

Articulating a Movement: A Discourse Analysis of the *Pinguino* Student Movement in Chile

By Andrew Wolf

Advisor: Professor Carolyn Gallaher

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Introduction

In May 2006, Chile's capital city of Santiago was the scene of student protests demanding that the Bachelet administration offer free and unlimited-use of public transportation passes, provide a free college entrance examination, increase funding for infrastructure, rewrite the country's education laws, and restructure the educational system to give a quality education to all students. This was not the first time that these sorts of demands had been made, but the movement of 2006 distinguished itself for the overall volume of student involvement and the intensity of the tactics used, including school takeovers that lasted for over a month. The long term demands included in the students' petition also included requests not previously made of the government involving the laws that form the structure of Chile's system of education. When new president Michelle Bachelet's government, which had promised changes to the education system, failed to address the students' demands, the movement intensified before reaching its climax. Almost one million high school and university students demonstrated in the streets, organized strikes, and took over nearly 250 of their schools. At its largest, the mobilization included public and private school students, teachers, political figures, and unions, but the movement was led mainly by high school students. The goals articulated by the leaders of the *Revolución Pingüina*¹ (Penguin Revolution) originally included requests similar to those of prior years such as free *pase escolares* (student transportation pass) and a free college entrance exam, but the movement reached a tipping point as its discourse began to include more structural changes such as addressing inequalities in access to education and abolishing former military dictator Augusto Pinochet's Organic Constitutional Law on Teaching (LOCE), which was passed in 1990 and encouraged the privatization of much of Chile's education system. While it is

¹ The movement received its name from the media, which called the students "penguins" after the navy blue and white school uniforms that Chilean students wear.

common for student protests at a more minimal scale to occur every year in Chile, something changed in 2006 that allowed for a transformation of both the scale and quality of protest. What led to such a massive mobilization with such varied participants and intensity of tactics?

During the summer of 2008, I had the opportunity to study the Chilean student movement by undertaking research on organizing methods and the politics of identity within this group. Through conducting over twenty personal interviews and by attending demonstrations and organized events, I was able to gather ethnographic data on student discourse for my analysis. In addition to these primary sources, I also surveyed news media, books, Internet sources, and academic writings to compare against my own findings. Rather than discovering a “typical *pingüino*,” I found that *pingüinos* came from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Despite differences in students’ economic backgrounds and their visions for society, common threads began to emerge in student discourse. Shifts in the messaging and tactics of the *pingüino* movement occurred at the same time as its scale magnified from a few student leaders to a popular movement. Organizing effectively did not mean articulating a demand common to everyone since needs differed greatly among students, but instead creating a discourse around which students gathered. This meant that identifying with the movement was a contingent process, continuously reevaluated through participation.

Appropriate to my findings is the theory and applied work on discourse by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Laclau and Mouffe define hegemony as what emerges when a group is able to represent the collective will emerging from a variety of social demands. Applying Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of articulated hegemony, I analyze my own data through a discourse analysis that determines common nodal points as well as fault lines within the movement. My project answers questions about how the *pingüinos*

generated shifting equivalences among demands through discourse, which included messaging, tactics, and other actions. While students coalesced on issues such as Chile's development, the role of government in influencing economic equality, and general hatred for the constitutional law on education (LOCE) passed by former dictator Augusto Pinochet, fault lines also developed among the different types of schools, between student leaders and their bases, and in the debate between for-profit versus universal public education.

The impact of such articulations was the largest student mobilization in Chilean history, as well as a later breakdown of the movement as frontiers shifted and the *pingüinos* lost their former transversality. My project maps out how this occurred through the narratives of seventeen *pingüinos*. I find that rather than joining the movement with preset identities, movement discourse led students to constantly re-identify with messaging and tactics. The *Revolución Pingüina* was not a class-based movement, nor was it formed by a collection of actors that all had the same desires and needs. To successfully organize over one million students nationwide in 2006, the student movement successfully articulated themes and created a feeling of solidarity with which *pingüinos* from many different backgrounds were able to identify. The result of identification with the movement was a common vision for society and shared antagonisms toward laws and government. This challenges common perceptions in social movement research that organizing occurs based on common needs or grievances, instead arguing that identity is formed through and while organizing. It also allows for change and divisions among social actors that can lead to the dissolution of a movement.

Chapter One: Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's Theory of Hegemony

Scholars have often looked at social movements as class-based, particularly when they are studying Latin America. This is in keeping with a long emphasis within Marxism on the

working class as the necessary revolutionary agent and a Cold War perception of Latin America as guided by Marxist ideology. In these analyses, socioeconomic class is the origin of involvement in national political parties and other activities, including social movements. This perspective fails to satisfactorily explain the catalyst for many social mobilizations since material conditions often exist without the instantiation of a movement and groups often organize on issues other than labor. Furthermore, it glosses over the many differences in identity among and within individual participants of movements. Beyond identifying with an economic class, an individual can also see herself as a woman, an ethnic minority, or another categorization *at the same time and to varying degrees*. These categories, rather than being clearly defined and preset, are constantly renegotiated in relation to society. This is particularly evident in student mobilizations, where even the term “student” may be contested (such as between university and high school students) and students have often not been as politicized by national parties or joined the labor force. In terms of the *pingüino* student movement in Chile, involvement was especially transversal, including students from many geographic areas, socioeconomic backgrounds, and political affiliations (when students had them). At the end of the movement, other sectors of civil society also sought involvement. Therefore, the *pingüino* movement requires further analysis to determine along what lines identification occurred and made large-scale mobilization possible.

