This Master's Thesis discusses the politicization of social movements through the case study of the Chilean university student movement between the years 2011 and 2017. The main objective of this research is to identify the effects of the politicization of the national university movement on the educational reforms carried by the government from 2014 onwards. The term politicization shall be related to the movement’s levels of embedded autonomy across time and is assumed to be essential to the changes taking place at the political dimension.

The research was carried through an extensive analysis of both primary and secondary data, including more than 170 news articles; books written by two former student leaders; organizational and governmental reports; public and private statistics; and six reform bills. The collected data was examined through a diachronic incorporated comparison and a temporal qualitative comparative analysis (QCA).

This Master's Thesis main theoretical framework is aligned with Markus Kröger’s Theory of Contentious Agency and his notion of embedded autonomy within the state. Through a temporal qualitative analysis of five contentious mechanisms that define the level of embeddedness of social movements, it was possible to analyze the strategies used by the Chilean university student movement on a yearly basis, since 2011, and relate it to their overall influence on the national educational agenda.

The findings presented point out to the embeddedness of the university student movement within the State – and therefore its politicization - from 2014 onwards, mainly as a result of the mobilization space and efforts from the previous years. I assume that the effects of the politicization of the Chilean university student movement, in line with its embedded autonomy post-2014, can be verified through the approval of four educational reform laws that addressed some of the students’ main demands, including: increasing public spending on higher education and strengthening public universities; implementing new criteria for access to public universities; gradual universal gratuity in higher education; criminalization of profit in the education system; recognition of education as a right; and progressive advancements on students’ participatory rights in state-controlled universities.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

Politicization; social movements; student movement; Latin America; Chile; education; democracy; university students; development; embeddedness; inequality.
The politicization of social movements: A case study on the Chilean university student movement

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January 2019
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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACES</td>
<td>Assembly of Secondary Students of Chile</td>
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<td>CAE</td>
<td>State-guaranteed Student Loan</td>
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<td>CONES</td>
<td>National Coordination of Secondary Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONFECHE</td>
<td>Confederation of Chilean Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Teachers’ Union of Chile</td>
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<td>CRUCH</td>
<td>Rectors’ Council of Chile</td>
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<tr>
<td>csQCA</td>
<td>Crisp-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Dynamic Approach to Contentious Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB</td>
<td>CONFECH Executive Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>FECH</td>
<td>University of Chile Student Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEL</td>
<td>Libertarian Student Front</td>
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<td>FEUDP</td>
<td>Diego Portales University Student Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Autonomous Left</td>
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<tr>
<td>JJCC</td>
<td>Communist Youth of Chile</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCE</td>
<td>Constitutional and Organic Education Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>MINEDUC</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAU</td>
<td>New University Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>Communist Party of Chile</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Higher Education Entrance Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>Catholic University of Chile</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCA</td>
<td>Theory of Contentious Agency</td>
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<td>UNE</td>
<td>National Student Union</td>
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1. Introduction

“El cambio tiene que darse a múltiples escalas. Algo ya está sucediendo. Desde aquellos que se arriesgaron en las elecciones municipales pasadas y participaron —viniendo desde el mundo social— como candidatos a alcalde o a concejal, dando un paso gigante.”

“Change must take place on multiple levels. Something is happening. Since those who ventured in the municipal elections and participated – coming from the social world – as mayoral and city-councilor candidates, giving an enormous step.”

--


1.1 Background

Paris, 15th of October 2011 – representatives from the world’s 20 largest economies meet in the French capital to discuss the effects of the worst global financial crisis since 1929. Outside, on the streets, tens of thousands march against the negative effects of the international financial system, corporativism and governmental austerity (Adam 2011). Part of the “Movimiento de los indignados”, or outraged movement – an arm of the world’s famous Occupy Wall Street in Western Europe – this mobilization was just one of more than 900 of its kind around the globe in the same day, and almost unnoticeable amidst countless clashes and mobilizations that took place during the heated year of 2011 around the world.

Present, and speaking in front of thousands at the Paris rally was Camila Vallejo Downing, a young Chilean university student who led, along with others, the “the most relevant social mobilization in Chile since the restoration of democracy in 1990” (Bellei, et al. 2014, 1). During her speech, especially adorned by a massive Chilean flag covering the crowd, Vallejo
calls for a change in the existing corporative societal model and asks for international support for the Chilean students’ demands in reforming the country’s educational system. The longstanding neoliberal model, according to her, has failed Chileans for the last 30 years (La Tercera 2011).

Vallejo represents one, but probably the main voice of the modern Chilean university student movement, especially active for the last 15 years. During the 2000s – mainly between 2005 and 2007, and after 2011 – student demonstrations, protests and marches were a common sight on the streets of Santiago, Concepción and Valparaíso, the country’s most important academic centers. The activists, on its great majority university and secondary students, often based their action on three main demands: free public education; the elimination of profit from private institutions; and increased regulation of private education providers (Palacios-Valladares 2016).

The Chilean education system, an inheritance from the dictatorial regime of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), is amongst the most unequal in the world and a direct result of neoliberal economic experiments (Silva 2009). Once centralized and free of charge, higher education in Chile went through severe changes during Pinochet’s rule, whose decrees dictated, under constitutional legality, the consumption of education over tuition fees, and the decrease of public spending on education by forcing universities to compete for funds (Palacios-Valladares 2016). The effects of these acts can still be seen in recent times, as out of the almost 1.1 million university students in the country, most attend private universities (Barrionuevo 2011). The constant debt acquired by students, especially those from poor families, embodied the crisis of the Chilean educational system until 2014, and the main driving force of the student movements since the 1990s (Moraga 2006).

In 2011, protests led by the Confederation of Chilean Students (CONFECH) unleashed a powerful mobilization wave that profoundly affected the country’s socio-political environment in the years to come (Donoso 2017, 82). The students effectively opposed the right-wing government led by Sebastián Piñera until the end of his mandate in 2013, triggering the dismissals of two ministers of education, and record-low approval rates of the administration (Montes 2012). The inability of the government to negotiate and concede to some of the students’ demands and the public leverage acquired by the movement in 2011 – including public
support and international recognition – resulted in a natural path towards the politicization of the university student movement as the only way to push their demands forward.

CONFEC’s demands echoed in the years after the massive 2011 mobilization wave, despite a constant decrease in the number of protests in the following years. Through the voice of four student leaders elected to Parliament and the newly elected president Michelle Bachelet, reforms in the country’s education system became an essential part of the national political agenda. This direct support represented the transcendence of the students’ demands from the streets to both legislative and executive powers and can be related to the later approved six education reform laws that considerably changed public higher education in Chile.

Whereas the demands were infused in the political agenda, the university student movement struggled to maintain the leverage and mobilization intensity seen on previous years during Bachelet’s administration. Without a complete makeover of their claims, later CONFEC leaderships found themselves disoriented – sometimes even opposing reforms previously supported by their past peers – and dimmed by the government’s protagonism in leading the reformist agenda. The effects of the 2011 mobilizations, however, could not be overshadowed. The maintenance and institutionalization of the students’ demands, during the 2011-2017 period points to a strong political influence acquired by the university student movement in 2011 but cultivated through legitimate political channels – such as the parliament – from 2014 onwards. Through the movement’s politicization, voluntary or involuntary, the students ensured the endurance of not only their pleas but also their voices, presences, and relevance in the national political environment.

1.2 Research Aims

This research aims to contribute to the study of social movements as potential drivers of development processes in Latin America. Through an interpretative case study on the Chilean university student movement, I hope to examine the impacts of organized collective participation in influencing actual changes in the country’s educational policy and laws and incrementally contribute to the understanding of such phenomena in the region.
The range of literature available on Latin American social movements are vast, taking their importance and relevance in national matters into consideration, and it isn’t different in the case of the Chilean university student movement. However, despite of the great amount of information produced, most researchers focus either on pure historical analysis of the movement, or on specific mobilization episodes and their subsequent peaks in public attention – such as those seen on 2006 and 2011 with the secondary and university student mobilizations, respectively – and the strategies used by them.

Fabio Moraga (2006), for example, delves deeply into a historical analysis of the Chilean university student movement and its recent crisis. Palacios-Valladares (2016) studies the diffusion strategies used by the university student movement since 2006 and especially during the 2011 mobilizations. Donoso (2017), Avendaño (2014) and Mella (2016) investigate the many sides of CONFEC’s internal organizational structure in steering the university student movement’s direction. And Majmud (2014) studies the institutionalization of the students’ demands as they find their way into the national parliament in 2014.

Little attention is given to the historical conjuncture of the movement, including its strategic development across the years, and its outcomes on the national educational agenda. I hope to use the available literature to support the development of a holistic analysis of the Chilean university student movement, including its impacts, historical conjuncture, and organizational strategies.

1.3 Concepts, Research Question, and Hypothesis

My research interest emerged from an admiration and curiosity towards Latin American social movements and a ponderation on whether they have an impact on national development policies. I first started to gather and identify important concepts and notions that I would have to use to perform my research, and only after that, I developed a final research question that guided my study from then on.

Defining primary concepts was fundamental throughout the preparation of my Master’s Thesis and a necessary step in leading me to my final research question. Figure 1 represents my first attempt in connecting and defining the main concepts to be used in my work, created around
one year before the submission of this thesis. Some of the main concepts used thoroughly on this research were identified in this exercise, such as the terms politicization, mobilization, and reform; while others were used for specific purposes, such as the term democracy and education (as a right).

**Figure 1 – Connecting Concepts: an exercise to define the concepts to be used in the research.**

The conceptualization stage allowed me to finally connect the necessary dots to come up with my main research question, a secondary question, and a hypothesis, which have steered the direction of this Master’s Thesis:

- **Main Research Question**: What are the effects of the politicization of the Chilean university student movement on the historical conjuncture that led to the mid-2010s’ educational reforms in Chile?

- **Secondary Research Question**: What is the correlation, if any, between CONFECH’s internal organizational structure and effective mobilization?

- **Hypothesis**: Different politicization levels assumed by the university student movements throughout the years may result in gains or losses of positive political influence according to its embeddedness to traditional forms of politics.
1.4 Structure of the Master’s Thesis

This Master’s Thesis is divided into five main chapters, including findings, discussions, and conclusions. Chapter 2 introduces the methodology used during this study and the main ethical considerations and issues deliberated during its process. Chapter 3 introduces the Chilean university student movement – its recent history, strategies, and organizational demands during the 2011-2017 period. I discuss the Confederation of Chilean Students (CONFECH), its organizational structure, its relevance, and protagonism during the massive 2011 student mobilizations, and its adaptative capacity to the educational reforms brought by the government from 2014 onwards. Chapter 4 presents this thesis’ two main theoretical frameworks: the embedded autonomy of social movement organizations and its relation to political outcomes; and their impact on the maintenance of socio-political fractures that rest in the core of their activism. Chapter 5 brings forward the findings of this study and discussions that emerged from them. The main findings discussed include the levels of embedded autonomy reached by the Chilean university movement after 2014 and its complete consistency to the movement’s broad historical context since 2011; and an analysis of CONFECH’s leadership diversity in relation to the organization’s influence in maintaining or not socio-political cleavages. Chapter 6 brings the conclusion of this study and its broader contributions to the field of Development Studies.

Besides the main chapters mentioned above, I shall also present my complete data analysis – in chronological order – under Annex 1. The rather dense data presented in the segment was collected during the first semester of 2018 from a variety of documentary sources and offers the reader a detailed view of the Chilean university student movement’s progression from 2011 to 2018 – nearly on a day-to-day basis.
2. Methodology and Ethical Considerations

This interpretative case study presents the findings of an incorporated comparison of the politicization of the Chilean university student movement between 2011 and 2017. For this research, I will adopt a diachronic comparison of facts of the Chilean university student movement across the specified period. Primary and secondary data were collected from a variety of national and international sources. Primary data directly collected and analyzed by me included: newspaper reports, law proposals, organizational statements, and communications, specific electoral statements and related content, and results from congressional voting sessions. Secondary data included statistics collected from a diverse set of academic literature and relevant national institutions, biographies and descriptive newspaper articles.

A total of 170 digital newspapers articles, dating from 2011 to 2018 and published by publicly recognized Chilean, Latin American and European newspapers were collected for this analysis. The selected content varied in form, from basic reporting to in-depth analysis of the main episodes related to the student movements and the educational reform proposed by the government. Two books, written by former student leaders were also used as a source of information. Regularly, media reports would lead to official organizational and governmental communications, such as letters, responses, and invitations exchanged between CONFECH and the Chilean Government; such documents were examined directly. Additionally, six educational reform bills formulated and voted by the executive and legislative branches between 2014 and 2017 were analyzed both directly, from the source, and indirectly, often synthesized by the media. Statistics reported by the government, as well as by third-party Chilean agencies and foundations were sporadically used to measure public opinion, higher education students’ data, and governmental effectiveness in bringing change. The detailed data analysis is available under Annex 1 of this Master’s Thesis.

