged from a complex negotiation of her immediate family reality, which was undoubtedly framed by the "leftwing discourse" of her family. These anecdotes help us to transcend the dichotomy between political "ideology" and social praxis often present in discussions of political radicalization. On the one hand, Classical Marxism tends to delegitimize all popular movements that do not adhere explicitly to orthodox Marxist theory as developed in the European context, with this theory itself supposedly reflecting the developing contradiction between the productive forces and productive relations, in economic fashion. On the other, Post-Structuralism and New Social Movements theory have proclaimed the death of all political

ideologies with universal, emancipatory pretensions, and thus commit the opposite error of reifying the social and thereby abstracting it from its organic relation with the political. This latter error translates to a problematic romanticizing of subjects as agents concerned entirely with local “social” rights without any broader “political” orientation towards the revolutionary contestation of state power, which paradoxically only reproduces a colonial logic by denying these marginalized subjects any universal revolutionary agency to remake their conditions of existence.

Rather, we can see praxis as the outcome of the cross-fertilization of formal ideology in its more traditional sense of systematized, scientific critique and “popular ideology”, which takes the form of “direct experience, oral tradition, folk-memory” (Rude, 1980, p. 28). Thus, following Gramsci (1971), “it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone’s individual life, but of renovating and making “critical” an already existing activity” (p. 331). That is, this popular ideology, embodied in art, culture, folklore, represents the scaffolding for any systematic critique of material reality. In this way, to use Gramsci’s terms, there is not rigid dichotomy between “common sense” (popular ideology) and “good sense” (formal ideology), but rather the two stand in fluid, dialectical inter-relation: “‘Common sense’ is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326). Over the remainder of this chapter, I will continue to examine the processes by which this “common sense” developed into a subversive “good sense” in the course of these students participation in social mobilizations.

Most of the students that I interviewed, however, did not come from households with an explicit identification with leftwing politics. Consequently, their path to politicization was far

more shaped by their high schools, as they did not come with many preformed political notions developed within their family milieu. For instance, Rodrigo, a student from the peripheral municipality of Maipu who currently studies at the University of Chile, says that his family “has never been a participant in political movements or parties,” although his grandfather held an important position in his union and was mysteriously ran over by a car during the dictatorship. He describes his high school:

My high school was a charter [*particular subvencionado*]. And the benefactors [*sostenedores*] of the school were people that always viewed as a business, because for them it is a business...So they never concerned themselves with the having good teachers, adequate infrastructure. For us, it was basically a warehouse [*bodega*] where they left us for the day...We were conscious that the school was not good... You saw that we didn't have a computer in our school, or that the teachers were simply bad. You realize that here's a problem that has to be solved, and it's not our school, but it's also happening all over the country... It was a problem that had to do principally with profit, with what this concept means, that which was always on people's mouths, the word that was always in the demands...I always remember in the pamphlets...profit, that was the central enemy, the central objective of the problem, because we lived it, we knew what profit was.

In the same way that Gramsci (1971) talks about workers developing a spontaneous economic consciousness of the exploitative nature of capitalist social relations, we see that students like Rodrigo with no prior political formation begin to, following Julio Reyes, “politicize [their] own reality”, generating a spontaneous critique of neoliberalism on the basis of their daily experience of material privation in school. Moreover, we note that this organic student social consciousness

is markedly *relational* insofar as it frames the poor conditions experienced by the students as a consequence of the profiteering of the school owners, i.e. “we go to school in poverty because you are getting rich”. In this way, following Lamont (2002), the discourse of “profit” represents an important tool in the hands of Chilean students for drawing strong symbolic boundaries vis-à-vis the sector of the Chilean capitalist class engaged in educational entrepreneurship, which in turn better positions the former to construct subjectivities contesting the underlying neoliberal social relations.

In a similar way, María Paz describes her parents as “hippies” who were inspired by Christian Humanism and identified culturally with the Left as embodied in the art and music but were not “political” as such and voted for the Concertación. For her, leaving to attend the prestigious Liceo Tajamar on the other side of the city represented the beginning of a “rupture [*quiebre*]” with the ideological world of her parents:

I entered high school in order to get to know [*conocer*] the world because before when I studied in an elementary school two blocks from my house in my municipality I didn't know these things, I didn't grow up knowing that it was an injustice to pay the [bus] fare [*pasaje*]. But when the fare started to cost me, when I saw that...I didn't pay the fare so that I could buy some french fries because I didn't have anything for lunch, there you realize that it wasn't merely a political demand [*reivindicación*]...[or] aesthetic, but rather it was something that affected your daily life.

As we saw repeatedly above, María Paz's experience with everyday economic hardship—having to choose between paying the bus fare and eating lunch—provided her with a window into the structural logic of neoliberal capitalism and foregrounded her decision to join the Communist Youth.

It is important to note parenthetically that while the Communist Youth is indeed an historic “traditional Left” organization, the participation of María Paz, Raúl, and others in the *Jota* within the context of their emblematic high schools with longer political traditions does not mean that these students are unconditionally inserted into a “traditional Left” cultural pattern. I want to resist the temptation to essentialize these cultural patterns, but rather regard them as fluid and mutually interactive. In other words, the *Jota* presented one of perhaps many cultural logics that these youth were exposed to, and it was precisely the experience with “assemblist logic” of the new Left that at least in the case of María Paz led her to eventually leave the *Jota*.

### **Fear and Memory**

In inquiring more about María Paz’s decision to join the Communist Youth, I was struck by how she contextualized it in the social conditions she and others experienced, which she associated not just with the cruel disparities of neoliberal capitalism but with the legacy of the military dictatorship:

I was a little girl [*era cabra chica*], I really wanted to do something. I felt that I had the Dictatorship in my subconsciousness and it was still here, like I felt it wasn’t something in the past, I felt it was part of my life. I saw for example issues like poverty, overcrowding, inequality, the lack of opportunities, I identified them as something that had not ended with the Dictatorship, and therefore I wanted to do something, I wanted to participate, because I felt like I had this accumulated rage, even though in those times I lived in good conditions, having grown up well. I realized that I didn’t like these things, I didn’t like the system. And a lot of that had to do with what my parents taught me, only that they were left with resignation [*se quedaron en la resignación*] in accepting, “this is it; one has to simply go on with life because this is the way the system is” [*esto es así*;

*hay que puro seguir la vida porque así es el sistema*]. In contrast, me no, I said: “I want to do something, because I don’t like this.” ... I wanted to participate and do something different, contribute to changing something, and I did this by myself...I became a militant in the Communist Youth without knowing anybody, totally self-taught.

It is quite fascinating how readily a woman as young as fourteen or fifteen identifies the injustices of the present with what normally seem a distant past that she only knows indirectly through the stories of her parents. While it is impossible to verify whether María Paz actually had these thoughts at the age of fourteen or imputed them retroactively to her younger self, I think her account, nonetheless, offers a useful lens for looking at struggles over historical memory in Chile, particularly among the generation of the *pinguiños*. Chileans today are still very much haunted by the ghosts of the recent dictatorial past. According to Steve Stern (2006), Chile is unique in the sheer “pervasiveness” of the atrocities committed:

In a country of only 10 million people in 1973, individually proved cases of death or disappearance by state agents (or persons in their hire) amount to about 3,000; torture victims run in the dozens of thousands; documented political arrests exceed 82,000; the exile flow amounts to 200,000 (p. xx-xxi).

Stern (2006), however, warns that these figures only constitute a minimum “baseline” and that reasonable higher estimates put deaths at disappearances at 3,500-4,500, political detentions at 150,000-200,000, and torture victims and exiles as high as 100,000 and 400,000 respectively. This latter, higher figure for torture is substantiated by the fact that the Valech Commission contained a stipulation that excluded all cases of torture that occurred in the context of short-term detention that was deemed beyond the scope of the commission’s mandate to investigate long-term political imprisonment. Consequently, the Valech Commission omitted from its report the

most common form of torture experienced by *pobladores* in the 1980s, which entailed being detained in *allanamientos* [military raids] and interrogated under torture in specially prepared spaces within the *población* for anywhere from a few hours to a few days before being released. A self-published report by the Colectivo de Memoria Historica Corporacion Jose Domingo Cañas (2005) documented the pervasiveness of this experience of torture in the context of their study of sixteen *poblaciones*, confirming that approximately 90,000 people, mostly young males, had been subjected to torture during these *allanamientos*. While that study was limited to sixteen *poblaciones*, there is little reason to believe that these military procedures of detention and interrogation somehow differed from those applied in other *poblaciones*, leading us to conclude that the actual figure for torture survivors was far higher than 90,000.<sup>14</sup>

What all this effectively means is that just about every person in Chile knows the story of someone in their family, extended family, or friends' families who was the target of some form of state repression (Stern, 2006). In fact, a disproportionate number of my interview subjects have relatives who were detained and tortured, which likely has to do with the fact that many of my subjects come from families with long traditions of leftist militancy. For instance, Martina who we met above informed me that one of the uncles of her grandmother who held a post in the municipality of Santiago and was “closely linked to the Communist Party” was sent to Dawson Island, a concentration camp established by the regime on an island to the south of Chile where the leadership of the parties of the Popular Unity government was sent as well as political appointees to top bureaucratic posts. Similarly, Harry notes that his mother's uncle was detained and tortured in the National Stadium for anywhere between two weeks and a month for being a militant in the Communist Party. Marlene also mentioned that her father and her grandfather

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<sup>14</sup> I am very grateful to Peter Winn for clarifying this point.

were detained in the National Stadium, although she says they were not tortured. In Camilo's case, his father was detained "6, 7 times" for marches and protests, and one of his uncles was disappeared for two years when he deserted his position in the Carabineros after the coup. Camila's cousins were militants of the MIR and consequently had to go into exile in Sweden. Victor Orellana talks about his "uncles tortured prisoners, all of them", one of whom received reparations from the state. Luis Thieleman likewise has a grandfather who was a member of the United Popular Action Movement (MAPU), a radical Marxist splinter group from the Christian Democrats, and was imprisoned in the Tres Alamos camp and subsequently released only to die of sickness and old age.