Political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe challenge essentialist notions of class as the necessary determinant for political engagement in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.² The text begins with a genealogy of hegemony in order to demonstrate that this concept arose out of a debate that sought to fill an absence that had developed within Marxism. Marxists often discussed the revolution as a historical moment necessarily carried out by the working class

² Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985).

because of the privilege granted it by the economic structure. As social unrest in Europe failed to produce an egalitarian society led by the proletariat and Marxists increasingly played a political role in organizing labor, a gap began to develop between theory and practice. This led to a shift in which societal change was increasingly a politically accomplished task. Vladimir Lenin became one of the main thinkers who articulated the need for a politically-forged alliance led by the working class. Laclau and Mouffe write “For Leninism, hegemony involves *political leadership* within a *class alliance*.”³ In order to wield power in society, the working class had to serve as the representative of a variety of social groups’ demands. For Leninists, separate groups seeking change in society each had their own interests, some of which were not compatible with working class demands. Thus, though the communist militant might take part in the move toward bourgeois democracy that would further the conditions of the revolution, she could not identify with that task and remained unaffected by it. Though Lenin opened up space for politics in the path toward revolution, the privileged working class remained pure as the leadership of a class alliance.

Laclau and Mouffe explain that with the opening of a dialogue about the role of politics in the movement toward a new state, doubts grew about making the working class the necessary leader of the movement. Instead of the working class being the representative of many separate groups’ interests, it became apparent that a message must be articulated that could collapse difference among various social sectors. Laclau and Mouffe identify Antonio Gramsci as the scholar who went beyond Lenin’s idea of class alliance to posit a “collective will” generated through a leading group’s political message.⁴ Rather than an alliance of separate interests maintaining their separate identities while being represented by political leadership, it was

³ Ibid., 55.

⁴ Ibid., 67.

apparent to Gramsci that one group must establish a synthesis of disparate demands through the expression of common values and ideas. In the context of Gramsci's Italy, which included regional divides between North and South, lack of political integration for the country's Catholic population, and only partial development of capitalism, the interests of social actors varied greatly. Therefore, creating what Gramsci calls a "historical bloc" - an ideologically unified political force - meant capturing the fragmented historical forces and disparate wills of people with a unifying vision of society. This vision changes the identity of the groups constitutive of the historical bloc, which is emphasized in Gramsci's assertion that "a class does not *take state power*, it *becomes state*."⁵ This "becoming" is hegemony. We no longer have a Leninist alliance of separate interests represented by one class but instead a relational identity forming and being formed by a common ideology espoused by a group.

Laclau and Mouffe argue that Gramsci's idea of hegemony is a "watershed" for two main reasons. First, the economically determined identity of a class does not *necessarily* make it the articulating agent for the movement's vision. Instead, the leading class must present an ideological concept of the world that creates the collective will of various social sectors. Second, political leadership means more than representation. Instead, it

"involves the progressive disintegration of a civilization and the construction of another around a new class core. Thus, the identity of the opponents, far from being fixed from the beginning, constantly change places in the process."⁶

This concept of the world alters not only the groups composing a historical bloc, but also the political leadership. Gramsci's main error, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is continuing to privilege the working class as the leader of the hegemonic struggle, even though it must

⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁶ Ibid., 70.

politically construct its leadership. Though the working class must now articulate its ideology as the cement holding together a historical bloc, it retains a partially necessary character based on its economic position.

Laclau and Mouffe seek to radicalize Gramsci's notion of hegemony further by detaching historical or economic necessity from the social field, thus leaving room for an endless variety of political leaders and combined demands. This stems from their involvement in what have been lumped together as "new social movements," that is, movements challenging various forms of oppression while not necessarily drawing on a class-based discourse. Instead, movements based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and the environment organize using other unifying themes. This is in keeping with Laclau and Mouffe's central argument that identity is articulated rather than given *a priori*, which means that social movements can mobilize people according to many visions of society. A given individual does not enter the field of social relations with her "real" identity already set, but instead her identity is created through her participation in the world. A women's movement must articulate what categorizes a woman in order to generate identification among individuals without a pre-established common cause. What it means to be a woman is an area of contestation that varies relative to the movement. Identification occurs based "not on entities constituted outside the political field" but on discourses that "retroactively create the interests they claim to represent."⁷ Social agents are not unitary subjects since their experiences vary depending on context, which means that sexism may manifest differently depending on the situation and not all "women" will have the same experience continually throughout their lives. In terms of class, social movements can be organized relating to the means of production, but class consciousness must be created within the spectrum of social relations rather than being automatically pre-given and unitary. The possibility of other identities that are not class related

⁷ Ibid., xi.

is always already present in a classed individual as she relates to others through her experiences in the world.

In order to closely analyze the way in which the *pingüinos* articulated hegemony, certain key terms must first be defined. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Laclau and Mouffe call for a new understanding of hegemony better suited to strategic political struggle by allowing for the formation of meaning through the relations of various social actors and demands. *Hegemony* refers to the instance when a “particular social force assumes the representation of a totality that is radically incommensurable with it.”⁸ In order for a particular force to represent the demands of a variety of subjects, a concept of the world is devised that unifies social actors’ demands. This does not mean that an element common to all demands is found, but instead that one social force becomes a sort of rallying cry for all others and in so doing, is emptied of meaning. This is the “radically incommensurable” nature of the particular in relation to the universal totality. The leading social force relates differently to various groups and cannot be attached to one specific social demand. Instead, it uses *discourse* as the means to both changing and unifying particular demands, thereby producing collective will. Laclau defines discourse as “any complex of elements in which relations play the constitutive role.”⁹ Thus, the meaning of a word, an action, or a group is not tied to some real “thing” that it represents, but instead arises from its relationship to the experiences and demands of different people and groups. Discourse, as the way in which we interact as social agents, includes actions, ideas, and language. Laclau and Mouffe write “Every social practice is therefore – in one of its dimensions – articulatory.”¹⁰ This means that a social movement’s discourse is not just the literal words it uses, but also its tactics and how it is represented to an amorphous society.