Process-tracing was used to identify causal chains that link explanatory factors (Vennesson 2008). They were compared through a combination of a diachronic incorporated comparison (McMichael 1992) and a temporal qualitative comparative analysis (Ragin and Strand 2008), based on their development between the years 2011 and 2017. Diachronic comparison “involves a comparison across time of multiple instances of a single historical process” (McMichael 1992, 359), which in this case consisted of levels of embedded autonomy,
according to Markus Kröger’s (2014) terms, possessed by the university student movements within the seven-year period, while the temporal qualitative comparative analysis aims to “identify the different combinations of causally relevant conditions linked to an outcome” (Ragin and Strand 2008, 431), or the diverse sets of actions taken by different student leaderships and their results.

Due to limited time and resources, only content related to the politicization of the university student movement and their pleas for reforms in higher education was considered for this study. The strategies, demands, and actions taken by secondary school students, who also represent a significant part of the national student movement, were not analyzed.

2.1 Ethical Considerations

One of the most challenging aspects of carrying out research in the field of Development Studies is ensuring that the investigative process is continuously self-assessed, reflected upon and aligned with a greater developmental purpose. A constant part of my study revolved around my own impacts and contributions to the development studies of South and Latin America and the actual consequences that my findings could have in understanding and interpreting development patterns in the region.

The study of Latin American social movements brings another challenge altogether. As I came to find out, the topic is surrounded by highly controversial and ideological statements, as well as conflicting information from opposing sources (e.g. student vs. police statistics). In the case of the Chilean university student movement, I had to be particularly careful with my source selection, ensuring a constant level of neutrality whenever possible. However, I understand and recognize that the subject itself cannot, and should not, be fully separated from a wider ideological reasoning, as it is the main driver behind the students’ mobilization efforts. This dichotomy represented my research’s most substantial ethical issue.

Therefore, based on my previously stated considerations, I sustained this research on the following ethical principles: reflexivity, social impact, feasibility, and integrity. Firstly, I recognize my specificity and individuality (Aull Davies 1999) throughout the whole investigative process and its results, especially during the selection and interpretation of the
sources. Secondly, my research objectives were guided by elementary principles of social sciences and development studies, including relevance to social research, occasional impact on civil society and respect to communities, groups, and peoples. Thirdly, as my research method did not include direct contact with organizations, groups or individuals, I recognize that it was not feasible to obtain any sort of acknowledgment, from mentioned parties, of the study being conducted and that the research process and conclusions are based on my personal interpretation of the facts available and the data collected by me. Fourthly, due to the number of journalistic information gathered throughout my study, I carefully controlled public available information and strived for maximum integrity of research according to three premises: publisher’s reputation and neutrality, priority to basic reporting of facts, and dismissal of opinion pieces. Proper attention was given to not disclose personal information of individuals included in my research and to the maintenance of a constant level of ethical sensitivity.
3. The Chilean University Student Movement

3.1 The origins of the Chilean university student movement.

The origins of the Chilean student movement can be traced back to the early 20th century, with the founding of the University of Chile Student Federation (FECH) in 1906 (Moraga 2006). Their history has since then been intrinsically connected to the structure of the national educational system, which has in turn, been transformed continuously since the second half of the century. According to Fabio Moraga, professor of University and Educational studies at the Autonomous University of Mexico, this ongoing transformation can be segmented in three different periods: Pre-dictatorship (-1973), dictatorship (1973-1990), and redemocratization (1990-present).

The Chilean higher educational system functioned, during the pre-dictatorship years, under total state control, meaning that university education was free of costs to a select group of educated individuals, and part of the national development agenda. The University of Chile, the country’s first and most important educational institution, possessed a national university status, under which the democratic Chilean State ran one of the country’s economic and social development pillars. The student body acquired progressive privileges under this system, including the right to vote and participate in the university’s administrative matters (Moraga 2006). This higher educational model crumbled after the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet, who imposed a repressive military regime that lasted 17 years, from 1973 to 1990.

The effects of the coup on student organizations were immediate and endured throughout the dictatorship. Along with the imposed illegality of any form of student assembly, around 117 students were arrested and 89 executed as an instant reflex of the military takeover in 1973 (Moraga 2006). G. Eduardo Silva, Political Science professor at Tulane University and specialist in Latin American studies, considers the incessant persecutions of socialists, communists, union workers, and left-wing student groups as an instrument to ensure the neoliberal political-economic order that sustained Pinochet’s rule (Silva 2009).

According to Silva (2009), Chile was the original market-society experiment. Pinochet’s military dictatorship completely reformulated the economic structure of the country, reinforcing
privatizations, market deregulation, as well as financial and trade liberalizations. Slashes in public spending reached unprecedented levels, severely increasing social-economic inequalities. Cuts reached 19% to family aid, 35% on health and 8% on education (Silva 2009).

The Pinochet regime also restructured all levels of the education system in their entirety. In 1981, with the enactment of the so-called University Law of 1981, higher education was reformed and decentralized, permitting the creation of private universities and transforming all eight regional branches of the University of Chile into autonomous institutions. Furthermore, it put an end to gratuity in higher education, introducing a credit-loan system for students (Moraga 2006). The latter was driven by Pinochet’s personal belief that free education led to higher activism; therefore, striking gratuity would consequently diminish student resistance to the dictatorship. As the General himself said, “If education is paid for, students will dedicate themselves more to their studies” (El Mercurio 1980, quoted in Majmud 2014, 3). Additionally, all forms of student and employee participation in matters related to the administrative aspects of university life were completely forbidden, suppressing participatory rights possessed by the students in the past (Moraga 2006).

In 1990, months before stepping down from power, Pinochet signed the Constitutional and Organic Education Law – LOCE, which redefined the term “education” in the national constitution as “a right to all people and under the provisional responsibility of the Chilean families (...) being the State solely responsible to safeguard the exercise of this right and the freedom of education” (Moraga 2006, 185). In other words, the Chilean State exempted itself as the country’s main guarantor of higher education.

Organized resistance to the dictatorship gained traction during the mid-1980s. Popular dissatisfaction with ever-growing levels of social and economic inequalities fragilized the regime’s capacity to repress popular demands, allowing a natural expansion of the political associational space (Silva 2009). Worker unions, left-wing political parties, and student groups called for Pinochet’s step-down from power, in addition to socio-economic and constitutional reforms – including a reliable transition to democracy. The restoration of the FECH and the establishment of the CONFECHE in 1984 symbolize the reawakening and reorganization of the Chilean university student movement during the neoliberal and post-neoliberal eras. From this point onwards, according to Moraga (2006), the movement has passed through a spiral of crises
and successes that has been directly influenced by different politicization levels reached within the movement’s structures – either creating a crisis or an emergence of political leadership. That, in turn, has resulted either on mass student engagement, or disengagement, on political matters (Moraga 2006).

The military government’s frail conditions throughout the second half of the 1980s led to a natural but controlled democratic transition between the years 1989 and 1990. The 1990s re-democratization process was defined by its incapacity to significantly reform some of Pinochet’s main socio-economic legacies, putting down its democratic roots on the edges of the constitutional mark of 1980 (Núñes 2012). According to Silva, the successive administrations of the new Chilean democratic era, who opposed the military in the past, consolidated the neoliberal agenda that they so defied during the previous decades (Silva 2009). Indira Palacios-Valladares, researcher and political scientist at the Missouri State University, argues that even though positive developments were brought to the higher education system during the post-dictatorship era, including higher student enrollment, better forms of faculty governance, and increased public spending, there was no attempt to bring significant structural policy change or to alleviate the high levels of educational inequalities in the country (Palacios-Valladares 2016).

Organized contention and mobilization were minimal during most of the 1990s. Under fear of ungovernability and recovery of influence by right-wing groups, social actors restrained their collective action – consequently weakening their position of resistance. Political coalitions, on the other hand, saw interest in a demobilized social movement that wouldn’t confront their policies (Silva 2009). Not differently, the student movements passed through a similar stage of neglect. A crisis of representation – or politicization (Moraga 2006) – within the different groups

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1 The Chilean redemocratization process officially began after the National Plebiscite of 1988, when the majority of the Chilean population voted against Pinochet’s continuation in power – in accordance with the country’s 1981 constitution. In 1989, Patricio Aylwin became the first democratically elected Chilean president since 1973.

2 Despite the Coalition for Democracy’s presidential victory, center-right and right-wing groups related to the military dictatorship successfully occupied the majority of seats both in Congress and in Senate, debilitating the new government’s ability to bring reforms to the 1981’s Constitution and the country’s socio-economic structures (Délano 1989).

3 The share of the national GDP destined to investments in public education grew from 2.4% to 4% per year, between 1990 and 2012, allowing a significant increase on the number of Chileans attending higher education, from 16.8% to 59% (Donoso 2017).
emerged as a result of rising discontent levels amongst students, who didn’t recognize a break on the educational policies after the end of the dictatorship. Gradually, the rising dissatisfactions led to a reform on the groups’ functional structures, leaving behind static and hierarchical methods of administration and giving space to faster and more democratic forms of governance – amongst which student collectives were the most common (Palacios-Valladares 2016).

Since the end of the 1990s, student collectives have been a recurrent form of organizational structure assumed by the Chilean university student movement. Different from their pre-dictatorship and post-dictatorship predecessors, they have tended to be independent of traditional political parties and have usually incorporated a range of leftist and radical ideologies into their operational strategies (Moraga 2006). According to Palacios-Valladares, the new structures and behaviors assumed by these groups reflected a pursuit for democratization that was left behind by traditional institutional actors. This allowed the new student movements to be built outside of the political spectrum and find their space within the national youth culture – gaining supporters and influence within the university environment (Palacios-Valladares 2016).

In 1997, the University of Chile Student Federation (FECH) started what Moraga (2006) called a “Democratizing Process”, bringing to light for the first time the effects and consequences of neoliberal policies to higher education. Regardless of its temporality, this trend can still be identified throughout the following two decades and until the present day, as it still revolves around the student movements’ main pleas – including changes on the financing structure, universal gratuity in higher education, and student participation on university matters – and the different governments’ failures to respond to them (Palacios-Valladares 2016).

Student mobilization levels considerably increased during the 2000s and reached its historical peak in 2011 (Figure 2). Between the years 2005 and 2006, both university and secondary student movements expanded and diffused their operations to new sites across the country. Using new technologies, such as online blogs and photologs, they successfully spread their demands and discontent with other students and civil society⁴. Tensions amid student

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⁴ In 2005, the university student movement mobilized against the creation of State Guaranteed Student Loans, also known as CAE. Such loans permitted all students, from public and private universities, to take state financed loans to finance their education. Such benefit only existed to public university students under a 2% interest rate per year. The new CAE system functioned under a 5.8% interest rate per year, considerably raising the rates to those studying at one of the 28 state-controlled universities.
groups and the government rose to unprecedented levels after the election of Sebastián Piñera in 2010, the first post-dictatorship right-wing president to take office. In the name of public efficiency, his administration announced several controversial measures to cut spending in higher education, including minimizing the distinctions between public and private universities (Palacios-Valladares 2016). Student upheaval finally erupted during the first semester of 2011, led by CONFECCH with the support from secondary student organizations, Coordinative Assembly of Secondary Students of Chile (ACES) and the National Coordination of Secondary Students (CONES), as well as from the Teachers’ Union (CPC).

What was later identified as the most intense and numerous social mobilization since re-democratization, surpassing two million supporters in more than six thousand demonstrations in one year (Segovia, C. and Gamboa 2012), the 2011’s student movements marked the beginning of a long reformist path towards social and educational inclusion. Between 2011 and 2017 and through a series of innovative methods of protests and demonstrations, concentrated contentious episodes, and different levels of routine strategies, the university student movements solidified their demands for a complete non-marketed educational reform – successfully including gratuity in higher education, the end of profit in private educational institutions and the development of more efficient regulatory marks for universities into the country’s socio-political agenda.

In 2006, secondary student organizations mobilized in what was later known as Marcha de los Pingüinos, the largest student demonstrations, until then, in Chilean history. Through a series of occupations, national strikes and protests, the students demanded, among other things, the de-municipalization of secondary education and prohibition of profit in private schools (Palacios-Valladares 2016).
3.2 The Chilean university student movement from 2011 onwards – organizational structures, strategies, and demands.

The 2011 Chilean student mobilizations enriched the range of interpretative literature attempting to study and correlate the national student movements’ structures, strategies, and demands to the educational reform initiated three years later. As stated by Sofia Donoso, Associate Researcher at the Centre for Social Conflict and Cohesion Studies (COES) and editor of the book *Social Movements in Chile*, “the 2011 (student) mobilizations set the terms of the political agenda and the correlation of political forces in the years to come” (Donoso 2017, 82). It is only natural, therefore, to explore the university student movement’s operations in its prime commencement in 2011 as the main catalyst to the socio-political transformations that followed in the next years.