Within the context of this overall pervasiveness, Nicole's family story is particularly evocative. Her father held a high-ranking post as a secretary in the Communist Party and was active in the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front. He was captured by the regime and imprisoned for three years in various torture centers throughout the country, including the notorious Villa Grimaldi clandestine torture site. She describes how she did not find out about his story until 2006:

They always hid these things from me, like that my dad was in prison, it was a taboo subject in my family. It was never talked about in family reunions, the subject was never touched...until the explosion of 2006, the marches, the *tomas*, and the whole student process in which I was involved and only then that the political subject could be talked about in the house.

It is not at all uncommon for Chilean parents to hide their political past from their children until they get older, and Martina and Camilo express similar sentiments about not learning this family history until becoming adults. Nonetheless, I think Nicole's case is very powerful, because it was

precisely her participation in the student mobilization of 2006 directed against a Pinochet-era law that brought her father to unveil the truth about his past. She continues to describe the context of her discovery:

A: No, they [parents] did not agree with my participation [in the mobilization]...because my dad, having been tortured, was left a little crazy [*quedó un poco loco*]. I think that the mark that the dictatorship left on him changed his life, his perspective on life is that of person with a lot of fear, a lot of bitterness [*resentimiento*], with a lot of hate, not towards human beings, but towards the political system they produce...my dad is a person who really supported the Communist Party, but in the moment that he was tortured, the Party was never there...he never again spoke of the Party, and did want us to be in the mobilizations out of fear, for fear that what he lived through would happen to us [*por miedo que nos pasara lo mismo que el vivió*]...Of course when the *toma* happened in 2006, we had a family conversation...where my father told the truth, he told us that he was tortured...he gave me the choice to decide whether I wanted to participate in the mobilization or stay back and be more protected.

Q: And you chose to participate?

A: Yes, of course I chose to participate!

I think it is important to underscore that while the case of Nicole's father is particularly extreme in the gravity of the violence inflicted on him, he is hardly exceptional and in many ways his story evokes the collective trauma of the "generation of '68" whose revolutionary project was brutally crushed by pervasive state terror. A tortured *mirista*<sup>15</sup> himself, Gabriel Salazar (2002) describes this collective defeat as "an experience of human tearing that pierced one's own flesh,

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<sup>15</sup> Term for a militant in the MIR.

that reduced to shreds the most intimate dignity of the person and destroyed the historical sense of social existence [*una vivencia de desgarramiento humano que atrevesó la carne propia, redujo a jirones la dignidad más íntima de la persona y destruyó el sentido histórico de la existencia social*]” (p. 228). Yet despite the very real presence of this shadow of dictatorial repression colonizing the present, many of the children of those who experienced this trauma, themselves born under civilian rule with no direct memory of that epoch, are unshaken in their commitment to student struggles. María Paz and Nicole are hardly my only subjects whose parents exhibited this sense of “resignation”, discouraging their children’s participation out of fear. My exchange with Harry, whose great uncle was detained and tortured in the National Stadium, is similarly indicative of this mindset:

Q: How does this [family] history impact you?

A: The way it impacts me is that there has always been a direct fear among my parents and grandparents of reliving these situations. Situations that are still lived today because there is political and police repression.

Yet, in spite of these very real family experiences, these students participated in the *tomas* at their high schools and continue to participate in student struggles through the time of being interviewed. Why is this the case?

Rather than fear, many of my subjects cited profound anger in the face of social injustice as the sentiment that motivated them to participate in the mobilizations. María Paz’s “accumulated rage” drove her to take part in the student movement, “because I wanted to destroy the system.” I want to return to this idea expressed above by María Paz of the dictatorship remaining in her “subconsciousness” and this being the source of deep indignation. Clara Han (2012) finds that this sentiment is not at all uncommon for the poor and marginalized people in

Chile, for whom “the word *torture* was used to emphasize the past continuous in the present” (p. 106). The proliferation of the use of this word in everyday contexts—“Debt is a torture,” “This system is a torture,” “I can’t find work; it’s torturing me” (p. 106)—evidences a discursive strategy of resistance employed by marginalized people to politicize their daily reality by demonstrating how seemingly personal issues like debt and unemployment were constituted and are continually reproduced through state violence. Perhaps for the *pinguinos* that I interviewed, many of whom incidentally come from fairly marginalized and politicized backgrounds, the response to these daily *tortures* is not “resignation” born of triggered memories of trauma, but this sense of “accumulated rage” that fuels action. For instance, Camilo, whose father was detained numerous times and whose uncle disappeared for two years, talks about how he became politicized:

I think that poverty as well, living in conditions of poverty such that some days you can’t go to school because you don’t have enough money for the bus, I think that these things also start generating bitterness and resentment towards an unequal life [*resentimiento y rencores con una vida desigual*], that bring you to this [politics], [and] you add to this a family political history, a history where people have been persecuted for fighting for the things they believe are just.

As we saw above, we see how Camilo’s social and political consciousness has emerged organically, in Raúl’s words, “from the material [*desde lo material*]”, that is, on the basis of his own experience with poverty and inequality in Chile. What is even more interesting is how, in discussing his motivations for participating in the student movement, he frames these experiences in the context of state repression brought to bear on members of his family who were similarly struggling to radically transform society. What is, in any case, clear from the students

that I interviewed is that their families' experience with state violence did not deter them from participating in student mobilizations. Marlene suggests that there might be a *generational* difference at work here in which lack of experience with state terror plays a constitutive role:

I believe that fear, if you look at 2006, it was a generation from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade [*primero a cuarto medio*]<sup>16</sup> that did not live through the fear [*no vivió el temor*] of the dictatorship, did not live through the fear of the curfews, it's not a frightened generation because it knows that it has rights. I know that I can take to the streets, because I have rights, and they can't torture me for having a poster in the street. So it's a generation that is not afraid, in contrast to our parents or our grandparents. So through this generation the others started realizing that they didn't have to be afraid...that was the great social occurrence [*el gran acontecimiento social*] of 2006, more than...the question of education and everything, I think that it was this sensation of freedom that was experienced that was not experienced since before the dictatorship, it made it so today there could be protests without fear of repression or things like that.

We find evidence for this thesis in María Paz's case whose parents went through such the transformation described here. While initially discouraging her from joining the Communist Youth, believing "that time had past" and fearing for their daughter's life, during the Penguin Revolution of 2006, María Paz's parents "changed their opinion totally, began to have hope again...began to feel again that something could be done." This transformation was such that by the mobilizations of 2011, María Paz and her parents attended a family march together, which greatly excited her parents, who were reminded of the mobilization for the 1988 "No" plebiscite that "changed their life." While this is merely one individual case, I think it does serve to perhaps

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<sup>16</sup> Chilean secondary education similarly consists of four years/grades, so for convenience I decided to adopt the U.S. parlance of "9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade".

illuminate the mindset of a larger number of people of the “generation of ‘68” for whom 2006 likewise represented a kind of watershed moment that allowed them to believe again in the possibility of historical social transformation in an era defined by the crowning of neoliberalism as the “end of history” to which there was “no alternative”.

I want to explore more this notion of “freedom from fear” that seems to characterize the subject position of Chilean secondary students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In terms of political opportunity structure, there is little doubt that the return to civilian rule in 1990 has meant a dramatic lowering of the potential costs borne by those participating in contentious mobilization. During the military dictatorship, dozens of people, mostly poor youth from the *poblaciones*, were killed by state security forces in the course of popular mobilizations. In contrast, for Chilean secondary students in 2001 and 2006, the risks were significantly fewer and less severe:

[If] you are detained [*te llevan preso*] in Chile at the age of 16, they let you go after two yours and you go home. You can be detained 20 times in a month at 16 and nothing will happen to you, therefore nothing happens to secondary students. The worst that can happen to you is if it’s really ugly, that Carabineros can beat you until they get bored, but the pain goes away (Luis Thielemann).

Therefore, having been born under civilian rule, this generation of secondary students not only has no direct memory of state violence to deter them from mobilizing, but they also face relatively little risk, at least as compared to their predecessors in the 1980s. For instance, Santiago, whose parents were militants in the Communist Party and the MIR, nonchalantly mentioned that he was detained but “never legally a prisoner”; he was promptly released and never told his mother. María Paz similarly contrasts her own lack of fear with that of her parents:

For example, [in] the *toma* of the school, it never scared me to occupy my school [*nunca me dio miedo tomarme mi colegio*]. I would enter the school at four in the morning, and break a window in order to enter—I never felt afraid with this, but them [parents], yes, because they lived in the Dictatorship, I didn't.