⁸ Ibid., x.

⁹ Ernesto Laclau. *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 68.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Hegemony is thus the discursively-constructed relationship that is formed among various demands that Laclau and Mouffe refer to as *subject positions*. Rather than being a fixed demand, a subject position is altered through the relationship it has with other subject positions. Subject positions should not be considered essential totalities, i.e. a unified individual, anymore than “class” is an *a priori* unifying identity. Furthermore, “fragmentation of positions exists *within* the social agents themselves, and...these therefore lack an ultimate rational identity.”¹¹ Not only is the social incompatible with a holistic vision of “society,” but individual subjects are not equivalent to solidly defined identities because identity is only formed in continual relation to the world. In various contexts, I may be characterized as a man, student, Italian-American, son, shift supervisor, or any combination of these various roles depending on my relation to the world. Laclau and Mouffe refer to identity as constantly “overflowing” since the unity of a subject position is always being renegotiated and can never be complete. While this would seem to preclude the possibility of collective social movement in favor of total fragmentation, this tension results in the possibility for both unity and difference, which together constitute change. Therefore, variation exists *among* subject positions as well as *within* individual subjects. Hegemony is the discourse that takes overdetermined or overflowing subject positions and creates relational unity.

How is hegemony able to generate identification with a movement? A hegemonic relation occurs when a “particular element assum[es] a ‘universal’ structuring function within a discursive field...without the particularity of the element *per se* predetermining such a function.”¹² For hegemony to occur, one subject position must begin to represent the others and in so doing is blurred since it must change in order to relate to the subject positions that it fixes to

¹¹ *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 84.

¹² *Ibid.*

itself. This blurred subject position is gradually emptied of its original demand, instead holding meaning only in terms of its relation to a variety of other subject positions. Laclau and Mouffe call the empty space upon which difference is collapsed a *nodal point*. The nodal point does not represent a characteristic common to all social demands, but instead becomes increasingly empty as it takes on an overflow of meaning. For example, under a dictatorship various sectors of society will have individual demands such as increased rights for women, more jobs, the end of military rule, or better education, but each of these demands may become equivalent through the “shared” goal of disposing the dictator. The end of military rule, previously a single subject position, is made empty as it takes on the meaning of all other societal demands. Antagonism toward “the dictator” creates a *chain of equivalence* whereby each demand is not positively defined or sutured to a complete whole but instead made equivalent through the shared discourse of opposing military rule. Furthermore, this making equivalent means that “equivalence is always hegemonic insofar as it does not simply establish an ‘alliance between given interests, but modifies the very identity of the forces engaging in that alliance.’”¹³ Each demand in the chain of equivalence is also changed in relation to the other demands. The chain of equivalence is never ossified and demands can always shift to a different discursive formation defined against something else, such as antagonism toward a foreign nation, which occurs in a nationalistic discourse. Equivalence means the changing of both the hegemonic group and the demands that are collapsed around it, all of which occurs at a nodal point.

The very creation of a nodal point that in turn generates a chain of equivalence is made possible through the *logic of difference*. Logic of difference refers to the antagonism that groups share toward something, whether it is the economic structure, the political leader, or a system of values. Earlier, this was accomplished through discourse on the overthrow of the dictator, which

¹³ Ibid., 183.

was assumed by various subject positions. At the same time, this demand means different things to different groups, since each group had their own demand for a new society. This difference is a necessary characteristic for creating a movement because if all subject positions coincided without difference, they would become absolutely identified with each other. The creation of meaning through a differential logic creates a necessary *frontier* or *fault line*, which is always unstable as groups become equivalent or different. At the same time, if no equivalence were generated, then all demands would remain distinct, which would also prohibit a movement from developing. We have seen that meaning is relational and therefore constructing identity necessarily entails relativity to other groups. Therefore, that these subject positions are not able to merge completely into a unified demand as well as the impossibility of particular existence means that equivalence and difference are both fundamental characteristics of the social. Hegemony is always unstable as nodal points create equivalence that necessarily entails difference to establish a frontier.

The entire social scene, then, can be understood as a constant attempt to constitute a coherent society from a set of subject positions whose universal and particular dimensions mean that identification is never complete. Laclau and Mouffe write:

“The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points, which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.”¹⁴

Identity is a constant attempt to create a center, to define oneself as a man or a worker or an environmentalist. Ultimately, any clearly defined identity will fail because it only gains meaning through its relation to the social scene. Nodal points as well as fault lines will develop in the

¹⁴ Ibid., 113.

discourse of a popular movement as alterity remains in tension with equivalency. The impossibility of complete equivalency is an opportunity because nodal points can constantly adjust to collapse difference, and in the case of social movements, this allows for social change.