In this segment, I attempt to bring to light some of the fundamental structural and strategic characteristics of the Chilean university student movement from 2011 onwards. I shall start by exploring the operational structure of the CONFECH, a confederation of university
organizations that has assumed a key role in channeling the students’ demands during the last three decades – as jointly examined by Marcelo Mella, Jara Héctor Rios, and Ricardo R. Gallardo. Subsequently, I try to combine Donoso’s interpretation of the different mobilization strategies used by CONFECCH since 2011 with Octavio Avendaño’s reflection on internal and external socio-political fractures that define the student movement’s actions. And finally, I detail the evolution of the students’ demands in the same period by determining links to the organizational structures and strategies assumed by the movement at given times.

3.2.1 CONFECCH – The Confederation of Chilean Students

According to Marcelo Mella, Political Scientist at the University of Santiago, the Confederation of Chilean Students (CONFECCH) is a parity-based group of 69 university student federations\(^5\) that act collectively towards common interests while maintaining their autonomy and sovereignty. The organization acts as a coordinating organism and a system of alliances between the different affiliated federations, and their interests (Mella et al. 2016). Established in 1984, during the reawakening of the Chilean student movement, CONFECCH has become since the second half of the 2000s the main channel through which the university student movement position itself before the government and civil society.

According to Mella et al. (2016), the organization is structured in five different decision levels:

1) The student federations, or the base unit that composes the confederation.
2) The Plenary, or the stance in which all federations vote – under equality of rights and obligations - on operational and strategic decisions that define the organization’s actions.
3) The regional administrative units, or a shared coordination space amongst federations that are part of the same geographical region. They are divided in: North, South, Coast and Santiago Metropolitan Area.

\(^5\) Out of the 69 current CONFECCH affiliated student federations, 23 are from public universities, 14 from traditional private universities and 22 from non-traditional private universities (CONFECCH 2018).
4) The executive board, or the maximum stance of representation within CONFECH, composed by each regional administrative unit’s elected leaders, who act as the organization’s national spokespeople.

According to the authors, however, regardless of its horizontal and egalitarian form of administration, CONFECH lacks both an organic organizational structure and coordinating mechanisms, being ever-dependent on the external socio-political environment and its own dispersive internal tendencies. Additionally, considering the membership expansion from 2012 onwards (El Dinamo 2012), especially to non-traditional private universities, it is possible to identify one more potential cause of conflict and fragmentation within an already fragile organizational structure (Mella et al. 2016). In sum, the confederation’s restrictive and shifting structure hinders its own capacity to maintain complete autonomy from external and internal political influences – while intensifying its inner heterogeneity and naturally creating a diverse set of opposing political groups that compete for the best distribution of power (Mella 2016)

Octavio Avendaño (2014), political scientist at the University of Chile, assumes the existence of three different political groups within the national university student movement environment since 2011. The first group is composed of student organizations that chose to align and cooperate with the center-left political coalitions in Congress, such as the Communist Youth of Chile (JJCC) – affiliated with the Chilean Communist Party – and the Nueva Acción Universitária (NAU) – originated at the Catholic University of Chile (PUC). These two organizations assumed the leadership of the mobilizations that took place in 2011 and have since then been intrinsically involved with the institutional transformation of the university student movement. The second group, according to Avendaño (2014), is composed by student collectives that identify themselves as anti-systemic and independent from political parties, often aligning their organizational objectives to revolutionary political transformations outside of the traditional political structure. Often, these organizations refuse any form of dialogue or collaboration between the student movement and traditional political parties, usually resorting to contentious forms of mobilization. And finally, the third group is composed by the self-declared autonomists, who have since 2011 assumed a mediatory amongst CONFECH’s different groups and defended a non-aligned political dialogue between the university student movement and the government (Avendaño 2014).
Similarly, Mella et al. (2016) assume the existence of four different groups within CONFECH: The traditional left; the libertarians; the independentists; and the conservatives. The traditional left, comparable to Avendaño’s center-left group, accepts the coordination of the university student movement with leftist political coalitions – Democratic Coalition and the New Majority – as an efficient instrument to drive the institutional transformation of higher education. According to Camila Vallejo, former FECH president and current congresswoman for the Chilean Communist Party (PCC), institutional change in education requires the student movements to have “one foot on the street and the other in Congress” (Donoso 2017, 87)– synchronizing the students’ demands and national politics.

The libertarian block, according to Mella et al. (2016), is composed by both libertarian and autonomist groups such as Frente de Estudiantes Libertarios (FEL), Unión Nacional de Estudiantes (UNE) and Izquierda Autónoma (IA). These groups main premises lay on the alignment and articulation of the university student movement with other social actors, such as secondary student organizations and worker unions, as a transformative social power capable of changing the existing unequal order. Often, these groups accept dialogue efforts with traditional political parties, and even the government, but are reluctant to subjugate their activities according to the institutional will.

The independentists, on the other hand, are non-political and self-managed student collectives that hope to disrupt the current educational system by any means necessary, including through the use of contentious strategies (Mella et al. 2016). Such groups are amongst the fastest growing groups within CONFECH between 2011-2017, assuming the control of the organization’s executive board for four years in a row.

And finally, the conservative or right-wing block is composed of rather weak political organizations that believe in bigger financial regulation of higher education and less State support (Mella et al. 2016). These groups have not assumed any significant role in CONFECH since 2010 and have not acquired much influence since the massive 2011 mobilizations.

CONFECH’s restrictive, shifting, and fragmented internal structures turn its own organizational trajectory into something naturally erratic and accidental (Mella 2016). Regardless of the student group acquiring power within the organization’s structure, its autonomy and influence to bring change will always be debilitated by internal and external
political influences, demanding from the different groups within the university student movement to adopt effective and long-lasting operational strategies that will ensure their socio-political impact.

3.2.2 Movement Strategies

In order to understand the strategic logic behind the Chilean university student movement, it is important to acknowledge CONFECH as the main association of higher education student organizations capable of leading operations nationally. Additionally, one must consider the effects of its erratic and fragmented structure on the students’ tendency to shift strategies according to their different levels of interaction with the institutional sphere, and also across periods of time. Only then it’s possible to comprehend the different strategy-making processes assumed by the students and their effects in defining different demands, tactics, and targets.

According to Sofia Donoso (2017), the development of the Chilean university student movement is based on the existence of two types of strategies, which have been assumed in complementary ways and in different degrees since 2011. An “outsider” strategy, based on the use of traditional forms of social resistance – such as protests, strikes and occupations – to defy existing institutions and push the students’ demands forward; and an “insider” strategy, based on the insertion of the movement within the existing institutional structures, so to drive transformations, such as the educational reform, from the inside out. Some of the tactics used in this form of strategy include lobbying and institutional activism – or the elevation of student leaders into traditional politics (Donoso 2017).

Following Goodwin and Jasper’s political process model⁶, Donoso (2017) assumes that the strategy-making process of the Chilean university student movement, since 2011, has been based on the ‘openness’ of the existing political system. Whereas open, the movement has tended to coordinate with institutional players to achieve its goals, but when closed, it has tended to

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⁶ The political process model developed by Goodwin and Jasper suggests that social movements’ strategy-making processes depend on existing access to participation in the institutional sphere, evidence of political alignment and splits within the elites, existence of influential allies and incapacity of the state to resist to contestation (Goodwin and Jasper 1999).
assume contentious forms of resistance and opposition. However, these tendencies are volatile and depend both on the positioning of outside actors, such as state players, and of inside actors, such as the different groups that coexist within CONFECH (Donoso 2017). In 2011, for example, during the most intense mobilization period since the country’s redemocratization, the organization’s strategies shifted according to the balance of power between two internal groups – the center-left and the independentists – and the government. While center-leftists assumed that the movement’s momentum required direct negotiation with the government, therefore backing “insider” strategies and responding to some of the Ministry of Education’s calls for dialogue, the independentist block defended the intensification of mobilizations on the streets, favoring “outsider” strategies.

It is worth mentioning that the ‘openness’ of the political system also reflects how the Chilean government responds to the strategies carried out by the student movement. During the first months of mass mobilization in 2011, when center-leftists assumed the leadership and control of the CONFECH agenda, several negotiations and dialogue sessions were carried between the organization’s board members and the government. However, as demands kept being disregarded by public officials, radical groups within CONFECH started opposing decisions carried out by their moderate peers and positioned themselves against any form of dialogue through institutional channels, favoring instead direct confrontation on the streets (Avendaño 2014).

Some of the main tactics used by the student movement during the 2011 mobilizations and upcoming years, following Donoso’s conceptualization of “outsider” strategy, were: street protests, occupations of public and private buildings, strikes, sit-ins, flash mobs and social media campaigns (Donoso 2017). Additionally, Rocío Zepeda Majmud (2014), professor of Political Science at Mayor University in Santiago, also recognizes cacerolazos, or pot banging, online public referendums and hunger strikes as essential strategies used by the movement in the same period. It can be said that such strategies proved to be controversial to the student movement’s interests, as the government retracted from any form of dialogue with CONFECH and assumed repressive stances towards the student movements, either university or secondary.

The uncertainty revolving the movement’s strategy-making process has led individuals to detach themselves from the traditional structures of the organization in order to drive some of
their demands forward. Since the end of the 2011 mobilizations, a number of former student leaders have run and been elected to the national congress, bringing along their demands from the student movement into the government itself. This socio-political phenomenon, called by Sofia Donoso (2017) “institutional activism”, represents the elevation of certain individuals into the institutional sphere by the advancement of the policy agenda of the social movement that they belong to. Also, according to the author, this official form of representation meant a sort of rapprochement between the political authorities and the student movement after the 2013 elections (Donoso 2017).

Majmud (2014) assumes that the institutionalization of the Chilean university student movement after 2011 is a direct result of its high indexes of socio-political support obtained through its transversality amongst social actors. Student leaders, such as Camila Vallejo and Giorgio Jackson, assumed emblematic identities that transformed the students’ demands into social demands, transcending traditional politics and obtaining massive support from the Chilean population. Naturally, with the proximity of the presidential and parliamentarian elections in 2013 and an incredible popularity acquired by the student movement for more than two years, political parties and coalitions were forced to adapt and develop their educational programs around the students’ demands. This included the acceptance and even support, by left-wing coalitions, of the candidature of five former student leaders to the national congress - something that could only be achieved, according to Majmud (2014), with an absolute transversality of the student movement since 2011.

According to Donoso (2017), the results of the 2013 elections shifted the strategies and conditions for mobilization for the years to come. The election of four former student-leaders to the national congress and Michelle Bachelet’s return to La Moneda with a brand-new center-left political coalition demanded a transformation of the university student movement from its usual opposing stance. For the first time since the transition to democracy, the students had to shift their agenda from old-style opposition into full participation in the country’s ‘most significant educational reform in 50 years.’ (Donoso 2017).

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7 Approval rates to the student movement’s demands reached 81.9% at its peak during 2011, while the government’s approval rates plummeted to a historical low of 23% (Majmud 2014).
Avendaño (2014), on his work “Fractures and political representation in the student movement”, assumes the existence of ideological fractures, or cleavages, within the leadership and organizations of the Chilean university student movement, mainly between moderate and radical groups. These fractures, according to him, were responsible both for the successes and failures of the movement during the challenging year of 2011 and afterward, first dynamizing and varying their demands, but later hindering its coordinating capacity (Avendaño 2014).

The two types of strategies assumed by Donoso, combined with the effects of Avendaño’s notion of internal cleavages characterize the complexity of the Chilean university student movement. Through a variety of creative “insider” and “outsider” strategies conceived from an unequal CONFECH internal structure, the student movement managed to, just in 2011, severely impact the overall image of the government, force the change of two Ministers of Education, redefine the government’s educational agenda and highlight the need of an educational reform. However, ever-increasing fractures – or cleavages – between opposing groups composing the Plenary stalled the student’s actions a long time, underlining both their capacity to act collectively and their position towards the government.

3.2.3 Movement Demands

Combining the notions presented so far, I defend that the Chilean university student movement depends on two organizational factors: the existing leadership structure of CONFECH at a given time and the strategies assumed by them; and one external factor: the government’s institutional agenda. Since 2011, the university students’ demands have been defined by shifts and impasses in one, two or all three of these elements. Some changes may have completely transformed the students’ pleas, whereas others may have maintained them completely unchanged. I attempt to bring the correlation between these three factors to light by presenting the evolution of the students’ main demands since the first semester of 2011.

2011

The year 2011 was, without a doubt, the most turbulent and dynamic period of the recent Chilean student movement history. In the book “We are here to stay – chronicles of the student revolt”, former FECH vice-president Francisco Figueroa reports on his personal experience as a
student leader and activist during the years 2011 and 2012, offering an insider’s view on the transformation of the students’ demands over time. According to him, CONFECH’s leadership assumed a more aggressive and opposing stance towards Sebastián Piñera’s conservative government during the year 2011, ceasing to be mere critics of the government’s educational agenda and becoming the creators of their own set of demands (Figueroa 2013). The first step towards this transformation happened weeks before the presidential speech of the 21st of May, when CONFECH mobilized its bases and demanded gratuity in higher education to low-income students. The students’ goals, according to Figueroa (2013), aimed to pressure the government before the yearly presidential speech and include reforms to the educational agenda in the public debate. Ultimately, the government’s complete disregard towards the demands set by the students and unpopular announcements regarding new loan mechanisms drove the university student movement to develop an agenda around three basic demands: increase public spending on higher education; implement new criteria to guarantee equality in access to universities; and repeal anti-democratic laws that prohibit student participation in administrative matters of public universities (CONFECH 2011b). These points became the founding base of a new momentum for the university student movement in Chile and have always been present since then.