We therefore see that a transformed political opportunity structure along with a generational shift represent important factors in setting the stage for mass secondary student mobilization in 2006. Following McAdam et al. (2001), these two factors must be viewed together as part of the same subjective process of movement identity construction. That is, the reduction in the costs of social mobilization cannot be taken as some “objective” fact that automatically triggered protests, but had to be subjectively perceived by students as an actionable opportunity as part of a cognitive process that was informed by the memory of political repression communicated by their parents. Evidently, for all of the students that I interviewed and likely for the 800,000 students mobilized throughout Chile in 2006, this historical memory of repression did not deter them from seizing this opportunity and mobilizing. Nonetheless, there is a methodological issue in that I did not interview students who did *not* participate due to their parents' fear or their own. Raúl attests to the existence of these students in his school:

There was a large group in the school that was not involved in politics because their families had experienced traumatic events. For example, my friend whose parents were militants in the Socialist Party did not get involved in politics because his parents were afraid of the military, were afraid of the police [*le tenían miedo a los milicos, le tenían miedo a los pacos*].

While these students are by no means the majority, their experiences are no less real and must thus be factored into any account of generational political identity.

Conversely, university students did not similarly mobilize on a mass scale until 2011. Why was this the case? While secondary students may indeed face lower costs of mobilization since the transition, this may not be the case across the board. For instance, in the case of university students, Luis Thielemann notes, “Once you’re already an adult, over 18 years old, they detain you [*te llevan preso*] and they can plant Molotov bombs on you and charge you with terrorism [*te pueden encaletar bombas Molotov y te pasan por terrorism*].” In this same vein, Harry does not seem to share Marlene’s optimistic assessment of brutal repression being a thing of the past. As we saw above, he seems to recognize that his family’s fear of repression is not entirely unfounded, reminding us that these “situations that are still lived today because there is political and police repression.” He claims that “the same ideology of the dictatorship is experienced today, an anti-social movements ideology,” and he points to recent repressive legislation proposed by the Piñera government, such as the Hintzpetter Law,<sup>17</sup> as evidence. In this way, the greater potential severity of state repression may represent an important factor in constraining university student mobilization.

Nonetheless, university students mobilized en masse in 2011, so evidently the relatively more severe threat of repression alone cannot explain the absence of a mass university student movement until the “Chilean Winter”. On the one hand, university students find themselves in a more precarious position; they simply have more to lose. Camilo compares university and secondary students in this respect:

With the university student the same thing has always happened...they yield [*se bajan*] when their interests of scholarship, credits become at risk, they retreat from one moment

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<sup>17</sup> The Hintzpetter Law, otherwise known as the *ley anti-encapuchado* [anti-hood law], proposed to criminalize the covering of the face at demonstrations [*encapucharse*], which is a common tactic employed by student demonstrators in their confrontation with state security forces.

to the next. The secondary student, the *pingüino*... doesn't care about these things, she has less fear, because she has less incidence in society, she is not someone who has great importance nor relevance for society as she is someone that will later be an agent of the labor force for this system.

Thus, for Camilo, the great mass of secondary students, overwhelmingly from the peripheries of Santiago like himself, represent the true revolutionary agent by virtue of their future position as Chile's super exploitable and disposable lumpen proletariat. In contrast to university students who are invested in the system by virtue of their debt and their inculcated faith in social mobility,<sup>18</sup> the great majority of secondary students, most of whom will never see a university hall, are akin to Fanon's (1963) peasants in that "they have nothing to lose and everything to gain" (p. 47). In their song titled "Lumpen", the Chilean anarchist hip hop group Salvaje Decibal evokes this sense of subaltern agency:

That things are not okay/ that for your person there isn't a job ["slot"]/ The devil spit out Cupid and without any new tricks/ now he is an alcoholic and a drug addict/exchanged his bow and arrow for macheteing and robbing/ in this way I make the play *bobo*...I sack the empire, money, jewels, many properties/ they have to give them all up/ when the lumpen irrupts/ their wimpy system of security/ and enters with his/her *capucha* [*Que las cosas no están bien/ que pa tu persona no hay cupo/ el diablo escupió Cupido y sin ocupar ningún nuevo truco/ ahora es alcohólico y drogo/ cambió su arco y flecha por macheteo y robo/ así que vivo la jugada bobo...Saqueo al imperio/ dinero, joyas,*

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<sup>18</sup> Since the publication of Tomás Moulian's *Chile Actual: La Anatomía de un Mito* (1997), there has been a growing debate on the role of debt in forging "credit card citizens" in which the politicizing effects of flexibilized labor discipline are apparently counteracted by debt-fueled consumerism. See Ariztia (2013), Barros (2010), Cruz Feliciano & Véliz Montero (2007), Clara Han, (2012), Ossandrón (forthcoming), Stillerman (2004, 2010).

*propiedades muchas/ tienen que entregarlas todas cuando el lumpen irrumpe su sistema de seguridad debilucho/ y entra con su capucha].*

Here we see in visceral poetic language that might rival Fanon the Manichean antagonism between lumpen and bourgeois, between colonized and colonizer, in which the former desires nothing more than to violently take the place of the latter, but can only truly be dialectically resolved with the abolition of the very colonial relation that gives these subject positions meaning. The profanation of the sacred, symbolized by the Devil spitting out Cupid, might be interpreted as a metaphor for the process by which capitalism reproduces the lumpen proletariat who, according to Fanon (1963), “are the truth of the system” (p. 38) and who could very well represent its gravediggers, following George Jackson and the Black Panther Party.

I want to underscore that the music of Salvaje Decibal and other underground hip hop and punk artists does not just express through its lyrics the social reality of the lumpen, these *secundarios* of the *poblaciones*, but it itself forms an organic part of that reality. This music is very much the “cultural blood” of this *pingüino* generation, and as such it represents the foundation of the new “circuit of socialization” of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Left, insofar as it reflects new bottom-up forms of socio-political organization. That is, this “new popular music” itself embodies this “assembliest logic” in that “it is sung, preferably, in the same place where people live for the same people who live there [*se canta, preferentemente, en el mismo lugar donde se vive y para los mismos que viven allí*] (Salazar, 2002, p. 278).

### **¡Qué se Acabe la LOCE!: Reflections on Movement Radicalization**

In pursuing the micro-level dimensions of secondary student politicization, I have not yet touched on the cumulative effect of this politicization on the progressive radicalization of the movement as a whole. In 2001, several thousand secondary students mobilized in the capital

demanding a free public transportation pass. In 2006, over 800,000 students mobilized nationwide, this time demanding the derogation of the supreme educational law in the country. How did this dramatic expansion of the quantity of students mobilized as well as radicalization in the scope of demands come about? In the context of the making of a mass movement, this question might be reframed in the following way: under what conditions are the masses of secondary students of the country, much of whom come from working class neighborhoods on the periphery of Santiago, willing to fight, not just for their immediate concrete interests embodied in the transportation pass, but for the overturning of the neoliberal educational model? Following Gramsci (1971), question is thus one of consciousness, namely to what extent has the “common sense” of the bases of the student movement become “enriched...transformed” in order that they are willing to fight for more radical, structural demands? In 2001, Luis Thielemann notes that the consciousness of the student masses was simply not at this level:

But in 2001, the movement can be this and nothing more. In other words, it can generate a disturbance but it can't go farther than that [*hasta ahí llega*], because the ACES was only created a year before, because the type of students that are mobilized are ready [*dispuesto*] to fight for the *pase escolar*, but not for socialism nor for ending neoliberalism in education.

In this way, we might conclude that a movement can only advance as far as the “common sense” of the bases permits, for people are only willing to fight for that which they perceive to have urgent bearing on their daily lives. And of course this process of student politicization does not just happen spontaneously in all contexts. Rather there are certain organizational preconditions, namely the existence of student *colectivos* as a crucial dimension of the “circuit of socialization” of the popular Left discussed above. During the *mochilazo* in 2001, the “baptism” of the

secondary student movement (Luis Thielemann), these *colectivos* were only active in a handful of elite public high schools, or *emblemáticos*, like the *Liceo de Aplicación* and still quite nascent at that. By 2006, there was a strong tradition of grass-roots student organizing at the *emblemáticos*, which was largely hegemonized by the radical Left. It was students from these *emblemáticos*, in the center of Santiago, who, according to María Paz, “were the protagonists of 2006” that set the national agenda. At that moment, these students, without doubt, represented the element with the most advanced political consciousness within the movement. For them, the demand for the derogation of the LOCE was organically implicated in the struggle against “the educational system of *pinochetismo*” (Luis Thielemann). María Paz articulates this consciousness in the context of her more cosmopolitan, emblematic high school:

In my generation in the [*liceo*] Tajamar, there wasn't anybody who openly defended the dictatorship, so if they were to present you with the derogation of a law that is a *ley de amarre*,<sup>19</sup> a law that ties you to the dictatorship [*amarre a la dictadura*], it's very easy have the whole school convinced that it's necessary to derogate it, because you're identifying it directly with a very dark past for our country such that one repudiates it right away. So in emotional terms, they tell you, “okay we want to derogate the law dictated by the dictatorship,” and you say, “obviously, because I'm not in favor of the dictatorship and I want to put an end to all continuity we have with that historical

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<sup>19</sup> “The LOCE is one of the norms known as the “*leyes de amarre de la dictadura*,” because with these laws the institutional framework of the dictatorship was “held in place” [*amarró*], making it practically unreformable [*con éstas se “amarró” una institucionalidad dictatorial haciéndola prácticamente irreformable*]. These laws were promulgated in the majority between December of 1989 and March of 1990, after the election of the first democratic president of the Republic and the first democratic Congress [since the 1973]. They have the status of “organic constitutional laws”, as they develop a precept or principle established in the Constitution [of 1980], for this reason they are an integral part of that document. Article 63, Section 2 declares that, “for their approval, modification, or derogation, they will require 4/7 of the active deputies and senators.” (Moraga, 2006, p. 185, translation mine).

period.” So therefore I believe that the demand for the derogation of the LOCE had a whole lot of support.