In On Populist Reason, Laclau applies this logic of the social to populism, a concept that is generally characterized as irrational, mass support for a political leader. By looking at populist movements in terms of hegemony, however, it becomes clearer how the leadership of such movements garners the collective will. Laclau identifies *rhetoric* as the populist tool that uses discourse to create a notion of “the people.” Laclau argues that “the people” is a necessarily catachrestical concept since there is no literal group corresponding to this rhetorical construction.¹⁵ As we saw earlier, a completely universal group would have no meaning since all demands would become coincidental and hence would be impossible to define. Therefore, the concept “the people” is an example of how individual elements that are impossible to synthesize completely are made equivalent and collective identification is made possible *across a hegemonic frontier that is formed through difference*. Rhetoric constructs a notion of the people as having equivalent demands and thus unification is not a common need, but the channeling of individual desires through a particular discourse. Populism is not an irrational political overflow but an articulated hegemony. It is also important to remember that participation in a movement entails changing one’s own group identity and demands, since this group now has the added characteristic of being equivalent to “the people” and thus will be influenced by the workings of the movement as a whole. Therefore, populism exemplifies the sort of hegemonic articulation that also characterizes the way in which social movements mobilize.

¹⁵ *On Populist Reason*, 71.

An example of a common populist discourse is “change,” which becomes hegemonic or popular when the particularity of the populist leadership’s message becomes a concept without clear meaning and thereby gains signification for a variety of subjects. This empties change of meaning because each group views change as something relative to its particular demand and change can no longer be firmly tied to one social demand. At the same time, the leader’s messaging works to make equivalent all demands to achieve the political goal of a transition in leadership. Each demand is altered by this process because becoming part of the movement means sharing in the message of the political leadership. Furthermore, change is an *empty signifier* because it has no correspondence to one true meaning while at the same time it collapses difference on a single demand. The “change leader” of a populist movement will continually need to adjust as her meaning changes in relation to the demands that are made equivalent to her, such as environmental concerns, homosexual rights, or neoliberal economic policy. A tension in the relational meaning of all groups occurs since all groups represent a split between particularity and universality. Laclau argues that any sign is the “impossible suture between signified and signifier.”¹⁶ What this means for politics is that the group representing the totality of groups in a movement will never hold onto a single meaning and does not stand for an attribute common to all social demands, but that the signifier will constantly change in relation to various signifieds. Laclau refers to this as the quilting of demands around an absence or the Lacanian *objet petit a* that is an empty desire. Even more importantly, the unity of “the people” only exists as constructed by its being named.¹⁷ Change is a shared demand only in that it is an empty signifier successfully articulated as the representative of a variety of signifieds.

¹⁶ *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 113.

¹⁷ *On Populist Reason*, 105.

This leads to a conception of the social as constantly shifting due to demands that are created in differential and equivalential relation to the discourses present in society. Ultimately, Laclau and Mouffe urge what they call “radical democracy.” If there is no universal value that remains outside of society according to which people should organize, then social actors must constantly create new hegemonic articulations in order to change the society in which they live. Ever since democracy first stripped the ruler of his absolute power to shape society through the authority given to him by God, power has been an “empty space” able to be contested by social actors.¹⁸ This is not to advocate absolute liberalism where each social actor is conceived as totally separate since identity is always constructed in relation to other social actors. As we saw previously, hegemony necessarily entails creating equivalence among groups and so articulation necessarily involves including the demands of other groups within one’s own movement and demands. Laclau and Mouffe write “It is never possible for individual rights to be defined in isolation, but only in the context of social relations which define determinate subject positions.”¹⁹ At the same time, any hegemonic formation, while prescriptive, must avoid making a foundation out of a horizon.²⁰ What this means is that radical democracy must be institutionalized in such a way that is open to new nodal points forming not on the basis of a universal principle, but instead as affirmation of agonistic struggle. To call on a universal principle is to try and halt the movement of radical democratic politics. One group does not hold the answer to creating a new egalitarian society but instead overcoming oppression in society emerges from the quilting of groups’ demands as they struggle within society. Ultimately, a populist movement must posit a radical change to society so that real change rather than reformism is possible. Laclau and Mouffe write “construction starts from negativity, but is only

¹⁸ *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 186.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

consolidated to the extent that it succeeds in constituting the positivity of the social.”²¹ Contra traditional Marxism, there is no universal fight or privileged area for social change and resistance to oppression must involve all areas of society. Radical democracy means affirming the difference that characterizes the social by keeping open the possibility for the restructuring of nodal points and new demands.

Social movements develop as the result of a discourse that generates identification. This means that in order to link individuals together, words, tactics, and other group practices that embody the collective will of various social sectors must be used. Laclau and Mouffe reach a breakthrough in their theorizing of the social with a radicalized notion of Gramsci’s hegemony. Rather than hegemony being based on the privileged position of an essential class, hegemony for Laclau and Mouffe is the articulation of a social demand such that identity is discursively produced. This conception of hegemony allows for a better understanding of how disparate social demands coalesce into social movements that can also dissolve into difference. Participants’ demands do not necessarily homogenize around *a priori* common identities but instead are produced after the fact through a hegemonic articulation. This means that rather than waiting for a privileged class to naturally generate a revolutionary movement, hegemony becomes a strategically accomplished task. Unified identity is contingent upon a variety of discursive maneuverings, which means that identity is and was always incomplete and open to change. A social movement may be described as “class-based,” but an individual’s involvement is not related to a prior identity as working, middle, or upper class. Instead, an individual’s identity is formed in relation to involvement in the movement. Identity is subject to change in relation to other demands included in the movement and social actors’ vision of society is co-produced with the hegemonic discourse being articulated.

²¹ Ibid., 189.