The three demands were not proposed by CONFECH’s Plenary, the maximum stance of university student federations, but by a select group of moderates within the organization's Executive Board. They were the ones that took the lead in defining many of the strategies and pleas that shaped the movement in 2011 (Figueroa 2013). This group maintained prominence throughout most of 2011 and were known for their openness in maintaining direct lines of communication with public officials. At their highest influence within the massive mobilizations of that year, the moderates demanded from the government 12 points of a potential reform in the country’s higher education system, which included some of the main points adopted by the movement months earlier but also included new pleas, such as the prohibition of participation of

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8 The twelve points demanded by CONFECH were the following: 1) Education must be guaranteed constitutionally as a social right; 2) Guarantee of basic stipends to be used freely by CRUCH universities; 3) Prohibit private banks to finance educational expenses; 4) End of profit in all the educational system; 5) Create new forms of access to Higher Education; 6) Guarantee the provision of high quality education in all accredited institutions; 7) Repeal legal barriers that unable full participation on democratic decisions within educational institutions; 8) Creation of a technical network; 9) Creation of a recognized teaching career; 10) Detach the basic and secondary systems from the municipal control and guarantee its dependency solely on the Ministry of Education; 11) End of shared credit; 12) Guarantee education and linguistic rights of the native populations (CONFECH 2011a).
financial institutions in providing loans to students, changes on the governing structure of both basic and secondary education, and guaranteed educational and linguistic rights to the native populations (CONFECH 2011a).

Moderate influence within CONFECH subdued with a growing pressure from radical leftist groups that composed most of the organization’s Plenary. Commonly known as ultras, they were against any form of negotiation and dialogue with the government and believed that the student movement should maintain its stronghold on the streets while holding on to one single demand: 100% gratuity to all students from public universities (Figueroa 2013). Radical control started in September 2011 and resulted in the break of the negotiation table between the student bases (university and secondary students, and teachers’ union) and the government. With a single exception in early 2012, President Piñera’s administration completely disregarded the university student movement’s demands for more than two years, from October 2011 until the end of 2013, not conceding a space for dialogues or even negotiations.

2012 and 2013

The two following years after 2011 didn’t see many significant innovations on the university student movement’s demands. CONFECH leaderships during 2012 and 2013 retreated and decided to orbit around a similar set of demands brought by moderate groups during 2011 including the end of profit in higher education; pardoning student debts; and ensuring student participation on administrative matters of public universities.

Structurally, CONFECH’s Plenary and Executive Board were mostly controlled by independent leftist groups, who remained reluctant to start dialogue attempts with the government (Figueroa 2013). Strategically, these groups remained faithful to their opposing stance, mainly focusing on already exhausted mobilization strategies, including protests and marches, and practically ignoring alternative forms of engagement with civil society or public officials. Whatever little effort was given to create situational dialogues with the government in
2012 was made through moderate individuals, such as Camila Vallejo\(^9\) and Gabriel Boric\(^10\), who were still part of the CONFECH Executive Board (EB).

During the period, the government remained secluded from direct interactions with the student movement. After a disastrous 2011 that cost the administration two Ministers of Education and record disapproval rates, President Piñera bet on delegitimizing the student movement by denouncing a supposed irrationality behind CONFECH’s “ultra-radical” leaders (Figueroa 2013). Interestingly, regardless of the government’s seclusion towards the movement during the years 2012 and 2013, it has used of some of the students’ demands as their own – mainly as an attempt to regain some of the public support lost. The controversial State-guaranteed Student Loan (CAE) for example, had its interest rates decreased from 6% to 2% after a series of tributary reforms brought at the end of 2012 (Agencia EFE 2012). The student movement, as much as it was involved and interested in such decrease on the CAE interest rate in 2011, did not gain any of the political capital involved in such declaration, practically handing over the perks of such act to President Piñera’s administration.

The maintenance, by the university student movement, of the same set of demands established in 2011 had a direct impact on the Presidential Elections of 2013. Michelle Bachelet, former Chilean president and second-time runner, strongly based her campaign and government plan on a future reform of the whole education system, which included the three main demands brought by the university student movement during the last three years: Free higher education; end of profit; and greater investments in public education (Montes 2013). Moreover, four former moderate student leaders\(^11\) directly involved in the student mobilizations of 2011 and 2012 were elected to Congress, waving some of the student movement’s banners as their own (BBC Mundo

\(^9\) In August 2012, Camila Vallejo, vice-president of the FECH and member of the Communist Youth (JJCC), wrote a letter to the National Congress asking for the rejection of the Tributary Reform bill proposed by President Piñera’s government (El Dinamo 2012).

\(^10\) In June 2012, Gabriel Boric, president of FECH and member of the Autonomist movement (IA), delivered a four-point letter to President Piñera demanding: 1) Halt on the advancement of the bill in Congress that would create two sub-departments under the MINEDUC for Higher Education; 2) which would be responsible for a new credit system; 3) Resolve issues with CORFO credit, including pardonning of students’ debts; and 4) End profit in Higher Education (The Clinic Online 2012).

\(^11\) The four elected student leaders were: Camilla Vallejo (Communist Party of Chile), Giorgio Jackson (Revolución Democrática), Karol Cariola (Communist Party of Chile) and Gabriel Boric (Izquierda Autonoma).
Michelle Bachelet was once again victorious, receiving 62.17% of the valid votes (Servel 2018).

2014

The year 2014 posed a series of difficulties to the Chilean student movement. Upon the dawn of a new government with leftist tendencies and the influence of four former student leaders who were elected to Congress, the university student movement found trouble in efficiently adapting its demands to exert pressure on the reforms being discussed by Bachelet’s government.

According to journalist Nicolas Sepulveda, the new government’s strong support to the demands set by the student movement in the past disoriented CONFECH’s strategy making process throughout most of 2014. At times, the university student movement found itself opposing some of the same reforms that their former peers fought for during the previous years. In other occasions, however, they remained faithful to the same old demands. This inconsistent attitude tainted CONFECH’s image before the Chilean population, who came to perceive the 2014 university student movement as irrational and immature (Sepulveda 2014).

Dialogue attempts were fed by the government, and not by the university student movement. In June of 2014, the new Minister of Education, Nicolás Eyzaguirre, announced a new governmental approach to future educational reforms, based on the collaboration of national educational actors, including the university and secondary student movements. The Plan de Participación Ciudadana – Citizenship Participation Plan – brought together demands from civil society organizations into a formal channel of communication and dialogue with the government. Eyzaguirre’s main objective was to create discussions that would nourish the conception of new educational laws while offering an institutional participatory space for a wide number of social actors. CONFECH answered positively to the Minister’s invitation but demanded real participation throughout the whole reform process and the respect to the student’s demands from previous years, including universal gratuity and an end to profit in higher education (Lopez 2014). CONFECH remained at the dialogue table until September 2014, when the leadership assumed that the initiative wasn’t going to result in any sort of proposal (Montoya 2014).
During CONFECH’s annual self-evaluation exercise, the 2014 Executive Board concluded that the university student movement lacked offensiveness and unity on its mobilization strategy during the year 2014. Additionally, they also recognized a sort of detachment between the university student movement and other social organizations, such as the Teacher’s Union and secondary student organizations, that may have hindered CONFECH’s visibility and effectiveness during the year (CONFECH 2014).

2015

Unlike the previous year, 2015 was characterized by an awakening of the student movement. To better use the academic year to their advantage, CONFECH’s new EB started acting earlier, as soon as January, to set their demands and position themselves before the government (CONFECH 2015b). The students started marching as soon as mid-April and assumed from then on a more offensive stance, focusing not only on protests and marches to spread their demands but also occupations, a contentious strategy practically not taken by university students since 2011. Structurally, CONFECH’s Plenary remained controlled by independent and radical leftist groups, however, for the first time in the organization’s history, a private university student federation – Diego Portales University Student Federation (FEUDP) – occupied a seat on the Executive Board (Ramirez 2015).

The year 2015 was also important to President Bachelet’s educational reform agenda. Amongst the priorities set by her government, none was more important than the discussion and creation of a universal gratuity bill – one of the main demands set by the university student movement in 2011, and an electoral promise made by the president herself during the presidential campaign. Bachelet’s initial design aimed to benefit 60% of all higher education students with free university tuitions (Agencia AFP 2015). Additionally, 2015 also marked the start of the implementation of a greater reform agenda set by the president during her campaign and first year in power. In June, Bachelet signed the first educational reform law, prohibiting profit, shared paying responsibility between the state and families, and selection processes in all public elementary schools (Superintendencia de Educacion 2015).

Throughout 2015, CONFECH successfully aligned an effective protesting strategy with renewed and strengthened partnerships with a range of educational actors, including secondary student organizations and the Teachers’ Union. In just a few months of active mobilization, the
university student movement wisely gained – and offered – support from/to groups that also perceived the educational reforms brought by the government as negative or insufficient (Muños S. 2015). On the 10th of June of 2015, CONFECH delivered to the Ministry of Education a letter entitled “Principles for a New Public Education” – an answer to the government’s supposed inability to productively establish an agenda for the educational reform and a list of demands requested by the university student movement (Muños S. 2015).

CONFECH’s “Principles for a New Public Education” represented a new approach to the educational reform by the university student movement. Although some of the demands listed are the same as in previous years, the document encompassed important elements that had not been documented, communicated or even mentioned by groups in the past, including demands set by secondary students, education professionals and university employees. The letter was divided in eight sections, individually detailed according to CONFECH’s view of a new public education system: Democracy and development; expansion of public education; gratuity; end of profit in the education system; new regulatory marks for higher education; new docent career laws; labor conditions for education professionals; and unity and collaboration in a wider social movement (CONFEC H 2015a).

2016

The Chilean university student movement lacked protagonism during the year 2016. While Bachelet’s administration worked hard to approve and bring to reality the educational reforms proposed in the previous years, CONFECH couldn’t ensure its participation alongside the government. Protesting was intense, especially during the first semester, but was overshadowed by the agenda defined by the government during the second semester. Even though agreements were reached in Congress between the government and the opposition, little participatory power was given to the students to engage in the negotiations.

CONFEC H’s internal structure slowly shifted towards a more moderate leadership. The autonomist movement, together with FEL and UNE, were the main conductors of the movement during 2016, forming a new alliance that ensured them half of the sits on the Executive Board. Radical left-wing student federations occupied the other half, still maintaining their prominence within CONFECH during the year.
Reform-wise, the government kick-started the long-awaited gratuity program throughout the country and focused on attending to other electoral promises related to the educational reform. In the start of the academic year, more than 80,000 university students were benefitted with free public education. This was also the year in which a new regulatory mark was set for all state universities, and technical and professionalization institutions (Toledo 2017). In July, the government finally announced the Higher Education reform bill, which included some of the student movement’s demands, including universal gratuity to students within the 60% poorest in the country by the end of 2018, and the improvement of the higher education entrance exam (PS) (TeleSur 2016).

Yet, the bill received objections from civil society, including resistance by the student movements, rectors and 62% of the population (TeleSur 2016). According to CONFECHE, besides the lack of involvement from students and other social actors in designing the bill, the proposal was deficient in attending to long-existing student demands, such as the end of profit in higher education, pardoning of student debts, democratization of educational institutions and the creation of a pluricultural education system (TeleSur 2016). Ennio Vivaldi, the rector of the University of Chile, publicly criticized the bill as it “maintained the privileges of private universities and did not attend the expectation of a systematic reform, tackling the marketization of the higher education system.” (TeleSur 2016).

During the following months, CONFECHE decided to channel its organizational demands into the elimination of the CAE a long-discussed demand set by the students in 2011. The initiative gained support from congressmen Giorgio Jackson and Camila Vallejo, who were part of the Educational Commission in Congress and proposed instant changes to the current credit system. Bachelet’s government, however, dismissed any sudden movement in eliminating the CAE under the pretext that such changes could hinder thousands of students trying to reach the higher education system, and instead proposed a collaborative effort between the Executive and the Legislative branches in the next year to solve the issue (Fuentes 2016).

In attempting to address at least some of the many demands set by the university rectors, and partially by the student movement, the government chose to redesign the higher education reform bill (Ministerio de Educacion 2016). Amongst the main alterations, it is worth noting the elimination of the CAE through a separate reform bill and the creation of a new financing
instrument completely ran by the government and without any interference from private financial institutions. Additionally, profit in higher education was finally recognized as a crime, with direct penal and administrative sanctions to offending institutions (Ministerio de Educacion 2016). CONFECHE considers the redesign proposed by the government as unsatisfactory, as there was no sign in the proposal of a clear action to avoid the indebtedness of students and their families (Tele13 2016).