We see here that in the elite *emblemáticos*, or at least in the *Tajamar*, there seemed to be some level of consciousness of the organic link between the struggle against neoliberalism in education and the struggle against the authoritarian legacy of Pinochet. Thus, the demand for the derogation of the LOCE was not perceived by these students as abstract and intangible, but was seen as just as relevant to their lives as the more concrete demands for the free student transportation pass and free PSU [University Selection Test]:

Those demands were almost like one’s skin [*eran como casi de piel para uno*], for every girl to whom you were to present the petition, you mechanically would say “I agree,” because how were you not going to agree with things that affect you directly? [*¿cómo no ibas a estar de acuerdo con cosas que a ti te afectaban directamente?*] (María Paz).

It is critical to emphasize that it did not come about “naturally” or “spontaneously” that these students came to identify so organically with these demands. Rather, this “common sense” had to be forged in the course of a protracted process of socio-political organizing that began in the late ‘90s with the steps towards the formation of the ACES.

However, it must be recognized that this consciousness of these demands was “common sense” and exactly that. That is, this consciousness had not yet acquired the character of what Gramsci (1971) terms “good sense”, namely the capacity for critical reflection grounded in empirical reality and informed by elements of “formal” ideology. María Paz informs us that her comrades were not motivated to have deep, thoroughgoing discussions about the national petition, instead announcing, “yes we agree,” and when the moment of the *toma* arrived, “they weren’t necessarily going to participate, they didn’t necessarily discuss, but rather they voted for

strikes out of laziness, convenience, out of not wanting to go to class.” Therefore, at least in the case of the *Tajamar*, it was only a small minority of the students who were charged with maintaining the *toma* over a period of several weeks, while the rest of the students went home on vacations. Raúl reports that in the context of the INBA, although “the majority of the people had internalized the demands and supported them at least partially,” participation similarly dropped off. Of the fifteen members of his grade who were participating in the *toma* at the beginning only four or five remained after two weeks of a mobilization, which in Raúl’s school would last three weeks to a month. However, in Raúl’s school, the students spent many hours in assemblies discussing the national petition as well as considerations of media coverage in light of the FIFA World Cup to be held in Germany that summer. Raúl found these discussions very “fruitful and exciting” and paradoxically more so than the discussions held in his faculty of the University of Chile during the mobilization of 2011.

In this way, even in the elite *emblemáticos*, there were varying differences in the level of consciousness between the leadership and the bases. In fact, the latter, while supporting the demands of the national petition, nonetheless in some cases were more motivated by their school’s respective “internal demands”, which could include any number of local issues. For instance, in the case of the INBA, many of Raúl’s comrades fought especially for the internal demands concerning the school’s repressive dress code in which students were regularly suspended for wearing tennis shoes, having long hair, or for failing to wear a suit jacket. Although the students’ national demands were ultimately defeated, many of these local struggles were actually successful, and in the case of the INBA, the students were victorious in their internal demands, which translated to “a loosening of the very military character that the school had in the internal question [*se desrigidizó el marco tan milico que tenía el colegio en la*

*interna*].” Thus, the struggle against the “*pinochetista* high school” [*colegio pinochetista*] (Luis Thielemann) was not limited to the national demand for the derogation of the LOCE but was also waged at the local level in the form of battles over concrete, social issues that directly impacted the students’ daily lives. These internal demands cannot be minimized in their importance, for they played a critical role in elaborating increasingly politicized forms of consciousness among the student bases.

Unfortunately, due to the limitations of my sample, I cannot speak to the character of the relationship between internal demands and the national petitions in municipal and charter schools, particularly those on the periphery.<sup>20</sup> As mentioned above, Rodrigo affirms that the students in his school supported the national demands, because profit was a highly tangible reality manifested in conditions of material deprivation in their privately-administered school. Meanwhile, in the case of Camila’s Catholic charter school, the national demand for de-municipalization of education was initially seen as “their problem”, that is, the problem of students in poor municipal schools. For her and her fellow students, the national demands for the free student transportation pass and free PSU were seen as much more pressing and relevant issues that “sparked the majority to mobilize.” However, through these more immediate, concrete demands, their understanding of the demand for the derogation of the LOCE,

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<sup>20</sup> As I signaled above in the introduction, my sample was undoubtedly skewed towards an overrepresentation of the *emblemáticos* of Santiago center, which constituted the vanguard of the struggle of 2006. Nonetheless, had I had more time, I would have attempted to dramatically broaden my sample to include over fifty *pingüinos* drawn from every school that was occupied in Santiago in 2006. Such a diverse sample would offer a lens into the socio-political processes at work behind every *toma*, affording me a more sophisticated understanding of the consciousness, or “common sense”, of the students in a variety of settings. More specifically, with such a sample, I could probably offer a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the national petition and internal demands within a plethora of specific contexts. Were students in peripheral municipal and charter schools really motivated more by internal demands (i.e. infrastructure, authoritarian rules, etc.) than by the national demand for the derogation of the LOCE? With such an expanded sample, perhaps I could more adequately answer this question.

“deepened”. That is, as they learned more about the material conditions in municipal schools—“schools that leaked when it rained, that didn’t have enough chairs nor tables, nor books”—they began to develop a sense of solidarity that underpinned their support for the end of the LOCE. Rodrigo and Martina similarly report that their school’s participation was greatly motivated by a feeling of solidarity with nearby municipal schools that were mobilized as well as by what I suspect to be a sentiment of wanting to be part of a “historic” moment.

In conclusion, we can conceive of the period between the *mochilazo* of 2001 and the Penguin Revolution of 2006 as part of an extended process of political construction that centered on the elaboration of an increasingly sophisticated socio-political consciousness among Chilean secondary students that was inevitably uneven, with important variation among geographic regions and among types of schools. That is, students had to come to view the derogation of the LOCE in the same concrete terms as they did the *pase escolar*, namely as an extension of their own “skin”. At the same time, this process was not entirely “bottom up” insofar as the national petition, as María Paz and Victor Orellana point out, did come “from above”, namely from the radical Left *colectivos* in the *emblemáticos* who led the movement since the founding of the ACES. Nonetheless, my object in this section is to show that this “top down” national petition would never have been taken up as a banner of struggle by the bases throughout the country if not for this process of grassroots organizing began in the late ‘90s. In this way, issues had to be framed in a way that they would resonate with the “common sense” of the student mass, that is, where they are at politically at any given moment. There is thus a dialectical relationship between the “bottom up” process of forging critical consciousness among the grassroots and the “top down” practices of framing movement demands, rendering mass mobilization impossible without a “frame [that] strikes a responsive cord in that it rings true with extant beliefs, myths,

folktales, and the like” (Snow & Benford, p.141). For this very reason, popular culture as a “circuit of socialization” for the new Chilean Left proved so critical and, as we will see in the following chapter, will remain central to the movement in the course of its expansion and radicalization between 2006 and 2011.

## CHAPTER IV: “CHILEAN WINTER”

Beginning in June 2011, hundreds of thousands Chilean students across the country — secondary and university, public and private—go on strike indefinitely in a mobilization that would last the entire winter semester of 2011. This is the “Chilean Winter”, which has been viewed as the Chilean counterpart to the mass social mobilizations simultaneously sweeping the world, including the Arab Spring, the Spanish *Indignados*, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and the Quebecois student uprising. The student demands are unprecedented, foremost of which is the call for free public, quality education at both the secondary and university levels for all Chileans, among a plethora of other demands concerning everything from the democratization of university administration to the abolition of the PSU (Rossi, 2012). The rallying cry is “¡no al lucro! [no profit!],” which connotes a rejection of neoliberalism, not just in the educational arena, but in society as a whole. The demand is not merely the demunicipalization of education, but the “toppling of the model” [*El Derrumbe del Modelo*], which incidentally was the title of the popular book by that same name written by Chilean sociologist Alberto Mayol of the University of Chile. We can pose the same question that we posed at the beginning of the last chapter, namely how did we get here from the mobilizations against the LOCE in 2006? In this chapter, I will chart the evolution of the movement through 2011, examining its transformations both in the content of its demands as well as in its organizational forms.