The *pingüinos* are a particularly good example of how a social movement is discursively articulated for several reasons. While the identities of all subjects are constantly negotiable, students' lack of formal political affiliations and comparably fluid perspectives facilitates the formation of nodal points. This provided for what was described by many students as a completely transversal movement in which many types of students participated. Furthermore, the large-scale usage of *tomas* (takeovers) and *paros* (strikes) created solidarity among students across Chile as commonality was felt even if the tactics themselves could not be linked to any single positive demand. Having a *toma* or *paro* at a school played a major role in linking together what eventually became more than 1,000 schools in most of Chile's regions, even if no direct communication was made. The *pingüino* movement of 2006 is distinguishable from previous years of protest because it expanded the discourse on education in Chile at the time. Whereas previous discussions of students' needs were primarily limited to short term student needs such as *pases escolares* and the college entrance exam (*Prueba Selección Universitaria* or PSU), student discourse grew in 2006 to include the very structure of education as developed in Augusto Pinochet's legislation on education, the LOCE. By playing on a common antagonism against the former dictator, students were able to form a nodal point from "*lucro*" (profit), a word that would otherwise be controversial and cause conflict between some who support education for profit and others who advocate a free education for all. As long as *lucro* was relationally equivalent to the dictatorship, antagonistically opposed to Chile's return to democracy, and not directly involved in political decisions, it could remain relatively empty and garner support from a variety of subject positions. Therefore, when the question of how a generation of students previously described as *ni ahí* (neither here nor there) about politics could become so politically engaged in 2006 is asked, the answer has less to do with technology or

school conditions that particular year and more to do with the movement's discourse in 2006, which was able to achieve equivalency among students' disparate desires for their education.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Analyses of the Chilean student movement have thus far focused primarily on the quality of the Chilean educational system and the history of student protest in order to describe the situation in which student mobilization occurred. While such data describes the society within which a movement happens, it does not provide an explanation of the nodal points that collapse difference to form a movement with a demographic as transversal as the *pingüinos*. What is needed in terms of this student movement and other social movements in general is an evaluation of how movements are organized and why wide-scale mobilization among varying groups becomes possible. In order to identify the way in which a demand can come to have meaning for differing social groups, it is necessary to analyze discourse to determine where nodal points

emerged in the *pingüino* discourse. Furthermore, attempts to generalize social movements with simplified organizational categories fail to examine the complexity of student identities. My research will fill this gap by mapping student narratives in terms of the *pingüino* movement's overall discourse. Analyzing the way in which the movement was articulated will better address the way in which individuals and groups were mobilized in relation to one another and speak to the general need within social movement research to look more closely at the complexity of identity and how discourse shapes popular mobilization.

Given the short span of time that has passed since 2006, there is a small but growing body of literature dedicated to the *pingüino* movement. The first response to the *pingüinos* occurred in the Chilean media, of which daily newspapers *La Tercera* (centrist) and *El Mercurio* (conservative) provided much of the movement's coverage. The media mainly focused on the *capuchado* (hooded) element, reporting the violence and vandalism that inevitably occurred within a certain sector of the demonstrations. When the media did begin to take greater notice of other groups of students, mainly because the sheer magnitude of the movement made it impossible to ignore, they focused their stories on the four *voceros* (spokespeople). For a brief period of time the *voceros* were able to convey a coherent set of demands through press conferences and the generally united front they presented to the media. However, media coverage soon began the *farandulización* (sensationalization) of the movement by focusing on the personal lives of the *voceros* and the divisions among them rather than the students' list of demands.²² This led the media to largely ignore substantive analysis of the Chilean education system and the students' demands. Sympathetic coverage of the *pingüino* cause was only given

²² Toward the end of the largest mobilizations of 2006, *voceros* such as Karina Delfino appeared on tabloid-like television programs such as *Gigantes con Vivi* and *Gente como Tú*.

after the *carabineros* (national police force) turned their *guanacos*²³ and *zorillos*²⁴ against the press in their brutal May 30th crackdown on a student march.

One of the first books written about the *pingüino* movement was Revolución Pingüina: La Primera Gran Movilización del Siglo XXI en Chile by Tamara Gutiérrez Portillo and Cristina Caviedes Reyes.²⁵ Released immediately following the major events of 2006, this book weaves together the narratives of several students from various *communas* (neighborhoods) in the *Región Metropolitana* (area encompassing all of the city of Santiago). The main project of the book is to record oral accounts of the event so that they will not be lost. Its overall tone is sympathetic to the students and it is meant to rally others to their cause. An editorial produced by *Le Monde Diplomatique* called Me Gustan los Estudiantes soon followed in 2006 with four essays on the movement by professors of journalism, psychology, sociology, history, and philosophy.²⁶ It analyzes the movement from various perspectives to further the debate about why the movement happened and its constitutive characteristics. The most recent book to be released about the *pingüinos* is El Mayo de los Pingüinos by Andrea Domedel and Macarena Peña y Lillo.²⁷

Written by two journalists at the Universidad de Chile, this book focuses on the role of the media and how it portrayed the movement's leaders as compared to accounts told by the leaders themselves. This book provides excellent detail of the major events and background on how decisions were made from the perspective of the movement's leaders, but it analyzes the Chilean media more than it addresses why hundred of thousands of students rallied together in 2006.

²³ An armored truck that sprays water and is named after the llama-like animal called a guanaco.

²⁴ An armored truck that sprays tear-gas; its name literally means "skunk."

²⁵ Tamara Gutiérrez Portillo and Cristina Caviedes Reyes. *Revolución Pingüina: "La Primera Gran Movilización del Siglo XXI en Chile"* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Ayun, 2006).