In order to implement the bill, however, the government had to first approve the budgetary law for 2017, which would require partial support from the opposition in Congress. Evidently, such task was not easy for the Minister of Education, who was forced to concede changes in parts of the bill in exchange of support in approving the law12 (Segovia, M. 2016). The preliminary bill was approved by a simple majority in Congress, counting with the votes of former-student leaders Camila Vallejo and Karol Cariola, who voted in line with the Communist Party regardless of criticizing the changes. Giorgio Jackson and Gabriel Boric condemned the attitude assumed by the opposition but abstained during the voting session (Camera de Diputados de Chile 2016).

2017

The year 2017 was Bachelet’s last in office and her last opportunity to bring to reality the educational reforms proposed during her campaign in 2013. The year started with positive results to the government, as the number of university students benefitted with gratuity doubled since 2016 – reaching more than 95,000 students. In total, more than 164,000 students were included in the gratuity law in 2017 (El Mostrador 2017a).

The reform agenda during the first semester was limited to the discussions taking place at the Congressional Education Commission, as parliamentarians attempted to pass the Higher Education Reform bill (El Desconcierto 2017). Vallejo and Jackson were key actors during this process, severely opposing the sluggish pace assumed by the government in including some of the demands set by the student movement into the reform bills – such as the elimination of CAE (El Mostrador 2017b). During the second semester, the reform agenda counted with the inclusion

12 The most debated concession was the injection of US$12 million into scholarships to be exclusively to private institutions – which, according to some may result in lower investments to public universities (Segovia, M. 2016)
of one new reform bill to Congress and the enactment of a new law by President Bachelet – The Public Universities Reform Bill and the New Public Education Law respectively.

CONFEC’s structure changed considerably if compared to the previous six years. For the first time since 2011, center-left groups occupied most of the seats of the organization’s Executive Board, leaving behind almost four years of total control assumed by radical leftists. This moderate CONFEC leadership resulted in a more passive attitude towards the government and discussions involving the educational reform – even as they continued to oppose the bills being proposed.

Protesting was less recurrent in 2017 and lacked the same level of mobilization seen in previous years. The university student movement hoped to reaffirm itself as still relevant to drive changes in the country’s higher education system, after more than six years of continuous mobilization efforts. Their actions aimed to draw public attention towards the inequalities that were still an inherent part of the Chilean education system – such as the number of indebted students even after three years of reforms (more than one million people); and a low access rate to public universities, of under 15% of the total number of registrations (Batarce 2017).

The 2017 elections also represented the expansion of the student base in Congress. Regardless of the reelection of former conservative president Sebastián Piñera, whom the students saw as a threat to the progress made since 2011, all congressmen part of the so-called “student base” were successfully re-elected for a second term\(^\text{13}\). Additionally, three former CONFEC student leaders were elected to Congress for the first time\(^\text{14}\), joining the other four in promoting student demands in parliament (Emol 2017).

\(^\text{13}\) The four reelected congressmen were: Camilla Vallejo (Communist Party of Chile), Giorgio Jackson (Revolución Democrática), Karol Cariola (Communist Party of Chile) and Gabriel Boric (Izquierda Autonoma).

\(^\text{14}\) The newly elected former-student leaders to Congress were: Camila Rojas (Revolución Democrática), Catalina Perez (Revolución Democratica), and Miguel Crispi (Revolución Democratica).
### 3.2.4 Chronology of educational reforms – 2014-2018

**Table 1 – List of proposed and enacted Education-related laws in Chile, from 2014 to 2018.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Reforms</th>
<th>Introduced to Congress in</th>
<th>Enacted into a law in</th>
<th>Legislative Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Education Reform Bill (# 9366-04)</strong></td>
<td>May-14</td>
<td>May-15</td>
<td>• End of profit in all publicly funded schools. • Non-discriminatory and democratic access to basic education. • End of shared investment - between families and the State - in basic education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Docent Law (#10008-04)</strong></td>
<td>Apr-15</td>
<td>Mar-16</td>
<td>• Sets new requirements for individuals studying Pedagogy as well as to institutions that instruct and accept students in the field. • Establish a raise on the base salary of all educators • Increase the number of non-teaching hours destined for preparation, planning, and evaluation. • Induction and professional support to newly graduated educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Public Education Law (#10368-04)</strong></td>
<td>Nov-15</td>
<td>Dec-17</td>
<td>• Establishes the de-municipalization of basic education, transferring the autonomy from cities to co-sharing responsibilities assumed by the Ministry of Education, the Public Education Directive and Local Education Providers. • Recognizes educational institutions as environments that enable the personal and communal development of individuals. • Recognizes the Chilean State as responsible for the education of children, adolescents, and adults. • Assurance of participation and transparency through the creation of Local Education Councils, with representing members from a vast number of stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universal Gratuity - Annual Budget for 2016 (# 10461-05)</strong></td>
<td>Dec-15</td>
<td>Dec-15</td>
<td>• Gradually guaranteeing gratuity in Higher Education in 2016 to students part of Chile’s 50% poorest families - or about 178,000 beneficiaries. • Gratuity would be offered to all 16 public universities and nine traditional private universities. All private institutions were required to have at least four years of accreditation and not to profit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Higher Education Reform Bill**  
(#10783-04) | Jul-16 | May-18 |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| • Proposes a financial mark to reassure universal gratuity and access to higher education. Public universities would assume a special role, with a preferential support guaranteed by law.  
• Defines Higher Education as a mixed system, with guarantees that both private and public institutions may prosper.  
• Creation of three new Higher Education institutions, under the MINEDUC, to verify, investigate and enforce an obligatory accreditation system to all higher education institutions.  
• Review and improve the higher education access exam (PS)  
• Establishes requirements for universities to reach gratuity, such as a guaranteed career path to professors, internal audits, administrative transparency, and at least four years of accreditation.  
• Profit in higher education recognized as a crime and subject to sanctions  
• Maintains recurrent investment transfers to CRUCH universities.  
• Expansion of gratuity will depend on the economic growth of the country. |

| **New State University Law**  
(#10783-04) | Jul-17 | Jan-18 |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| • Creates the State University Coordination Council  
• Establishes a strengthening fund of 300 billion Chilean pesos (US$450 million) to public universities.  
• Creates a financial instrument for State Universities, which is going to work based on the budget approved by Congress.  
• Increase the number of admitted students according to the gratuity law.  
• Establishes a common mark for institutional governance of public universities, including a three-party administration model composed by the Rector, the Superior Council (formed by three presidential nominees, three student nominees and two relevant professionals from the region) and the University Council (formed by the students) |
4. Concepts and Theoretical Framework

The proper adoption and use of concepts are central elements of social research. In social sciences, the choice and use of meanings allow one to properly express the way he/she wishes to lead a given research project. Most of the concepts I use in this thesis will be drawn from the fields of social movements research and development studies. I will define these key concepts, which will be used as heuristic tools to conduct my analysis. I will also develop these concepts later on and throughout this chapter.

A central element of my research is the term politicization. Due to its flexibility in the English language – when compared with Spanish for example – the term can assume different meanings depending on the point of view of the reader. It can assume a sense of “becoming political”, what would be referred in Spanish to the process of seeing oneself as part of a political party or position – partición. Or it could also assume a logic of acquiring political power to attend and protect one’s interests – politización. For this thesis work, I will be using the second logic of interpretation of the term “politicization”.

International Relations researcher Ademola Adediji, while attempting to describe the effects of the politicization of ethnicity as a source of conflict in Nigeria, appropriately addressed the use of the term along with its etymologic origins, from the word politics. According to him, the word politicization must be understood as a phenomenon with three main characteristics:

1. The acquisition of political character by a group, institution or activity.
2. The acquisition, by an individual, of political interest and activities.
3. Characteristic of behavior aimed at the acquisition or preservation of power.

Furthermore, besides the endeavor of attaining political power, the term politicization can’t be static, as it’s a process that is continuous by nature (Adediji 2016). Therefore, for the purposes of defining an ever-changing concept, I shall use and adapt the term politicization according to the previously stated assumptions and the following definition given by Adediji: “an overt intervention into public political arena so as to change or alter the content of the rules and regulations within a political organization and in a wider society.” (Adediji 2016, 95).

Along the same lines, I may also clarify my understanding of the word democracy, as it encompasses an essential part of my investigation of the Chilean university student movements.
Due to the nature of my object of study, the students, some definitions of *democracy* can be rather misleading and exclusive. According to geographer and researcher Michael Mason, from the London School of Economics, “a democracy is a political system in which all adult citizens have the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their interests” (Mason 2007, 2). The use and limitation of the word *adult citizens* promptly ignore those who are underage and actively participate in politics, the case of thousands of high school and university students in Chile and in Latin America, who constantly demonstrate exceptional mobilization strategies and influence within their political environment. I must disagree with the term proposed by Mason and instead propose a more inclusive and general term for *democracy*, suggested by Markus Kröger, professor and researcher at the University of Helsinki: “the power of the people to make decisions that alter their lives” (Kröger 2014, 17)

A sufficient democratic capacity embodied by “the people” is only possible under certain socio-psychological circumstances. Brazilian social educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of Indignation*, stated that social transformations are feasible only when people know that such changes are possible (Freire 2000, cited in Teivainen 2003 and Kröger 2014). Teivo Teivainen, professor and researcher at the University of Helsinki, contributes to the discussion by outlining the importance of setting rules to balance democratic claims. This involves, for example, constitutionally protecting the rights of minorities upon harmful decisions taken by a majority (Teivainen 2003). Democracy shall, therefore, involve a balance between the absolute power of the people and the protection of their fundamental rights (Teivainen 2016, 24) – including health, justice, and education.

### 4.1 Concepts and Theoretical Premises – Social Movements Theories

From now on, most of the concepts that I will be using will be directly related to general and specific social movement theories. I hope to study the Chilean university student movement from 2011 onwards through concepts and notions brought by theorists of the Dynamic Approach to Contentious Politics (DOC), elaborated by some classic social movement authors, such as Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly. I shall use Markus Kröger’s Theory of Contentious Agency (TCA) – a branch within the DOC line of thought - as my main tool to analyze the real effects of the politicization process of the Chilean university student movement.
on the national educational development. Furthermore, I wish to adapt to my analysis concepts developed by cleavage theorists Seymour M. Lipset, Stein Rokkan and Mario Diani, who accredit the existence of conflicts in modern democracies to a constant presence of socio-political fractures between state and civil-society actors, and within organizational structures.

The choice of the above-mentioned theories reflects the complexity in analyzing cross-relational elements of the Chilean university student movement - and modern social movements in general - through a single theoretical lens. My attempt to elucidate the internal and external operations of the movement, in relation to its direct outcomes and influence in policy change, demanded the combination of theories that could: offer me insights into the operational elements of contemporary social movements (DOC); relate the strategies assumed by the movement with the governmental agenda and real political outcomes (TCA); and explain the perpetuation and adaptation of the students’ agenda across different periods, governments and support bases (Cleavage Theory).

4.1.1 Dynamic Approach to Contentious Politics

Often perceived as a result of classic social movement theorists' reflection upon their own previous work, the Dynamic Approach to Contentious Politics (DOC) is a direct response to ever-changing political landscapes and the emergence of pioneering social movements around the world during the 1990s and 2000s. Different from classic theorists, who rely strongly on the three fundamental elements that define the logic behind social movements – opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing – the DOC assumes the operation of social movements to mechanisms of contention – dynamic and cross-functional by nature (Caren 2007).

McAdam et al. (2001) define mechanisms as “a class of events that alter the relationship among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations.” Processes, in turn, are “regular sequences of mechanisms that produce transformations to those elements”. Mechanisms can take three forms: (1) Environmental, (2) Cognitive, and (3) Relational. Environmental mechanisms correspond to external influences, from outside of the movement’s reach, that somehow affect social interactions – e.g. police repression against Chilean students during the 2011 mobilizations. Cognitive mechanisms function within alterations of individual and collective perceptions towards the movement,
affecting how participants engage and participate in collective action – e.g. the collective and mental construction of a common political identity that represents and unifies the student movement within the social dimension. And finally, relational mechanisms are those that alter the existing connections between peoples and groups, increasing or decreasing levels of interaction between them (McAdam et al. 2001) – e.g. the mediated relationship between student movements, teacher movements and even worker movements.

According to the authors, the usage of a similar set of mechanisms, by different movements, may result in a comparable collective action, but may not be understood as a part of the same movement. This is of extreme importance when analyzing social movements that may utilize similar contention mechanisms but still maintain autonomous trajectories. In the case of the Chilean university student movement, some of the mechanisms adopted by different CONFECHE leaderships varied greatly across the studied period and influenced the students’ mobilization efforts, such as different diffusion levels and radicalization episodes. Inversely, some mechanisms remained the same and defined a constant trend towards the years, such as an interactive and continuous attribution of opportunities and threats that mobilized new students – and sometimes even civil society – to fight for the students’ demands.

According to the dynamic model, mechanisms are present in almost all episodes of contention. While mechanisms are a conditional factor to the definition of a group’s trajectory, three types were highlighted by McAdam et al. (2001): diffusion, repression, and radicalization. While the latter two are important and even present in my case study, I shall discuss further the development of diffusion mechanisms, as they represent an important tool used by the Chilean university student movement to establish and spread their claims throughout the years.