### **2006: Betrayal and “Loss of Innocence”**

Although taken initially off guard by the sudden outbreak of the Penguin Revolution in April 2006 and at first condemning these mobilizations, the government of Michelle Bachelet eventually regrouped and announced on national television that all student demands would be met in exchange for the demobilization of the students (OPECH, 2010). Specifically, the President pledged to create a Special Presidential Counsel on the Quality of Education which

would be tasked with preparing a piece of legislation that would replace the LOCE in coordination with the Congress. The leaders of the student movement took the President at her word and subsequently demobilized, cautiously observing as the new legislation was developed and debated in Congress. However, the new General Law of Education (LGE) was born out of closed-door agreements between the Concertación and the Right, and as such did not represent a fundamental rupture with the LOCE (OPECH, 2010). First, the new legislation did not alter the “subsidizing role” of the state, in which the right to education is not guaranteed by the state, but is the responsibility of individual parents (OPECH, 2010, p. 129). From this “subsidizing role” follows the maintenance of a dual system of privatized and municipalized education in which municipal and charter [*subvencionado*] schools receive equal funding, while the latter retains the right to discriminate from sixth grade onwards in the selection of students, enabling them to select the students with fewer needs (OPECH, 2010). Lastly, the LGE does not reverse the subordination of the right of education to the “freedom of instruction”, i.e. freedom to open educational establishments enshrined in the Constitution, which affords private educational providers the right to profit [*lucro*] (OPECH, 2010). In short, with the passage of the LGE into law, there was little doubt that, in the words of FECH president Giorgio Boccardo, “the pillars of the LOCE remain intact” (OPECH, 2010, p. 102, translation mine).

For the thousands of young people who fought tirelessly to bring down the LOCE, the LGE could only come as a profound betrayal. This sense of deception and betrayal is expressed very clearly by María Paz:

2006 passed and we went home, so the moment was very pretty, because it gave us all hope that “we can change things”. But of course Bachelet comes out talking on the national television saying that okay, it was enough, now was the time to dialogue, and in

this way everybody ended [*bajaban*] the *tomas* and we went home and there we stayed and nothing changed. We are continuing in the same model still. So therefore for me the student movement of 2006 causes me a lot of deception.

María Paz is hardly the only one to articulate a deep discontent in the face of the perpetuation of status quo even after such an historic moment of student struggle. However, for Luis Thielemann, this discontent was not just directed against the figure of Michele Bachelet but the Chilean political class as a whole:

For the generation who were secondary students at that time and later were university students or workers, Bachelet had promised everything on television, and had not delivered, but rather in 2008 signed the LGE, which was a rejuvenation of the LOCE that maintained the *pinochetista* logic of education, that maintained the neoliberal system, that did not include any of the secondary student demands from 2006. This was seen as a betrayal not only by Bachelet but by the entire political class.

Thus, while not ultimately a victory, the Penguin Revolution proved an instructive political experience for the generation of secondary students who participated, for whom 2006 represented a “loss of innocence” vis-à-vis the political class and the possibility of change by way of established institutional channels (Thielemann, 2012, p. 48). Rodrigo describes this transformation in his thinking initiated in 2006:

In 2006, these curiosities [*inquiétudes*] and these little sparks are born, which inform my reflections on Chilean society, concerning social problems, the authorities, the economic structure. So by 2011, government authority lost all credibility and respect for me...I believe that I wasn't at all naïve, and I'm not going to believe the story that the politicians

tell, and much less the president<sup>21</sup> that we have, knowing where he comes from, knowing which economic group he belongs to.

For Rodrigo, then, the image of the state as the neutral arbiter of competing social interests is totally demystified, as the state is revealed to be intimately identified with the very economic groups with stakes in the neoliberal model of education. This unmasking of the political class would have important practical implications for 2011, as we will see in the next section.

### **2011: Radicalization and Political Learning**

The betrayal of the student movement at the hands of the political class in 2006 was interpreted by the generation of *pinguinos* who participated as a series of valuable political lessons, which were subsequently put into effect in 2011. Camila elaborates on one of these lessons:

Q: What did you all learn in 2006 that you applied in 2011?

A: The first thing was not to trust in traditional politics, given what had happened with the LOCE. We had to keep pressuring until we get the final result. Anything that they offered us, they are going to give us something else unless we keep pressuring. We can't trust again in the promise that we're going to get together to have a discussion. In 2011, we the students wanted to be participants of the discussion.

The key insight expressed here is that the movement cannot let up on the pressure and expect to be able to participate in negotiations. Interestingly, former Communist president of the FECH in 2011 Camila Vallejo comes to a similar conclusion:

I think that [2006] reaffirmed a little the disconfidence towards the political class. During the "Penguin Revolution"...the problem is that...the mobilizations...were ended when it

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<sup>21</sup> Rodrigo is referring to former president Sebastian Piñera, who is one of the wealthiest businessmen in the country.

was time to negotiate, so when one is not mobilized, one ceases to be a negotiator with the capacity to negotiate. This left a mark on the student movement that allowed us today not to fall so easily into instances of cooptation by the political class...” (Ouviaña, 2012, p. 15).

While indeed a lucid observation by the ex-president of the FECH, it is nonetheless ironic that it was in fact her very own Communist Party (PC) that sought a backdoor agreement with the education minister Lavín that would bring about a rapid solution of the conflict in exchange for the party’s “late integration into the equilibrium of the transition” (Ruiz, 2014, p. 63; translation mine). This proposed agreement was paradoxically defeated not by the students of Vallejo’s own University of Chile but by the students of the private universities, such as the Centers of Technical Formation, the Professional Institutes, and the Technical Schools, “whose matriculation in recent years has surpassed the old state and private institutions” (Ruiz, 2014, p. 63, translation mine). Luis Thielemann contextualizes this historical moment:

The Communist Party tries to negotiate with the Concertación and the majority of parliamentarians in the House of Deputies that the conflict is evacuated to the parliament and the parliament pressures the government and a new law is instituted, and the student movement wins. That was the strategy of the PC in a moment of 2011. The PC tries it and the whole Left says “no.” The PC didn’t have a majority in the deliberative spaces of the student movement, and therefore the bases, the intermediate leadership, and the upper leadership of the CONFECH, all of them say, “no,” and it’s a “no” with reason and not just bureaucratic opposition to the PC, but that the Parliament cannot be trusted: “The Parliament is going to fuck us, the Parliament is going to betray us like they betrayed us in 2008, in 2006, no.” And here...the idea is established that the student movement

negotiates with the government or doesn't negotiate. The student movement negotiates directly with the government and doesn't pass through the natural mediators of any Western political system.

First, we see that the movement's refusal to demobilize and allow for parliamentary mediation in favor of direct negotiation in the heat of struggle represents a key form of "tactical innovation" (McAdam, 1983; McAdam et al., 2001), in which the movement adapts its strategic and tactical repertoires in response to past instances of defeat. Second, it is crucial to note that this innovation arose in part from "the bases" whose distrust of the political class stemming from their diagnosis of 2006 led them to favor a strategy of direct negotiation. In this way, we observe that the "common sense" of the bases is gradually being transformed into "good sense", which in turn informs the political praxis of the movement. Part of this "good sense" is the incipient recognition that the parliament is not a neutral arbiter of conflictive interests, but in fact the production of this very image is precisely its function as an Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser, 2014). That is, the parliament, as the fulcrum of representative democracy, is tasked with channeling all socio-political conflicts into institutional channels where they can be resolved in accordance with interests of the hegemonic bloc. However, people must *believe* in the myth of the neutrality and legitimacy of the parliament in order to cede their own agency. It is exactly this belief rooted in "common sense" that was shattered in 2006 and afterwards, which was gradually translated into a new political praxis that was embodied in the call for direct negotiations with the government. Thus, we see that "common sense" contains an amalgam of folk beliefs—"an infinity of traces" in gramscian terms—some of which reinforce bourgeois hegemony and some which lend themselves to subversive appropriation and radical resignification.

Nevertheless, this distrust of parliamentary politics was directed not only outwards towards the political class but also inwards. For some of the students whom I interviewed the very organizational structures of the student movement were contaminated by this parliamentary logic. María Paz, who became a high-ranking member of the Communist Youth before leaving the organization in 2008, articulates her critique:

Look in 2008 I began to understand. Well I started to study pedagogy and I began to break with this authoritarian logic of understanding politics shared by the Communist Youth, of understanding itself as a vanguard that had to go before the masses and say, “this is what you have to do.” This is what we did in 2006, we arrived with a petition and we said, “okay you all need to get on board [*tienen que sumar*], because already discussed this for you, we did the thinking for you, and now you have to get on board.” So seeing this reality and continuing with the *Jota* [Communist Youth], I realized that this vanguardist logic continues reproducing itself, I realized that this wasn’t what I believed necessary for a social movement...I realized that while it was the parties that led [*movían*] the social movements, we weren’t going to obtain any decent triumphs at least, because we continue to have an obedient mass that doesn’t really self-reflect [*no reflexiona*], so when this conjuncture of masses ends, the masses who never reflected for themselves go home and forget and continue living their lives, continuing with the same routine with motivations that have nothing to do with the motives for which they fought.

In this way, 2006 set María Paz as well as many others on a path of rupture not just with parliamentarianism, but with the historic standard-bearer of the old Chilean Left, the Communist Party. However, for María Paz, it was precisely the new organizational logic realized on a mass scale in 2006 that revealed to her what remained of this “vanguardist logic”. In a dialectical

manner, she had to experience the possibility of the new before she could perceive the outmoded character of the old:

I believe that 2006 left us with a lesson, that the organizational logic that was totally a revelation. In other words, we were still with this logic of leadership that the leaders make decisions for the rest, and then in 2006, it was said: “No *po*, we want an assembliest logic in which the leaders don’t make decisions because they are accountable to the bases.”