²⁶ Mario Garcés et al. *Me Gustan los Estudiantes* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2006).

²⁷ Andrea Domedel and Macarena Peña y Lillo. *El Mayo de los Pingüinos* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Radio Universidad de Chile, 2008).

Various theses have been written in addition to the books that have been published on the *pingüino* movement. Carmen Gloria País Thomas and Daniel Francisca Orozco de la Paz, two students who attended *Universidad Diego Portales' Facultad de Comunicación*, published a journalistic account called “Los 192 Días de la Revolución Pingüina” in which they recount the events of that year through the eyes of Karina Delfino, one of the four *voceras* of the movement.²⁸ This work provides insight into the strategy of one of the main articulators of the student movement. Abigail K. Hall, a former student at Colby College, wrote a thesis entitled “The Penguins’ Revolution: An Analysis of Student Response to the Multi-Dimensional Chilean Educational Crisis” in which she lays out the structure of the Chilean educational system, the history of Chilean student mobilization, and popular discourse on education and inequality in order to present the overall system in which protest occurred.²⁹ Hall’s look at inequality in Chile and in particular its education system provides excellent insight into the students’ demands but does not look closely at the organizational approach of the student movement. Lastly, a thesis written by Wesleyan graduate Izaak Orlansky entitled “Chile’s ‘Revolución Pingüina’” addresses various social movement theories in order to assess which provide the best reason for mobilization.³⁰ Orlansky concludes that materialist and political-process theories provide the most appropriate explanations for both the synthesis and breakdown of the movement, as class conflict united and then divided the students and a disorganized Bachelet administration failed to address growing student unrest while political parties tore apart the movement’s leaders. Orlansky provides a detailed analysis of the social context for the 2006 movement, but does not

²⁸ Daniel Francisca Orozco de la Paz and Carmen Gloria País Thomas. “Los 192 Días de la Revolución Pingüina,” (Undergraduate thesis, *Universidad Diego Portales' Facultad de Comunicación*, 2008).

²⁹ Abigail K. Hall. “The Penguins’ Revolution: An Analysis of Student Response to the Multi-Dimensional Chilean Educational Crisis,” (Undergraduate honors thesis, Colby College, 2008).

³⁰ Izaak Orlansky. “Chile’s ‘Revolución Pingüina,’” (Undergraduate thesis, Wesleyan University, 2008).

specifically address the discursive strategies necessary for mobilization within the context of material conditions and political incompetence.

Books published on the student movement take a largely congratulatory tone while the theses written on the *pingüinos* offer a more complex picture of the movement. Academic literature on the topic also confronts popular discourse, generally from those outside the movement, which makes simplistic claims that the students represent a return to democratic participation in post-post transition Chile.³¹ These analyses of the student social movement point to a variety of ingredients that were necessary for the movement, but they do not provide a deeper analysis of the formation of the movement or an explanation for its size and transversality in 2006. A detailed discourse analysis will demonstrate nodal points in the discourse of students, as well as fault lines that would later lead to the movement's collapse. Closer investigation of the students' discourse as conveyed through messaging and actions will reveal critical points that were capable of collapsing difference, thereby generating such a massive movement. Material conditions in schools, a history of student protest, and new technology that could be used for organizing did provide the necessary background with which a movement could be staged, but the actual synthesis of students' varied demands had to occur through a narrative that provided logics of equivalence and difference.

This paper will provide a discourse analysis of the *pingüino* movement based on over twenty personal interviews, which will be further supported by discourses found in books, newspaper articles, documentaries, leaflets, websites, and blogs on the subject. Widening the

³¹ President Michelle Bachelet's election in 2006 was hailed as the beginning of a post-post transition period in Chile since former dictator Augusto Pinochet died that year and her political narrative called for a new, more democratic Chile. Since the protagonists of the student movement were born after Chile's transition to democracy that began in 1988, they were seen as outside the country's collective memory of dictatorship. That the combination of the two reinvigorated Chilean democracy is problematic given the continuing lack of student voices in terms of education and other issues, many of which are still guided by laws and ideology left over from dictatorship.

scope to include a plurality of students will allow a more nuanced account of how the movement emerged and eventually disintegrated. Within the discourse of student participants are fault lines and nodal points that exemplify the tension between equivalency and difference in a movement characterized by alterity in that subject positions were extremely varied. Hailed as a transversal movement, closer analysis reveals ideological, socioeconomic, political, regional, and other differences among the participants, which leads to the question of how so many separate student demands could come together through the discourse of the *pingüino* movement. The discourse employed by the movement was able to achieve a chain of equivalence by collapsing difference on common nodal points. This study will examine nodal points not as common “things” students were demanding, but as signifiers of common lack students felt toward their society and education system.

Chapter Three: The Movement Explained

In order to understand the construction of a student discourse capable of collapsing difference and creating large-scale, transversal mobilization, it is necessary to establish a brief background regarding the Chilean education system and student movement. Student protest is common in Chile and has precedent throughout the twentieth century, though no recorded mobilization has been larger than that of May 2006. A report published by the *Centro de Estudios Socio-Culturales* lists certain key events in the history of Chilean student activism

including a protest against rising transportation costs in Valparaíso in 1957, a *paro nacional* (national strike) against President Salvador Allende's *Escuela Nacional Unificada* (ENU) in 1972, and demonstrations for the democratization of high schools and the entire country during the 1980s Pinochet dictatorship.³² Whereas Chilean students were traditionally seen as politically active, this had changed more recently. During the nineties as Chile transitioned from dictatorship, students were described in popular discourse as being “*no están ni ahí*” about politics, essentially characterizing them as disinterested or apolitical. Technology and consumer culture were blamed for creating a new generation of young people that were more individualistic and materialistic.