According to Sidney Tarrow, mechanisms of diffusion are similar responses to common constraints and inducements faced by similar actors. It always involves the state and its reaction to contention activities (Tarrow 2010). Diffusion may occur through three different paths: relational, nonrelational and mediated. Relational diffusion involves the transfer of forms of contention, or emulation, through preexisting connections between actors. It is considered the easiest and more trustworthy type of diffusion as it passes through established lines of interactions. Differently, nonrelational diffusion involves an impersonal transfer of forms of contention, often through media and other types of communication. It can be simplistic and
fragile when compared to the relational type, as it does not involve the trust between a set of actors. And finally, mediated diffusion involves diffusion mechanisms such as brokerage, in which a third party maintains the relationship between two actors (Tarrow 2010).

In my case study, both relational and un-relational diffusion methods were found to be widely used and worth being investigated. For example, the university student movement has historically maintained and nourished a constructive relationship with secondary student organizations, mainly because of common interest and goals, but also due to historical connections – secondary student leaders often become university student leaders when they get older (Jackson 2013). Both groups have, during the seven-year period, been influenced and exerted influence on one another, including the transfer and even emulation of protesting and occupation techniques and the adoption of common demands before the Chilean government. Similarly, external actors to the university student movement, such as some private university students’ organizations with no CONFECH representation15, adopted some of the students’ demands and mobilization strategies while adjusting others to their own reality and needs (Segovia, C. and Gamboa 2012).

Regardless of the type of diffusion, the expansion of contentious action towards new actors and institutions, often within different social and political spaces, may represent a Scale Shift (Tarrow 2010). According to Tarrow, a new form of inclusive coordination that is able to move the contention beyond its origins and initial claims, somehow impacting and influencing different interests, as well as values, of new actors, may be called an Upward-Scale Shift. On the contrary, a contention that diminishes the reach of one group’s action may be called Downward-Scale Shift (Tarrow 2010). Naturally, Upward-Scale Shift represents one of the most important processes in contentious politics, as it is the key figure behind both the creation of new identities and amplification of a group’s outcomes. I hope to elucidate the incidence of such phenomenon in the Chilean university student movement that allowed it to reach a significative level of embeddedness within the government and assure the inclusion of its demands on the educational reforms.

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15 The first private university federation to join CONFECH was the FEUDP in 2015.
Political Identities

Political identities assume a central role on the dynamic framework of contention. Through their interaction with mobilization processes, political identities directly affect the course and outcomes of the collective action. Whenever public claims are made on the basis of those identities, and whenever these claims involve the government, either as a subject or as a third party, the identity can be considered political (McAdam et al. 2001, 134). The authors considered six different claims related to the creation, appropriation, activation, transformation, and suppression of political identities.

1. Throughout the process of contentious politics, participants are able to shape, adapt, manipulate and reinterpret the identities of the parties participating in contention.
2. Identities are the base for claim-making.
3. Existing identities form the base for individuals to engage in contention and further create new identities throughout episodes.
4. Identity strongly impacts the outcomes and the trajectory of contention.
5. Episodes may create, transform or extinct identities and therefore transform the political environment after it has ended.
6. Causal mechanisms in contentious politics are based on social interaction, and not on individuals.

(McAdam et al. 2001)

4.1.2 Theory of Contentious Agency

Following my objective to study the outcomes of the Chilean university student movement since 2011, I acknowledge that it is necessary to go beyond traditional social movement theory models and towards a more specific social movement-state analytical approach. To do so, I will attempt to use the notion of embedded autonomy developed by Development Studies’ scholar Peter Evans and adapted by Kröger (2014, 14) on his book Contentious Agency and Natural Resources Politics. Embedded autonomy, or “the interaction of a movement with the state”, will be my main tool to analyze the complex, and often ripped relationship between the university student movement and the Chilean state, while associating it
with the outcomes, or changes, in the existing educational model. According to the author, by relationally studying these two dimensions, it is possible to guarantee a more flexible analytical tool to study the outcomes of contemporary social movements such as the Chilean university student movement.

Kröger’s theory of embeddedness is structured on a “cycle of contentious agency”, which exemplifies the natural flow of action in which social movements operate. By contentious agency, the author refers to a “changing of the social relations by social actors”, and its deepening would ensure actions that could maintain social movements in operation (Kröger 2014, 12). Figure 3 represents the “cycle of contentious agency”, as proposed by the author, and is based on five mechanisms, or strategies, that when mutually used by social movements may represent advancements on their organizing, campaigning and politicizing capabilities – which likely would increase an array of social outcomes. The five mechanisms represented by the letters a-e denote respectively: The (a) organizing and politicizing of social actors; (b) campaigning by heterodox framing; (c) protests; (d) networking with allies; and finally (e) embedding with the state while maintaining autonomy (Kröger 2014, 13).

Special attention should be given to mechanisms (c-e), as they are the main drivers of contention agency, feeding the cycle into a more intense round of contentious action. Mechanisms (a) and (b) are basic conditions to the development of further mechanisms on the cycle, they represent the importance of strategic organization as a driver to challenging and sturdy acts of contention. According to the author, “once movements strategies a-e are in action, for example, they foster the education of contentious subjects, those activists with a contentious habitus” (Kröger 2014, 19). Up next, I shall give more details to mechanisms/strategies a-e as they are the base of my analysis of each year of the Chilean university student movement since 2011.
Figure 3 – The virtuous cycle of contentious agency promoting strategies

Source: Figure reproduced and borrowed with permission from Kröger (2014, 15)

The first of Kröger’s five mechanisms – (a) – refers to the organizational and politicization capacity of social movements. According to him, progress in contentious agency depends strongly on internal and external structures developed by different groups and organizations, referring to both their ideological and institutional foundations that bring together members of a specific movement to act towards their common objectives (Kröger 2014). In the case of the Chilean university student movement, one can mention the organizational and participatory structure of CONFECH and each individual student federation, portrayed by recurrent assemblies, democratic decision-making processes and free elections that politicize and shape its members’ behaviors.

The second mechanism – (b) – is campaigning by heterodox framing, a “prime strategy to gather, foster and direct grievances. (...) it is an act of spreading contentious ideological contents
within a movement (...) and should be based on ethical and moral grounds” (Kröger 2014, 65-66). In other words, it’s the ideological, and often psychological method in which movements attract, retain and unify its bases towards their objectives (Kröger 2014). Giorgio Jackson, CONFECH spokesman during the 2011 mobilizations, described one of the strategies developed by the university movement to attract different “classes” of students into the mobilizations – namely those who were poor and indebted and those who were wealthier and held no loans. According to him, one of the tactics assumed by the student movement, during its campaigning in 2011, was to instigate frustration on those who were directly affected by the system and create a sense of guilt on those who were not hindered by it (Jackson 2013). By inciting students from different social classes in supporting the CONFECH agenda, the 2011 university student movement successfully gathered support from a significant part of the national student body.

Protesting – (c) –, according to Kröger, is a sign of “underlying movement strategies being utilized and developed” (Kröger 2014, 69). It is the third mechanism that the author uses to depict the cycle of contentious agency and represents one of the main sources of visibility to social movements. Effective protesting skills create awareness of issues that are raised by social movements and convert impartial individuals into loyal supporters of the cause. It is also an effective technique to force governments to negotiate with social movements – or at least note their existence. Successful movements count with a varied set of protesting strategies and use them according to their specific objectives, in order to achieve very specific organizational goals (Kröger 2014). The Chilean university student movement, for example, has counted with a diverse set of protesting methods throughout the years – from customary street marches and strikes to flash mobs and artistic interventions (Donoso 2017). Undoubtedly it represents the most common strategy used by CONFECH and university student federations to propagate and communicate their demands to the public and the government.

The fourth strategy is networking with allies – (d) – and bases itself on the idea of replication and adaptation of a movement’s strategies by other social movements (Zald 1996, quoted in Kröger 2014, 71). It represents the creation of networks of resistance towards a common adversary (Kröger 2014). In the Chilean student movement case, CONFECH maintains itself close to secondary student organizations and the CPC, who have since the beginning
adopted and incorporated the university student demands as their own. In exchange, CONFECH has adopted these groups’ demands as their own (CONFECH 2011a).

And finally, Kröger’s fifth mechanism is the embedded autonomy with the state – (e) –, or the “relationship of a social movement with the state while maintaining its organizational autonomy in promoting contentious agency” (Kröger 2014, 76). According to the author, a successful movement reaches an embedding state when it manages to influence State institutions to drive its organizational agenda, laws governing them and maintenance of sympathetic staff to control them (Kröger 2014). In the author’s words,

“the government has had to give in to the demands of the movement, for example by granting state actor positions to movement sympathizers or more resources to the pro-resistance institutions, or allowing greater legitimacy to contention. This shows that a movement has had an important role in resistance outcomes, even where state institutions have made the final decisions.” (Kröger 2014, 77)

Additionally, a successful movement manages to use embeddedness as a way to guarantee support from the state and maintain its own level of autonomy secured. A fully embedded movement ensures the support from the state to the demands set by a social movement (Kröger 2014). In the case of the Chilean student movement, certain levels of embeddedness took form through the ingression of student leaders into traditional politics, mainly as national representatives in the Parliament, and the adoption of some of the student demands in the government agenda after 2014.

The five mechanisms defined by Kröger (2014) are not independent, but on the contrary, are connected and also consequential to each another. For example, mechanisms (a) and (b) are considered by the author as base strategies that define the actions and progress of a specific social movement. Mechanisms (c), (d) and (e) are then only plausible if the first two mechanisms are successfully executed. This is especially important for the conception of a reliable and effective protesting strategy (c) – requiring a strong organizational structure (a) and an effective evangelization exercise done by movement’s leaders (b). Mechanisms (d) and (e) are not direct conditions to protesting (c) but positively influence its outcomes.
Mechanisms must also spread a “metaculture of replication” within the social space. Replication “promotes creativity, innovation, and empowers people to be autonomous and do things themselves” (Kröger 2014, 21) while still ensuring that set organizational objectives are met. The contentious agency, then, becomes the product of those mechanisms that inherently involve the emancipation and empowerment of those who are part of the contentious action. Actors who are vested by strong mechanisms, maintain the flow of its contention agency to its optimal level and manage to embed themselves to the national political game, are more likely to achieve their goals (Kröger 2014).

Kröger (2014) recognizes that the creation of a virtuous cycle between the five strategies results on benefits for the social movement. Movements that count with an effective control and usage of the five strategies are more likely to succeed than those that do not, as they activate and instigate contentious mobilization. This, according to the author, represents the key difference between this theoretical line of thought and those who support theories of “political opportunities”, as no movement will enjoy an opening of opportunities from external sources without the capacity created by political organizing and internal stimuli to engage in action (Kröger 2014). Also, differently than its DOC predecessors, such as McAdam et al. (2001), Kröger (2014) identified the existence of a causal relationship between different sets of mechanisms and their outcomes – addressing a longstanding gap in social movement theories and constructively measuring the real impacts of social movements in political sciences and development studies.

The contentious agency theory proposed by Markus Kröger can provide an interesting insight into the socio-political outcomes of the Chilean university student movement between the years 2011 and 2017, especially in relation to the different mobilization strategies adopted by different leaderships throughout the period. In the following chapter, I shall analyze each year of university student mobilization following Kröger’s cycle of contentious agency and attempt to identify the outcomes of their actions into effective changes to the national educational system.

4.1.3 Cleavage Theory

As mentioned in chapter 3, the internal structure of CONFECH – the principal and maximum stance of university student mobilization in Chile – is erratic, fragmented and
restrictive by nature. The autonomy and influence of any given group may be hindered both by external and internal powers, demanding groups to adopt effective long-lasting strategies and ensure an inclusive political identity within its bases.

In this section, I will attempt to identify the effects of social-political fractures that exist outside and inside the realm of social movement organizations, including the Chilean university student movement. To do that, I hope to associate their existence with the strategies adopted, as direct responses, by relevant groups – such as CONFECH. I shall use the sociological notion of cleavage, originally identified by sociologists Seymor M. Lipset and Stein in the 1960s and then use sociologist Mario Diani’s adaptation of the term into contemporary social movement theory as the main base of my exercise.

Sociologists Seymor M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) assumed, during the development of a cleavage-based structure theory, that fractures within the socio-political spectrum of western democracies roved on a two-dimensional space – territorial and functional – built over two main dichotomies: “elite-periphery” and “ordinary-ideological interests” – the first referring to socio-economic cleavages and the second to individual-communal cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). According to Lipset (2001), political parties and groups in contemporary western democracies must somehow link themselves to these political, social and economic sources of cleavages to ensure collective stability and effectiveness. These relations, also according to him, are direct responses to transformations that are part of historical processes of socio-economic development. Today’s sources of cleavages, for example, are strongly founded on the prominence of post-materialistic issues to socio-economic matters, such as education and health (Lipset 2001).