This is the same “assembliest logic” that we saw developing in the universities under the leadership of the SurDa in the late ‘90s and in many elite municipal high schools in the early 2000s under the umbrella of the ACES. However, at least according to María Paz, this “assembliest logic” was not “applied in the way it should have been applied” until 2011. We do find evidence for her thesis in the torpedoing of Camila Vallejo and the Communist Party’s bid to negotiate a fast-track parliamentary solution to the conflict in 2011, which was largely the outcome of pressure from the bases, especially from those outside of the traditional universities.

However, I think that it is important to contextualize María Paz’s critique in her relationship with the Communist Youth and not universalize it in an unqualified manner. While in the context of her work for the *Jota* in her high school she did not feel that a “vanguardist logic” was overcome in favor an “assembliest” one, this does not necessarily mean that others had a similar experience. For instance, Raúl recounted in the previous chapter that his school had regular discussions among the bases that were quite “fruitful and exciting”. For him, these discussions were actually more engaging and productive than those that took place in the assemblies of the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities of the University of Chile during 2011, which were dominated by certain “political groups that benefit from the political organization” in

the faculty. Martina similarly reported that she was hesitant to participate in the assemblies of the faculty during 2011:

In general I never participated in the activities that they do here at the faculty, I feel that they are very politicized, you're 'trosko' [Trotskyist] or you're 'anarko' [anarchist], you can't be in the middle, so I prefer to go the marches and not take up the banner [*abanderarme*] of any political party.

Ironically this situation in the faculty seems to mirror the very same “vanguardist logic” denounced by María Paz in the case of the Communist Youth, only that this time it is perpetuated by groups that politically and ideologically disavow this logic. In sum, 2011 cannot not be taken to be some kind of “final point” in which an alternative, “assemblist logic” was perfected, but represents another just another moment in an uneven and fragmentary process of political learning.

In this vein, we see that 2006 did not signify a finite series of “lessons” that were mechanically applied in 2011. Rather, we must situate 2006 and 2011 as important conjunctures within a broader *process* of political learning that has made the Chilean student movement what it is today. Through individual accounts we can begin to make out some of these *micro* patterns of political learning that underlie this broader process. Rodrigo’s story is a case in point:

And there began was my process of internal reflection, and from there the music influenced me as well, listening to social themes, and more precisely themes of rap, of Victor Jara, this music that stimulates your thinking about these issues. And in 2008, my comrades and I had it clear, and we definitely knew that we had a system that was fucking us from all sides [*que nos estaba cagando por todos lados*]. So it was necessary to act against it in some way, and in our own local space, our school, we said, “okay let’s

do something.” We had these days of discussion in order that the *cabros* who wanted to participate, could think and discuss issues that in the school were not discussed because there wasn’t time, you’re not going to go over them in class and if your family doesn’t have any political tendency, you’re never going hear them, you’re never going to discuss them. So we had to begin to begin to have debates about the reality that we have, the model which we are living, the thing that is affecting us, which are problems on the national and local levels in our *barrio*, school, family, etc.

First, I think it is important to highlight the role of the music in channeling political reflection. Again, we see this alternative “cultural pattern” of the popular Left that is fundamentally hybrid in nature, combining hip hop with Victor Jara, the iconic figure of Chilean “New Song”.<sup>22</sup> Second, we get a sense of the indispensable politicizing role that *colectivos* such as this one play for students like Rodrigo who did not grow up in a leftwing environment, like that of Raúl, where these types of discussions might have been commonplace at the family dinner table. Rather, for Rodrigo and so many others, political consciousness had to be constructed essentially from scratch and the Penguin Revolution gave immense impetus to this process. Therefore, for this generation of *secundarios*, the Penguin Revolution was critical in setting off this dialectic of action and reflection that would open the way for renewed action in 2011.

This radicalizing role of the *colectivos* must also be situated in the more macro context of the movement as a whole. By 2011, these radical Left *colectivos* were not merely confined to the elite *emblemáticos* in the center of Santiago, but had spread to municipal and charter schools on the periphery. Rodrigo and his comrades’ formation of a *colectivo* in their charter school in the

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<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, there are various remixes of classic Victor Jara songs by hip hop groups both in Chile and internationally. For instance, the Chilean hip hop group Song Fusion produced a remix of Jara’s “Vientos del Pueblo” in commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the military coup in 2013: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy4TjToOp5Y&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy4TjToOp5Y&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

neighborhood of Maipú on the southwest periphery of Santiago is indicative of this trend. These *colectivos* were instrumental in extending the scope of the movement in a far more transversal way such that by 2011 there was a multiplicity of protagonists and not just the *emblemáticos* as it was in 2006. Luis Thielemann explains this transformation:

In 2011 when the secondary student movement already had leftwing organizations of the periphery, it had student *colectivos* in all parts, every school has a center of students [*centro de alumnos*], there's a tradition of how to take to occupy [*tomarse*] one's school. In 2001, almost no one knew how to occupy their high school [*liceo*]. The high schools that were occupied, where there was tradition of *tomas*, like the *Liceo de Aplicación*, the *tomas* lasted a day. In 2006, they do the *tomas*...I remember that we were here [in the FECH]; I worked in the secretary of communication of the FECH, and we would see how the same students of the small leftist groups would meet here [the FECH] and go to a high school in San Miguel, even though no one was a student [there]...but since there was no tradition of *tomas* in the *liceo* of San Miguel, these *muchachos* from other high schools in Santiago would come and occupy the school, and the *cabros* learned to occupy the school, and therefore in 2011, the *tomas* exploded all over, because now there is a tradition of *tomas*. You have to understand that before 2001, you would occupy your school, and they would throw you out [*te echaban*] the next day.

First, we note the critical role played by *colectivos* in disseminating new tactical repertoires, which is of course a form of “tactical innovation” (McAdam et al., 2001), to which the state would respond with increased repression, as we will see below. Second we observe that the grassroots, “assemblist logic” of the *colectivos* successfully decenters the *emblemáticos* at the helm of the movement, signaling an important step in overcoming the antagonism between the

more elite schools at the center of Santiago and those on the periphery. This is of course symptomatic of a geography of class in which the traditional middle classes from Santiago Centro, Ñuñoa, and other historic neighborhoods attend the emblematic public high schools and traditional elite universities of the CRUC, while the “new middle classes” from the peripheral “suburbs” of Maipú, la Florida, and others send their children to charter schools as well as private, non-selective universities and technical institutes (Ruiz, 2014). It is precisely these children of the “new middle classes” who, as Victor Orellana stated above, “do not respond to the cultural pattern of the traditional Left,” which consists of trade unions and historic political parties like the Communist and Socialist parties (Ruiz, 2014).<sup>23</sup> Rather, as we saw in the last chapter, these youths are forging their own political organizations that follow a distinct “assemblage logic” within an alternative “circuit of socialization” largely shaped by punk and hip hop subcultures.

Moreover, the forging of this new leftwing political culture must be contextualized as an effort to channel the deep discontent with the neoliberal model that has been growing in Chile over the past two decades (Mayol, 2012; Ruiz, 2014). The neoliberal model of accumulation has produced a “homogenization of the conditions of life of the middle segments in the distribution of income who, in the face of the stagnation of wages and growing exclusion from the profits of large companies, share similar conditions of life” (Ruiz, 2014, p. 68, translation mine). The education system looms large in this discontent, given that Chilean elites have presented the promise of social mobility implicit in higher education as the answer to ever widening levels of

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<sup>23</sup> While we must consider this intersection of geography, class, and education in our analysis of the student movement, we must not treat the articulation of these variables as absolute determinants, for they are always mediated by historical contingency. For instance, the municipality of San Miguel mentioned above has a reputation for Communist militancy, known as the “red *communa* [*communa roja*]” and is not located on the periphery of Santiago, yet despite this legacy, the tradition of the *toma* had been apparently lost or forgotten, at least at the secondary level, and had to be consequently reinvented.

social inequality (Comargo, 2012, Orellana, 2011). This promise has largely fallen flat. According to Urzúa (2012) of the conservative Center of Public Studies, two of every five university graduates would have had better wages if they had begun working immediately after graduating. Equally pressing is the issue of student over-indebtedness, which since the privatization of student credit with the creation of the *Crédito de Aval de Estado* (CAE) has reached an average of close to 60% over available income (Ruiz, 2014). For these new waged middle strata facing crushing debt and stagnant wages, the demands of the student movement were hardly foreign and intangible, but responded to their immediate material interests. These strata would thus come to constitute almost a natural constituency of the movement.

In this context, following Snow and Benford (1992), we might conceive of the demand for “free public, quality education” as new master frame that offered “simple and concrete” solution to the strategic deadlock in the wake of the passage of the LGE that enabled the bases of the movement to view the question from a new angle and mobilize accordingly (p. 143). Unlike the demand for the derogation of the LOCE, the student movement’s national petition in 2011 resonated with far more transversal swathes of the Chilean population, including not just secondary students and the traditional constituency of elite university students but the students of private, non-selective universities, professional institutes, and technical centers, as well as their parents. María Paz speaks to this transversality in the context of her own parents’ motivation to participate in the movement:

It was because they wanted to feel part of something that was more massive. This is what 2011 achieved, that it really translated to a totally transversal citizen mobilization that now was not solely students or *cabros* with uniforms, young people. So therefore, I think that this motivated them even more, and above all the demand for free education, this

touched them directly, thinking about the immediacy of the demand, of having to think about our future, that everything would be totally different for them, for their pocketbook, for everyone and for society, if education were free.