This generalization was made problematic in 2001 when thousands of secondary students demonstrated in protest of the high price of their *pases escolares*, which are the passes used to receive a student discount on public transportation. This protest was named the *mochilazo*, a combination of the words for “backpack” and “strong blow.” The students were able to win administration of the transportation passes by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), thereby regaining democratic control by arguing that students' transportation was in the public interest and not a matter to be privatized.³³ The student organization negotiating this agreement was the *Agrupación de Centros de Alumnos Municipales de Santiago* (ACAS), which was created in 2000 to replace the older federation system of student organization with a more democratic assembly method of decision-making. Under the *Federación de Estudiantes Secundarios*, leadership was concentrated in the hands of a president while in the new *asamblea* system, the president of each school voted on each decision and for the four *voceros* that would represent the

³² Oscar Aguilera et. al, “La rebelión del coro: análisis de las movilizaciones de los estudiantes secundarios,” Centro de Estudios Socioculturales, Santiago <http://www.cesc.cl>, 3.

³³ Ibid., 4.

asamblea to the government and general public.³⁴ As the students realized their capacity to voice and win demands, they sought a more transversal and democratic movement.

It was ACAS that continued student organizing around educational demands. Both the government and students were focused on educational issues during this time, especially following the release of two large educational data sets in 2000 that demonstrated Chile's low standard of education compared to its global wealth and power.³⁵ By 2005, students were meeting regularly with MINEDUC and working on educational reforms that went beyond their *pases escolares*. They also recognized that if they were going to convey a coherent, unified front to the government, they must present a clear petition of demands. On November 30th, 2005, students from ACAS submitted a document representing work they had done to gather together the main student demands.³⁶ The document was 27 pages and included an analysis of the LOCE, the municipalization of education, and the *Jornada Educativa Completa* (JEC) program. It also included suggestions for non-traditional subjects to be taught in schools (i.e. art and sexual education), a proposal for democratizing the governance of schools, and recommendations regarding technical schools. It was well-received by MINEDUC and the education minister at the time, Sergio Bitar, gave students at least token participation by holding scheduled meetings between MINEDUC officials and ACAS representatives once a week to work on education reform. During one of these *mesas de diálogo* (discussion tables), MINEDUC officials went so far as to sponsor a viewing of the documentary *Actores Secundarios*, which had been released in 2004 and followed the stories of high schools involved in protests against the dictatorship in the

³⁴ Orozco, 16.

³⁵ Abigail Hall does an excellent analysis of the Chilean education system in her thesis "The Penguins' Revolution: An Analysis of Student Response to the Multi-Dimensional Chilean Educational Crisis." See also: Cristián Cox, "Las políticas educacionales de Chile en las últimas dos décadas del siglo XX." <<http://www.umcc.cu/pasantia/Docs/Mision1/Las%20Politica%20Educativas.pdf>>.

³⁶ "Propuesta de Trabajo de Estudiantes Secundarios de la R.M," Nov 30 2005, <<http://www.opec.cl/>>.

eighties.³⁷ Students present at the showing later recalled the images from the film as partial impetus for actions taken during 2006.³⁸ At this point, student requests were what Laclau would call *democratic demands* rather than *popular demands* due to the government's capacity to handle and isolate educational demands from other social demands, thereby preventing a chain of equivalence.

Michelle Bachelet was elected the first female president of Chile in January 2006 on a platform that promised reform, including some talk of changes to the education system such as increased involvement from current students.³⁹ Though he had supported Bachelet during the election, then minister of education Sergio Bitar announced that he would be leaving his position in March when Bachelet took office. Bitar promised the students that his replacement would begin where the process had left off. The new minister Martín Zilic, however, did not acknowledge this promise in what would become one of the early flaws of the Bachelet administration.

At the start of the 2006 school year, most students were unfamiliar with the LOCE, as well as many of the other laws regarding education.⁴⁰ Student leaders of the ACAS, who came primarily from Santiago's elite public schools commonly referred to as *emblemáticos*, worked hard during the second half of 2005 to learn the laws and include them in their demands.⁴¹ This marked an important transition in the student movement, as protests had previously related to single issues and immediate needs, such as the *pase escolar*. In order to understand this transition, student demands and the educational system must be further explained.

³⁷ *Actores Secundarios*. Dir. Pachi Bustos and Jorge Leiva. DVD, 2004.

³⁸ María Carolina Huerta Vera. Comisión Política of ACES. Instituto Superior de Comercio II. In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, June 26, 2008, see also País, 21.

³⁹ Garcés, 11.

⁴⁰ A normal scholastic year in Chile begins in March following the end of summer vacation and continues until November or December. A mid-year vacation is normally given during the winter in June or July.

⁴¹ Vocera Karina Delfino was said to travel with a copy of the constitution in order to make sure she was always prepared to answer questions about the LOCE, see País and Orozco.

As previously noted, students had protested for many years about the cost and terms of use of their *pases escolares*. This related to both the cost of buying the actual card and the price per trip on a *micro* (public bus) or the metro. In 2006, the students' demands extended to the usage of the card since they were only allowed two trips per day on school days. Any further usage or trips not on a school day would cost the normal adult price, which is about three times the student price. Since many students needed to travel more than twice a day for school, especially those who attended technical schools where the normal school day involved an internship, this was an unfeasible arrangement for these students. The demand of ACES in 2006 was a free pass with unlimited and free usage.