Mario Diani, sociologist and professor at the University of Trento, Italy, adapted the Lipset-Rokkan Model of political cleavages to the study of social movements. According to him, political parties and social movement organizations contribute to the maintenance of specific cleavages in society (Diani 2000). Cleavage, according to him, “is a process which leads to the definition of some forms and modalities of conflict as legitimate, and to the exclusion of others as illegitimate” (Bartoloni and Mair, 1990 quoted in Diani 2000, 396).
The perpetuation of cleavages by social movement organizations is the result of individual and group affiliations that relate with existing fractures, either emotionally or rationally, and indirectly contribute to their preservation. On the other hand, if such link is broken and individuals don’t further relate to existing cleavages that form the base of action of organizations, it is possible to imply their weakening within the socio-political system (Inglehart, 1990, Dalton, 1988, quoted in Diani 2000, 390). The Chilean university student movement, and more specifically CONFECH, may be clear examples of such phenomenon. Since it’s reemergence, in the 1980s, the modern Chilean university student movement seemed to strongly lean itself on the existence of socio-economic cleavages that have constrained access to higher education to great shares of the population. Their action, resistance towards the government and even their own existence may be perhaps explained in relation to this severe social fracture.

![Diagram of social linkages, partisan identification, and reproduction of cleavages](image)

Figure 4 – Reproduction of cleavages according to Mario Diani (2000)

Source: Figure created based on Diani (2000, 396)

*Figure 4* depicts Diani’s understanding of the relationship between social linkages, organizational identity and the reproduction of cleavages in society. According to the author, social connections assumed by individuals and groups have the potential to reinforce levels of partisan identification, granting organizations a strong relational participatory base that provides the foundation for the reproduction of cleavages that lies in the core of a group’s source of action (Diani 2000).
Additionally, according to Diani (2000), established common identities assumed by social movement groups can be regarded as a result of exclusive and concentrated member bases—called “concentric circles”. They “support cleavages to the extent that they reinforce actors’ worldviews and identities while reducing the possibility of their access to other social milieus with conflicting views” (Diani 2000, 396). On the other hand, non-established common identities, also regarded as the result of membership diversification, may contribute with opportunities for social-political change (Diani 2000).

Existing cleavages also influence cooperation and opposition between, and within social movement organizations (Diani 2000). Whereas different groups may collaborate behind common sources of cleavages, some may challenge the leading position of already well-established groups by deflecting support towards a more effective political alternative. This sort of defiance behind existing cleavages, according to Diani, represents an essential source of innovation within social movement organizations and define the positions of different groups as protagonists or mere spectators of contentious action (Diani 2000). Through my findings, I hope to discuss CONFECCH’s role in perpetuating socio-political cleavages in public higher education and bring to discussion the ability of the Chilean university student movement to innovate and drive its mobilization strategy according to its structural diversity or uniformity throughout the years.
5. Findings and Discussions

So far, I have presented the theoretical and methodological background chosen for this research, as well as a historical perspective of the Chilean university student movement from 2011 to 2017 – including its origins, organizational structures, and demands. In this chapter, I aim to firstly present my findings through a crisp-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA) truth table, mirrored on Kröger’s study of contentious agency promoting strategies and plantation expansion in Brazil. Subsequently, I hope to discuss the findings presented on the csQCA by comparing the outcomes of the university student movement diachronically, within its own broader historical conjuncture.

Table 2 presents a csQCA on the contentious agency promoting strategies assumed by different seven CONFECH leaderships and educational reform laws introduced by the Chilean government from 2011 to 2017. Each CONFECH leadership, named after the year of their direction and the coalition which they were part of, are organized chronologically from earliest to latest. Variables A-E follow Kröger’s five mechanisms of contentious agency (of the same nomenclature) previously described. Independent variable Outcome signals the existence or not of higher education-related reformist laws introduced by the Chilean government – namely the executive – during the same year.

The following determinants were set for the five mechanisms (a-e) to be considered either active (1) or inactive (0): for mechanisms A, the social movement must have a democratic and participatory organizational structure, with recurring assemblies, democratic decision-making processes and free elections of representatives. Additionally, a common reformist attitude toward the educational system must be identified. For B to be active, the movement ought to voice discontent with an unequal and unjust education system and defend higher education as a public right to all Chilean students. For protesting, or mechanism C, I shall consider the number of CONFECH-directed marches (over 5,000 people regardless of their location in Chile), occupations, strikes or other alternative forms of spatial clamors reported by mass-media channels from Chile and the world. For D to be active, there must exist a coalition network between CONFECH and other social actors that aim for reforms in the national educational system. And finally, E will be active when those part of the “Student Block” in Parliament act, either by voting or expressing publicly their opinion, in line with CONFECH’s
demands to reform the current educational system; or when CONFECH’s demands are integrated in governmental, or electoral discourses related to reforms in the higher education system; and when CONFECH’s autonomy is observed by its capacity to control the influx of influence coming from the outside.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFECH (and leading coalitions in the EB)</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Outcome - Educational Reform (indicator: introduction of university education-related laws by the Executive into the National Congress)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 (Center-Left¹)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No bills yet passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 (Independent Left)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0₄</td>
<td>No bills yet passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 (Independent Left)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No bills yet passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 (Left Coalition²)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No bills yet passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 (Independent Left)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Docent Law (#10008-04); New Public Education Law (#10368-04); Universal Gratuity - Annual Budget for 2016 (#10461-05).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (Left Coalition³)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Higher Education Reform (#10783-04).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 (Center-Left)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New State University Law (#10783-04).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1. During the year 2011, both Center-Left and Independent Left coalitions occupied 4 seats on the CONFECH Executive Board. However, during most of the academic year, Center-leftists maintained their role as leaders and conductors of the university student movement.

2. The 2014 Left Coalition was formed by the Autonomous Left (IA), the Libertarian Student Front (FEL) and the National Student Union (UNE).

3. During the year 2016, both Left (IA, FEL, and UNE) and Independent Left coalitions occupied 5 seats on the CONFECH Executive Board. However, during the academic year, Leftists maintained their role as leaders and conductors of the university student movement.

4. The decrease of the CAE from 6% to 2%, and part of the Tributary Reform approved by President Piñera should not be seen as a concession, or support, to the student’s demand but as a response to the presidency’s record low approval rates. The student movement was still seen by the government, throughout the entirety of 2012, as a menace to public order.
Table 2’s structure follows Ragin and Strand’s interpretation of Temporal QCAs and their understanding that causal conjunctures are sequences of series of events (Ragin and Strand 2008, 432). In this case study, the causal conjuncture that led to the passing of reform bills was the result of different mobilization and organizational strategies assumed by CONFECH along the seven-analyzed years – or as in the authors’ terms, a series of events.

### 5.1 Comments on the csQCA and findings

Mechanism A remained active throughout the seven CONFECH leaderships analyzed in this research. Democratic and participatory structures were identified both on national and regional levels, mainly through free elections, collective decision-making procedures, and assemblies. The importance of the Zonales – regional CONFECH representations – in appointing Executive Board Members safeguarded the democratic essence of the organization’s highest decision-making body. Additionally, the collected data shows that all seven leaderships remained faithful to a common reformist ideology based on a free, public, high-quality, equal and democratic higher education system.

Equally, mechanism B is active in all seven analyzed cases. Heterodox campaigning founded on an unequal and unjust higher education system remained always present throughout different CONFECH leaderships, although somehow adapting to existing conditions. As previously mentioned, Jackson’s (2013) description of the strategies used to attract university students from different economic classes diversified and solidified the bases during 2011’s mobilizations. In 2015, by publishing the document “Principles of a New Public Education”, the CONFECH leadership reaffirms its commitment to free and public higher education as a social right to all Chilean citizens, regardless of reform bills being discussed and voted in Congress. And lastly, in 2017 the leadership shaped its mobilization strategy around a “reminder” to civil society that the core demands set by CONFECH since 2011 were yet to be attended.

Mechanism C varied across the seven-year period. The collected data shows that protesting considerably decreased after the peak-year of 2011, most likely due to an overall exhaustion of the university student movement and its bases, along with the government’s unwillingness to hold dialogue with CONFECH and actions trying to delegitimize the
movement. More interesting, however, is an even larger decrease in the number of protests during Michelle Bachelet’s first year in office, a clear sign of the 2014 leadership’s loss of influence in setting the terms of the educational reform. Considerable higher numbers in 2015 and 2016 reflect CONFECH’s renewed stances towards the reforms being brought by the government.

Mechanism D remained constant. My findings show a strong partnership between CONFECH, both secondary student organizations ACES and CONES, and the Teachers’ Union (TC) during the whole analyzed period. The identified types of support between the three groups varied in form and content: joint marches and strikes, co-authored institutional declarations and communications and mutual support on negotiation tables. Occasionally and under specific conditions, CONFECH also partnered up with the Rectors’ Council (CRUCH) – e.g. in the signing of the “Great Accord for Education” in 2011 (Sepulveda 2011) – and with labor unions and worker associations – e.g. joint strike with the Labor Central and the Copper Workers Association in 2013 (Cooperativa.cl 2013).

Mechanism E was only activated in 2014 but remained active ever since. The findings show that regardless of the massive mobilization levels in 2011, the university student movement did not, at any point in that year, guarantee support from the government or embed its demands into the governmental apparatus. Apart from few sparse negotiation episodes along the year, the student movement and the Chilean State remained disconnected. This trend continued throughout President Piñera’s last two years in power, when hostility levels prevented any form of dialogue or negotiation between the two actors. Some of the responses and concessions given by the government, such as the decrease of the CAE from 6% to 2% in November 2012, can be seen as unilateral and a reaction to Piñera’s administration’s record low approval rates amongst the population (Montes 2012).

Embeddedness finally took form in 2014 but had its genesis during the 2011 mobilizations and presidential and legislative campaigns of the previous year. The candidature of five former student leaders to Parliament influenced the input of many of the university students’ demands into the national electoral politics. Newly elected Michelle Bachelet admittedly adopted many of the movement’s demands, such as gratuity in higher education and the end of profit, as her own electoral banner. The future president personally recognized the student movement as
the main drivers of the reforms being proposed during her campaign. Throughout 2014, the new government and the so-called “Student Block” in the National Congress assumed some of the demands set by the student movement during previous years and set the tone for future reforms in the educational system.

Mechanism $E$ can be considered active during the next three years, from 2015 to 2017, if analyzed exclusively on crude terms that define embedded autonomy – especially the adoption of some of CONFECH’s demands in governmental discourses; and the widespread of the demands within the educational reform agenda led by the Executive and Legislative branches. However, it may be subject to interpretation if one chooses to analyze the embedded autonomy of specific leaderships only in their own context. The proposed reform bills from 2014 onwards partly attended some of the students’ demands set mainly during the 2011 mobilizations, such as universal gratuity, strengthening of public universities, and prohibition of profit, but did not include CONFECH or any other student organization in the design and/or implementation stages of these processes. While the last three leaderships positioned themselves against the reforms being carried on during their terms, more due lack of student input to the negotiations than actual disagreements regarding content, the proposed bills can be considered aligned with the main demands set by the university student movement during the whole period – thus an active mechanism $E$.

I hope to further complement the discussion brought on Table 2 by reinterpreting the collected data while taking into consideration its historical conjuncture. Such exercise will enable me to explore the temporal outcomes of the massive 2011 mobilizations on the levels of embedded autonomy previously presented in this chapter and reach conclusions on the outcomes of the university student movement’s politicization levels. I shall bring this issue to the discussion through Phillip McMichael’s notions of diachronic incorporated comparison.

### 5.1.1 Historical Conjuncture

I suggest that any form of study of the recent Chilean university student movement must be carried on taking into consideration its broader historical conjuncture. The findings presented previously, through the csQCA, can be very elucidating to comprehend the continuity and resilience of the university student movement during the seven-year period, especially in what it
regards to its democratic organizational structure, strong identity and capacity to network with allies. However, the csQCA presented on Table 2 by itself cannot indicate the existing causal chains between one CONFECH leadership and the other – and especially between the massive 2011 mobilizations and the following six years. I propose a discussion to bring light to the causal chains that took form during the period and hopefully clarify how all five mechanisms, but specially embedded-autonomy, or mechanism $E$, are subject to the effects of the broader historical conjuncture of the Chilean student movement.