In this way, the demand for free education radically reframed the problem of education, in the eyes of upwards of two-thirds of the Chilean population (Mayol, 2012),<sup>24</sup> from one of individual responsibility to one of collective duty overseen by the state. This reframing evidences a shift in the “common sense” of the overwhelming majority of the population away from a central pillar of neoliberal ideology, namely the interpellation of the individual as “homo economicus” (Read, 2009), which ironically comes in the face of former president Piñera’s insistence at the height of the 2011 mobilizations on the idea of education as a “consumer good”.

Nevertheless, this shift is contradictory and fragmentary, for this same public that supported the student movement in 2011 also voted overwhelmingly for Bachelet in 2013, who campaigned on the long overdue promise of a “pure *concertacionismo*”, namely the realization of the program of real social democratic reform abandoned by the Concertación in 1990 (Fazio, 1996), which incidentally included the promise of free education for 70% of Chileans. This is indicative of the fact that the consciousness of the Chilean public largely remains at the level of “common sense”, elements of which are progressive and potentially subversive, such as a profound discontent with neoliberalism, as well as elements that reflect a naïve faith in the possibility of pure *concertacionismo*. In contrast, the student bases are increasingly developing a counter-hegemonic “good sense” informed by several years of practical experience in student struggle and by elements of more formal radical Left ideology, which are together forged as praxis in the action of the *colectivos*. Therefore, that a frame “resonates” with these bases is not

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<sup>24</sup> According to Mayol (2012), at the height of the mobilizations in 2011, anywhere between two-thirds and 80% of the Chilean public supported the students’ demands.

some essential property of the frame or of the bases, but reflects a protracted process of grassroots political construction in which students in thousands of *colectivos* throughout the country independently reached the conclusion of the need for a rupture with the neoliberal model. The master frame of “free public, quality education” and more specifically “no profit!” then served to channel that grassroots political will towards action.

Furthermore, we must not omit the provinces from this discussion, for even though roughly 40% of the population lives in the metropolitan region,<sup>25</sup> students from Chile’s regions had experiences of 2006 and 2011 that were quite distinct from those in Santiago. Unfortunately, due to logistical constraints, I was only able to include one person from the regions in my sample. Leo, a history student at the University of Chile, comes from Rengo, a small town located in the largely agricultural 7<sup>th</sup> Region of Chile, to the south of Santiago. In his school, a charter school founded in 1995 with no tradition of student struggle, the students, inspired by the communiqués from the ACES in Santiago, “innocently” asked the principal if they could occupy the school, which was flatly refused, although they were permitted to have an authorized vigil in the school at night. Following the demands coming out of Santiago for demunicipalization, there were discussions about the “state of infrastructure”, but beyond that “there never was a deeper debate.” By contrast, in 2011,

One saw a much larger mobilization in the regions. The *liceos* were occupied for much more time. In Rengo, a federation of students of Rengo was created, something that didn’t have an antecedent, which convened the five schools in the municipality...I participated in Rengo, giving talks to the students and going to regional marches. I feel that 2011 served to initiate [*entablar*] certain political discussions in which students

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<sup>25</sup> Chile has a unitary, centralized administration that is divided into fifteen regions, plus the metropolitan region that includes greater Santiago metropolitan area.

became conscious of the power that they have as a group. For example, in my school, my sister would tell me that year their classroom leaked from the rain and didn't have light. They stood in the middle of the field with umbrellas open as a signal of discontent and didn't initiate classes until those issues were resolved. In this sense, they are sharper [*tienen una mayor viveza*]. They are capable of discussing much more than what we discussed.

Therefore, while this is only one individual case, we can see that even in provincial areas of Chile with little or no political tradition there is a definite process of political learning taking place. Moreover, we distinguish Leo's role as a transmitter of organizational memory, returning to his school to give talks that probably shaped the students' political consciousness. In short, while the discussion here has been inadequate due to methodological constraints, we cannot make the error of confining our discussion of the Chilean student movement to Santiago, as the regions deserve attention in their own right.

### **On Violence and Counter-Violence**

In the face of the strategic and tactical innovations deployed by the Chilean student movement, the Chilean state has sought to adapt its repertoires of repression in order to render ineffective the movement's capacity for mobilization (McAdam, 1983). Roberto comments on the escalating violence of the Carabineros in evicting students from occupied schools after 2006:

But in that moment [2006], the Special Forces only evicted [*desalojaban*] between 8 in the morning and 9 at night ¿*cachai*? But what happened by 2011 was that in 2011 was that they evicted the *cabros* at whatever hour ¿*cachai*? The repression was becoming every time more extreme. At the time of 2006 the *pacos* were much less aggressive with us. By 2008 when I was a fourth year [in high school], the *pacos* were much more

aggressive. In fact, that year they detained us all, one day that we were in the school, we had the school occupied, we spent the whole afternoon in the police station. And by 2011, it was like every day they would evict the *cabros* at any hour.

Here we observe an expanding arc of repression, in which the *Carabineros* changed their own operating protocols in order to counter the escalation of *tomas*, which by 2011 had increased not only in scope, namely beyond the *emblemáticos* to schools across the country, but also in duration, lasting as long as six months. Moreover, during 2011, the Coordinator of Student Federations of Chile (CONFECH) organized weekly marches down the Alameda passing through the business district, which was immensely disruptive and raised the costs of mobilization for state and economic elites. The state subsequently responded by erecting physical barriers separating the street from the sidewalks on the Alameda as well as drastically stepping up its deployment of tear gas and water cannons—all with the objective of deterring these costly, unauthorized marches. Students have sought to respond to this stepped-up state repression with self-defense tactics of their own. Hooded students known as *encapuchados* seek to counter the state's use of tear gas and water cannons to break up student marches with rocks and occasionally Molotov cocktails, and student marches generally conclude with pitched street battles between *encapuchados* and the Special Forces. The *encapuchados* have been demonized by the media and political establishment who exploit what is framed as the “violence of the student movement” to distract from its demands, which garner mass public support. The Piñera government had sought to seize upon significant disapproval of the *tactics* (Mayol, 2012) of the student movement to attempt to pass the Hintzpeter Law, otherwise known as the anti-*encapuchado* law, that would have criminalized the tactics of the *encapuchados*, which represents another effort at tactical adaptation on the part of the state (McAdam, 1983). While

the *encapuchados* are largely demonized in public opinion, it is important to situate them within a longer history of popular insurrectionary revolt against the Chilean state by the “*bajo pueblo*” of the *poblaciones* that goes back as far as the founding of the republic in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Salazar, 1999), with its most recent antecedent in the popular struggles against the military dictatorship (Han, 2012; Salazar, 2012). Thus for them, the only real purveyor of violence is the *criollo* state which reproduces the conditions necessary for capitalist accumulation. The underground hip hop group Salvaje Decibal expresses this sentiment in their song titled “*Autodefensa* [Self-Defense]”:

Violent is healthcare and education/ of the market, violent is subcontracting and wages/  
 Violent is the state and its perverse force/ Our response is not violent given that its self-  
 defense,/ Self-management and autonomy make visible/ that the hierarchy of the state is  
 inservible [*violenta es su salud y educación/ de mercado, violenta es la subcontratacion y*  
*los salarios,/ violento el estado y su perversa fuerza/ nuestra respuesta no es violenta*  
*puesto que es autodefensa,/autogestion y autonomia hace visible/ que la jerarquia de un*  
*estado es inservible*].

Then, for the *encapuchados*, that their self-defense could be at all equated with the violence inherent in the system is beyond absurd. Rather, following Fanon (1963) and the Black Panthers, they see their self-defense as a perfectly legitimate and necessary form of “counter-violence”, which is only the latest incarnation of a historic tradition of popular resistance.

**“¡Luchar, Crear Poder Popular!”<sup>26</sup>**

Some of the students I interviewed did not confine their political activity to the student movement, but broadened the scope of their work to include community-organizing known as *trabajo territorial* [territorial work] within their own *barrios* and *poblaciones*. Interestingly, they were inspired to take on this work during the student mobilizations in 2011. For instance, Rodrigo talks about his work in his community since 2011:

I’ve been working for a while on a popular library in the sector of Villa Francia, close to where I live in Maipú. Also, three years ago I joined a music group with some high school friends who were the ones involved in the *colectivo* and some friends of theirs. And we have this music group that always plays for the *barrio*, we play bingos, *peñas*, anniversaries of the *población*, any type of solidarity activity, but always of a local, territorial character, they’re not grand scenes, they’re no more than territorial, for the people. I feel that there’s a conviction because we put a lot of effort into organizing a concert for no more than the people who are there [*nos esforzamos caleta y damos todo por levantar una tocata, para la gente que está ahí no más*] in the middle of the *población*. We’re not looking for fame with this. Besides, the lyrics that we would have, the discourse that we would present always sought to raise the consciousness [*concienciar*] of the people about the problems in the national conjuncture [*los problemas*]

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<sup>26</sup> “Fight, Build Popular Power!”, slogan of Luchar, a coalition of revolutionary Left *colectivos*, that as of 2014 holds the presidency of the FECH. Incidentally, this slogan hardly originated with Luchar, but is actually lifted verbatim from the left socialist and MIR marches of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. Again, we note that the political identity of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century secondary and university Lefts is not being constructed in a vacuum that is divorced from the old and new Lefts of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Rather, this contemporary dynamic of identity formation represents a dialectical process of hybridization and amalgamation in which the symbols of the past are strategically reappropriated and reinvented to serve new purposes in the context of new conditions of struggle. I am grateful to Peter Winn for clarifying this point.