According to Sociologist Phillip McMichael (1992), an incorporated comparison method aims to situate processes within a broader historical conjuncture. Any set of compared cases under this method are integral, individually and interactionally, to the understanding of the whole of the historical process being studied. It can be either diachronic – a comparison across time – and/or synchronic – a comparison across space. For the case of the Chilean university movement between the years 2011 and 2017, I will use McMichael’s incorporated comparison diachronically. Table 3 shows an adaptation of Linguistics Professor Juha Hämäläinen’s (2013) logic of diachronic reasoning to my case study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FOCUS</strong></th>
<th><strong>ANALYSIS</strong></th>
<th><strong>LOGIC OF ORDER</strong></th>
<th><strong>BASIC INTEREST</strong></th>
<th><strong>COMPARISON</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The effects of the first year(s) of mobilization strategy on its successors.</td>
<td>Events or set of events that defined CONFECH’s mobilization trajectory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Chilean university student movement must be studied within its own historical conjuncture. Based on my findings, I suggest that the maintenance and even activation of each of the five mechanisms studied on the csQCA are correlated to each other across the whole seven-year period. This is especially valid to the activation of mechanism $E$, or embedded autonomy, from 2014 onwards. The collected data doesn’t show any direct linkage between the 2014, 2015, 2016 or 2017 leaderships and the levels of embedded autonomy reached by the university student movement during the specific years of their activities. The clearest connections lay on the 2011 mobilization efforts and during the 2013 electoral campaigns, when the demands of the movement were defined, its popular support reached unprecedented levels and its aggregation to the political discourse determined. Hence, I suggest that the level of embedded autonomy reached by the university student movement under Bachelet’s administration was defined up to three years earlier, with a concise and effective mobilization strategy by past CONFECH leaderships.

However, it is important to elucidate the effect chains that lay behind my rationale (Figure 5):

1. The 2011 university student movement’s innovative mobilization methods, massive adherence, and broad mediatic coverage were quickly noted and contested by the government, whose first reaction was to repress and delegitimize the movement.
2. The government’s repressive posture guaranteed the movement a valuable endorsement from Chilean civil society and the international community, who identified themselves with the students’ contest.
3. The massivity gained during 2011, “a snowball out of control” according to Jackson (2013), forced the government – whose approval rates had reached unprecedented levels – to retract completely from any sort of direct negotiation with CONFECH for the next two years.
4. A reduced mobilization space in 2012 and 2013 – not only due the government’s unwillingness to dialogue but also due to a natural fatigue of the movement after 2011 – was compensated by the adaptation of the students’ demands into the electoral promises in 2013.
5. The success of former student leaders in being elected to parliament and the election of Michelle Bachelet to the presidency, who recognized the importance of the student movement in defining the demands for a future educational reform, safeguarded some of CONFECH’s demands as part of the new governmental agenda.

6. As the core demands of the university student movement remained the same and counted with aligned governmental efforts in presenting reforms to the educational system, it is possible to affirm that the activation of mechanism $E$, or embedded autonomy, was finally possible in 2014.

Figure 5 – The Chilean university student movement effect-chain leading to its embedded autonomy within the state.

In line with Ragin and Strand’s understanding of temporal QCA and considering the university student movement within its unique historical conjuncture since 2011, it is possible to then compare CONFECH’s demands throughout the whole period and the actual laws that were approved by President Bachelet’s reformist efforts. I propose a redesign of Table 1, presented on
Chapter 3. *Table 4* demonstrates the movement’s main structural demands and the actual laws brought into effect during the seven CONFECH leaderships previously discussed.
Table 4 – Main university student demands during the period 2011-2017 and the approved educational reform laws during Bachelet’s Administration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s main structural demands</th>
<th>Approved Educational Reform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase public spending on Higher Education and strengthen Public Universities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement new criteria to guarantee equality in access to universities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Gratuity in Higher Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibition of Profit in the Education System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of public education as a right</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized participation of students in educational matters</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Socio-political cleavages and the Chilean university student movement

It is difficult to relate, at least directly, the Chilean university student movement and CONFECH with the perpetuity of socio-political cleavages, on Diani’s (2000) terms, during the rather limited period analyzed throughout this research. Throughout my data collection and analysis, some aspects of the movement’s operations, including its yearly changes of leadership and internal clashes between opposing groups, provided some insights into CONFECH’s different approaches towards the sources of the inequalities that drive their work. However, the findings do not point towards a simple and holistic answer to whether the university student movement supported or not the maintenance of cleavages that were in the core of their existence – they simply provide us an entry-point towards future research opportunities and investigation.

In Figure 6, it is possible to visualize the composition of the different CONFECH Executive Boards throughout the seven-year period analyzed on this research. Except for the 2013 EB, in which data could not be retrieved in its entirety, all the other years presented the same structural trend in leadership. This included a minimum of 50% of seats occupied by single coalitions each year. Independentists ensured most seats on five out of the seven years, but that did not necessarily mean that they maintained control of the movement’s agenda throughout the whole time, as we have previously seen. Centrist coalitions, such as the one led by Camila Vallejo and Giorgio Jackson ensured control of the movement’s agenda during critical moments in 2011 regardless of its minority on the leadership board. Other left-wing coalitions, such as those formed by FEL, UNE and the Autonomous Left in 2014, broke the hegemony of the independentists for that year but saw its mobilization capacity diminished during Bachelet’s first year in power.
Figure 6 – CONFECH Executive Board’s diversity between the years 2011-2017
My findings do not show a direct correlation between leadership diversity within CONFECH and the perpetuation of sources of socio-political cleavages that limit access to Higher Education in Chile. However, this does not mean that such correlation may not exist when analyzing a longer period and the diversity of the organization as a whole – and not only its leaders. I assume such statement based on two main observations:

1. Throughout the analyzed period, the diversity of the EB was limited to three, or maximum of four groups, which most likely don’t represent the entirety of the mobilized student body. Additionally, independentist groups – who represent a significative part of the organization – cannot be considered a homogeneous unit, but a diverse set of student collectives with different ideological and organizational characteristics. A deep understanding of individual independentist groups may indicate whether CONFECH can be considered diverse and not chained to Diani’s (2000) concept of concentric circles – which perpetuate socio-political cleavages.

2. A seven-year period of analysis proved to be insufficient to analyze whether the Chilean university student movement contributes or not to the perpetuation of the socio-political cleavages that limit access to Higher Education. It was clear during the analysis that more historical data from CONFECH was necessary to conclude this rationale. A possible hypothesis for future research may point to the emergence of today’s student movements in Chile, since 2006, as the result of the collapse of former concentric circles that existed within the movement since its rebirth in 1984 and supported the maintenance of socio-political cleavages on the educational system since then.
6. Conclusion

This research attempted to answer the following primary and secondary research questions: What are the effects of the politicization of the Chilean university student movement on the historical conjuncture that led to the mid-2010s’ educational reforms in Chile? And what is the correlation, if any, between CONFECH’s internal organizational structures and effective mobilization? As a pre-developed hypothesis, I assumed that different politicization levels assumed by the university student movements throughout the years may result in gain or losses of positive political influence according to its embeddedness to traditional politics.

In this section, I hope to add up to the previous Findings and Discussions Chapter and explore some of the theoretical and conceptual advances reached in this Master’s Thesis and their eventual contributions to the field of Development Studies, while attempting to answer the main research questions that guided my study. I shall start by reflecting once again upon the term politicization. Subsequently, I shall further explore the ties between the theories and the findings previously presented. And finally, I hope to conclude this thesis by posing further questions and highlighting the need for further research on the impacts of social movements on developing countries.

According to Adediji (2016), politicization must be understood as a non-static intervention on the political sphere that drives changes in society. It necessarily involves the acquisition of political character and a power-led behavior by any given group or individual. It is a continuous phenomenon and exists within its own historical process, which I have adapted to this case study at different levels. These levels are both causal and the result of the university student movement’s embedded autonomy within the state, and therefore founded on the broader historical conjuncture that defines it. I suggest that embedded autonomy and politicization, in the case of the Chilean university student movement, walk hand-in-hand and are consequential to each other. The more embedded the student movement is to the state, while maintaining its autonomy, the higher is its own level of politicization.

As previously stated, the adoption of a diverse set of theories to study the Chilean university student movement reflects the complexity in analyzing cross-relational elements of modern social movements through a single theoretical lens. The combination of the classic DOC approach presented here by McAdam et.al (2001) and Tarrow (2010), with Kröger’s (2014)
TCA, offered significant insights into the effects of different mechanisms of contention on the Chilean university student movement’s capacity to embed within the state while maintaining its autonomy. By leading its mobilization strategies beyond its origins and perpetuating it across time, while impacting and influencing different sets of actors from within and outside the mobilization space, I suggest that the Chilean university student movement reached Tarrow’s (2010) definition of an Upward-Scale Shift. Additionally, I also propose that such process was detrimental to the activation of mechanisms a-e (Kröger 2014) and the overall success of the Chilean university student movement in advancing many of its demands into the governmental agenda.

The notion of embedded autonomy adapted by Kröger (2014), and part of the Theory of Contentious Agency (TCA), proved to be a valuable theoretical tool to my case study. Through an adapted csQCA, I’ve analyzed the different mechanisms of contention and strategies assumed by the students during seven different CONFECHE leaderships: (a) organizing and politicizing of social actors; (b) campaigning by heterodox framing; (c) protests; (d) networking with allies; and (e) embedding with the state while maintaining autonomy. The collected data points to the activation of mechanisms a-d throughout the whole period, demonstrating the university student movement’s strong organizational structure, democratic decision-making processes and effective mobilization strategies. The activation of mechanism e - namely embedded autonomy – occurred from 2014 onward, when many of the demands set by the university student movement were either adopted or incorporated by the government as part of a reformist package driven by former-student leaders who were elected into Parliament and the new president Michelle Bachelet.

If analyzed in crude terms, however, embedded autonomy during the period 2014-2017 wasn’t prone to activation if leaderships were studied independently. The university student movement in 2011 and 2013, for example, proved to be considerably more consequential to the later activation of mechanism e than the actual efforts of 2014-2017 CONFECHE leaderships, when the mechanism was already active by itself. I suggest a diachronic comparison – a comparison across time – of each of the seven CONFECHE leaderships within the university student movement’s own contemporary historical conjuncture (2011-2017), as a way to truly measure the group’s overall effects on the delivery of educational reforms.
The research question “What are the effects of the politicization of the Chilean university student movement on the historical conjuncture that led to the mid-2010s’ educational reforms in Chile?” may be addressed, therefore, according to the embedded autonomy –mechanism – acquired by the university student movement as a result of its continuous mobilization efforts between the years 2011-2017. For the purpose of answering the research question, I assume that the effects of the politicization of the Chilean university student movement, in line with its embedded autonomy post-2014, can be verified through the approval of four educational reform laws that addressed some of the students’ main demands, including: increasing public spending on higher education and strengthening public universities; implementing new criteria for access to public universities; gradual universal gratuity in higher education; criminalization of profit in the education system; recognition of education as a right; and progressive advancements on students’ participatory rights in state-controlled universities.

While addressing the second research question posed in this Master’s Thesis, “what is the correlation, if any, between CONFECH’s internal organizational structures and effective mobilization?”, I’ve used the adapted interpretation of the theory of socio-political cleavages developed by Mario Diani (2000). Cleavages in society, according to this line of thought, can be perpetuated by, and rooted within the structures of groups and organizations which existences are related directly to socio-political fractures. I’ve attempted to analyze the internal structure of the Chilean university student movement - CONFECH - and investigate if its internal diversity, product of a fragmented and erratic organizational structure, had considerable effects on the group’s capacity to mobilize effectively.

A year-by-year analysis of the composition of CONFECH’s EBs from 2011-2017 did not point out to a direct correlation between organizational structure, effective mobilization efforts, and a perpetuation of the socio-political fractures that cause educational inequalities in Chile. However, that doesn’t mean that such correlation may not exist when broadening the studied period beyond 2011 and thoroughly considering various independent student collectives that compose the organization and are not represented at the CONFECH’s executive board. This still open research question may represent future opportunities of research on the topic and the use of cleavage theory in interpreting Latin American social movements.
This thesis has made significant advancements on theoretical, empirical and methodological dimensions. The theoretical framework used in this research will hopefully contribute to the further advancement of the TCA approach developed by Markus Kröger (2014) and broaden the array of research available on the outcomes of social movements and their acquisition of political power as a way to perpetuate their demands. I assume that the mutual use of the TCA and the incorporated comparison method may lead to a wider reach of the theoretical framework in the study of politicization of social movements as historical development processes. Additionally, this thesis has contributed to the advancement of the temporal QCA methodology, which has not yet been extensively used in social movement research.

Through this Master’s Thesis, I’ve sought to study the effects of the politicization of contemporary social movements using the case of the Chilean university student movement. My objective was to identify if and how development could be affected by the acquisition of political power by social groups and organizations, taking into consideration their mobilization trajectories and recent history. My study points out to a correlation between the acquisition of political power by social movements - during and after acute episodes of contention - and relevant changes in national legislation regarding social protection and rights. However, regardless of its comparability with other social movements in the Latin America and in the developing world, it is fair to recognize the outcomes of this case study’s considerable politicization efforts as successful and a relevant reference for future research on the developmental impacts of social movements.
7. Annex

The complete summary of this Master’s Thesis’ data can be found in the supporting document “Annex I – The Chilean university student movement mobilization timeline (2011-2018)”, available online with the following URL: https://helsinkif-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/varro_ad_helsinki_fi/EVdchGhWPfJMqjJCvGx-QBhit9-SoYFBE-EXywJgnJO?e=fNYkna. The document contains additional information on the mobilization activity of the Chilean university student movement from 2011 to 2018 and was not included in this Master’s Thesis due to space issues.
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