*de la coyuntura nacional*], or national issues that have always been there, the aberration of the neoliberal model.

Once again, we observe the bottom-up logic of this “new popular music” that, like the *peñas* associated with the most radical early iterations of *nueva canción* chilena, is “is sung, preferably, in the same place where people live for the same people who live there [*se canta, preferentemente, en el mismo lugar donde se vive y para los mismos que viven allí*]” (Salazar, 2002, p. 278). Rodrigo and his friends who themselves come from the people, produce among the people, for the people. Not only is their artistic form radically grassroots, but the content also engages directly with the social reality, seeking to sharpen popular discontent with neoliberalism into a critique of its structure that prepares the ground for action. In other words, following Gramsci (1971), Rodrigo is not bent on “introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone’s individual life, but... [is committed to] renovating and making “critical” an already existing activity,” namely people’s daily experience with the neoliberal model (p. 330).

Moreover, the construction of historical memory is critical to this popular politico-cultural process:

Well also, in this moment I am joining a project of territorial festivals on the occasion of 40 years of the coup, and they are going to host the group 40 Iniciativas along with popular *colectivos*, they are going to do territorial festivals in different municipalities, *barrios*, local spaces of social participation, but with artists that have songs with relation to political resistance, struggle, consciousness, the dictatorship, human rights, etc.

As we saw in the previous chapter, 1973 is a central symbolic referent for all actors in contemporary Chile. As Clara Han (2012) demonstrated with the pervasive use of the word “torture” in everyday conversation in La Pincoya, memory of the 1973 coup represents a

powerful symbolic tool for people in the *poblaciones* to make sense of their social conditions, namely that their poverty is not their personal fault, but is the consequence of the model installed and maintained over the last forty years. Therefore, the commemoration of the anniversary of the coup on September 11<sup>th</sup> and *Día del Joven Combatiente*<sup>27</sup> are rituals vested with great symbolic importance for many Chileans, especially those from the more historically politicized *poblaciones*. As we see in the quote, music plays an indispensable role in constructing and transmitting this memory, which gives Rodrigo and others of his generation the opportunity to intimately connect with a past that they never directly experienced.

María Paz also did territorial work in her municipality of Cerro Navia. She recounts her experience:

Look first I worked in territorial assembly that, like all territorial assemblies launched in 2011, sought to be space where organizational initiatives could be formed...we sought to bring in even the political parties, but also unions, students of the schools in the municipality, other political *colectivos* and create a meeting space where politics could be thought about at the local level. *O sea*, to construct a local community project in a *barrio* or determined geographic territory in order to give vitality to municipalities that are really dismembered, *o sea*, there is not social life, no community, there isn't communication, there's no social articulation in these municipalities. So we hoped that with this territorial assembly, we could give dynamism [*dinamizar*] to the community in that year around the demand for public education, but in the future work in other areas like health, housing, or much more basic questions like green space, the problem of antennas that they put in our

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<sup>27</sup> The “Day of the Young Combatant”, March 29<sup>th</sup> of every year, was proclaimed by the MIR to commemorate the assassination of Rafael and Eduardo Vergara Toledo by the Carabineros in 1985, as well as all of the young people who died resisting the dictatorship. While initially proclaimed by the MIR, the day is commemorated by diverse Leftist groups throughout the country.

poor communities. So there are a lot of problems to work on, from the tangible material [*desde lo material tangible*] to the creation of bonds of community. That initiative failed, because after 2011 passed, we were few, because the people went home, and the students went back to classes. We realized that we were not prepared as a society to launch an initiative at that level, and then I went to work in a *colectivo* called Autonomous Cultural Agitation that sought other ways to do similar things, like reestablishing bonds of solidarity, mutual aid, self-management through practices such as the presentation of documentaries that they call “pantallazos” [“screen shots”], agitation, propaganda. And there I lasted a while and I left because I realized that it wasn’t advancing very much either. Even though these are the experiences of constructing power from below that I’ve had, they have failed. But despite that, I’m not going to resign myself and stop working. *O sea*, I haven’t stopped believing there that there is a way, a real possibility. It’s difficult, it’s very difficult.

As we saw with Rodrigo, grassroots political work is largely about communicating with the people where they are politically in any given moment, which often means finding a cultural medium that resonates with their lives, whether it be *tocatas* or documentaries. This must of course be done with the understanding that politics is constructed “from the material”, on the basis of tangible, material reality, and the process of politicization often begins with seemingly miniscule, “non-political” issues like antennas or green areas, which though not grandiose, impact real people’s lives, who can be empowered to fight for them and in doing so gain a deeper grasp of how they are implicated in the broader power structure. As we saw in the high schools organized by the ACES in the early 2000s, these apparently insignificant “social”

demands are actually quite political and play a critical role in building a mass movement: there would have been no “Chilean Winter” without the *mochilazo* a decade prior.

Moreover, I think the fact that Rodrigo, María Paz, as well as Camilo all decided to take on “territorial work” in 2011 is significant inasmuch as this timing speaks to the radical transversality of the mobilization which afforded many students the opportunity to fight not just for student power but for the empowerment of the subaltern classes generally, especially the poorest and most marginalized. It is equally significant that these are students of history and pedagogy who themselves come from these very *poblaciones* and return to them as “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971) who offer their knowledge as a tool utilized by these communities to understand their realities. Rodrigo, María Paz, and Camilo are hardly alone given that a third of Chilean university students come from the first and second quintiles of the population, and tend to gravitate towards pedagogy, social work, history, journalism, psychology, sociology, and law, among others (Salazar, 2012). These students tend to pursue class projects and undergraduate and graduate theses that examine “the cultural and sociopolitical processes that are occurring in their *poblaciones* of origin” (Salazar, 2012, p. 209). In this way, these students are rupturing with the hegemonic epistemological logic that produces them as petty-bourgeois academics cut off from their marginalized communities who in turn produce knowledge *about* these communities in order to more effectively control them. Rather, students like Rodrigo, María Paz, and Camilo are returning to their communities to produce knowledge in the service of their liberation.

Lastly, I will conclude by noting that the building of popular power is a dialectical process at its core—contradictory, uneven, and, above all, grindingly difficult. In spite of the colossal nature of this task, María Paz’s resolve to continue struggling for the real possibility of a

revolutionary alternative ensures that history remains radically open. The next chapter is yet to be written, but I have little doubt that Rodrigo, María Paz, and the rest of the young people whom I interviewed will be counted among the protagonists.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have endeavored to write a social history of the Chilean student movement, namely a history “from below”. First, I have demonstrated the role of autonomous politico-cultural processes, embodied in the *colectivos*, as the lifeblood of radical subaltern social movements. That is, I have sought to shed light on the micro processes of politicization, refuting the notion that radical movements emerge purely through the transmission of formal political ideology in a dogmatic, top-down sense. Rather, I have argued that this distinct “assembliest” cultural logic represents the critical scaffolding for elements of formal political ideology. While highlighting these grassroots processes of politicization implicit in the *colectivos*, I also demonstrate how leadership is also exercised on a more macro basis through the practice of collective framing. I have furthermore endeavored to contribute to the scholarship on generational identity construction by examining the *pingüinos*’ self-construction as a “generation without fear”, in this way drawing symbolic boundaries with their parents’ generation. Lastly, I have also shown how this grassroots perspective on politicization can be applied to *colectivos* outside of the student movement, including those involved in “territorial work”.

While the scope of this thesis is no doubt limited to Chile, my intention in writing this work has always been to transmit the experience of Chilean students to their English-speaking counterparts, who may draw important implications for their own struggles. This work is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary Boston, where there is an ongoing campaign organizing around public transportation. Like their Chilean counterparts in 2001, students in Boston are similarly beginning to organize to demand a free public transportation pass for all students, particularly urban public school students, who are largely working class people of color. While this may seem to many on the Left as a marginal, “reformist” demand, the potential

politicizing implications of this struggle should not be underestimated. Like the Chilean *mochilazo*, the demand for a free student pass could prove an effective means for urban public school students to politicize their daily reality, by laying bare the structural violence of neoliberal capitalism that, as we saw in the case of María Paz in Chapter III, often forces students to choose between paying for a “public” service and providing for their other basic needs such as lunch. Moreover, such a campaign is concrete and very winnable, allowing for the gradual accumulation of student power that be channeled into more ambitious projects. By unmasking the façade of the “public” in “public transportation” and exposing its privatized neoliberal character, students might eventually be empowered to do the same with respect to “public education”, which lays the groundwork for initiatives around more radical educational transformation. What is crucial is organization: without some form of grassroots *colectivos* organized by students, of students, for students that scaffolds these demands in youth countercultures, there can be no victory. Finally, although there are thousands of college students in Boston, I think it is critical that Boston urban public school students retain their autonomy and not allow themselves to be coopted by their mostly white, upper middle class university peers attending schools in the surrounding area. That being said, like the Chilean student movement in 2011, it is undoubtedly in the interest of high school students to pursue strategic alliances with university students, particularly those in the UMASS system, many of whom are their natural class allies. In sum, the Chilean student movement represents an indispensable case study for anyone committed to advancing student power towards radical new horizons, both globally and in the belly of the beast.

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