The second issue was the *Prueba de Selección Académica* (PSU), which is the test students take in order to enter a university, much like the ACT or SAT in the United States. In order to take this exam, students must pay approximately 20,000 pesos, or forty dollars. This is a large sum for many students and since it is the only way for students to attend college and improve their social situation, not being able to pay excludes these students from future opportunities. Therefore, students demanded that the exam be made free for all students wishing to attend college.

The third issue involved infrastructure, in particular school lunches. Students who live in poverty often do not receive adequate food at home and so school lunches become a main source of nutrition. In many places, schools can only afford a limited number of lunches and therefore once they have reached the end of the allotted meals, any remaining students must pay for their lunches or go hungry. This became an even larger problem with the JEC, which lengthened the school day and therefore kept students in school even later. Without money to pay for a meal or some sort of snack and without the school infrastructure necessary to provide these things to

those who could not afford them, students were left hungry and in a classroom for up to eight hours a day.⁴²

The fourth issue involved the internships of students in technical schools. Technical school is the route of many students who do not have the means to attend a university. At these schools, students study a specific skill such as accounting, business administration, or a health profession and spend a certain period of time working in that profession as an intern to complement their studies. Many students with internships were unhappy with their treatment in these positions and so in the ACAS demands were included food and transportation costs, worker health insurance (which is superior to that of a student), fair wages, and the right for interns to unionize themselves.⁴³

The two main systematic components of the student demands related to the LOCE and the JEC. The *Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Enseñanza* (Organic Constitutional Law on Teaching or LOCE) was made official on the last day of the Pinochet government: March 10th, 1990.⁴⁴ The main purpose of the law was to consolidate a series of educational reforms implemented by the Pinochet government upon the advice of the “Chicago Boys” economists. These economists were known as the “Chicago Boys” because they were trained at the University of Chicago in the U.S., which was dominated by the free market ideology of Milton Friedman, or were educated at the *Pontificia Universidad Católica* in Chile, where the economics department also adhered to Friedman’s neoliberal ideas. Pinochet was a proponent of the neoliberal restructuring of Chilean society because it lessened the government’s responsibility to provide social services, which served to depoliticize issues of education,

⁴² “Propuesta de Trabajo de Estudiantes Secundarios de la R.M.”

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ See <<http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/detalle/detallenoticias.asp?idnoticia=221167>> for a summary and <<http://www.movimientoestudiantil.cl/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=3>> for the full text of the law.

healthcare, and transportation by placing them in the private sphere. As we shall see, however, the deterioration of these services can also lead to wide-scale political mobilization.

Furthermore, privatizing social services decreased the need to produce tax revenue and averted messy political debates about public services. The specific argument for educational reforms was that by giving control of education to individual municipalities, costs would be reduced for the central government and the competitive nature of individual schools would increase the average standard of education. The central government would be responsible for creating the most basic standards of teaching and providing some subsidies to schools based on enrollment. The main role of the government, however, was to protect *libertad de enseñanza* (freedom of teaching), which meant that the government would stay away from institutions of learning unless they negatively impacted national security, public order, or the country's morality. These reforms, combined with municipal control of education, resulted in a three-part, fragmented education system. The three types of schools currently existing in Chile are:

Municipal (Municipal): These schools are public and free. The municipal government funds the school in addition to a small subsidy from the national government. The student movement differentiates between wealthy and poor *municipales* due to the large difference in the quality of education at a public school found in a wealthy neighborhood or town compared to one in a poorer area. This is similar to the disparity in education found between areas with higher or lower property tax bases in the United States.

Particular Subvencionado (Subsidized private): These schools are run either by a non-profit or for-profit organization with a subsidy from the central government. In 1993, a law was passed

that allowed schools to charge an additional tuition fee from the students' parents, thereby creating a large disparity between those schools subsidized by students' parents as compared to those without tuition costs. Most *particulares subvencionados* are for-profit and their quality varies widely depending on the institution and whether parents pay a tuition fee or not.

Privados (Private): These schools are completely private and unsubsidized by the central government. The price paid for these schools per month often exceeds the monthly minimum wage in Chile. Only the wealthy can afford to attend them.

The *pingüinos* criticized the LOCE for a variety of reasons centering on the prioritizing of educational freedom over the right to a quality education. Discourse on the negative impact of for-profit education served as a fault line among students because whereas some argued for the right to a free education for all, others supported private, for-profit education as long as the quality of public education was improved. Because this law is constitutional, only a majority of at least 4/7 in both houses of the Chilean congress can overturn the law. Most recently, passage of the *Ley General de Educación* (General Law of Education or LGE) by the lower house of congress signals that the LOCE may indeed be overturned, but only with significant concessions to parties on the right, a move that is necessary in order to achieve the 4/7 vote since right-wing political parties control more than a third of congress. Discussion of minor changes to the LGE will continue in the upper house throughout early 2009.

As seen in the continuance of LOCE policies after the democratization of Chile and even the exacerbation of inequality through policies, such as the shared tuition plan for subsidized private schools, governments following the dictatorship also hold responsibility for the current

status of education in Chile. One of the main policies passed during the nineties was the *Jornada Educational Completo* (Full School Day or JEC), which originated in Spain and involved the extension of the school day on the premise that doing so would increase educational performance and prevent students from being involved in harmful activities after school.⁴⁵ The 2004 revision of the law attempted to increase funding to help schools implement the law and prohibited the expulsion of students who were pregnant or mothers, but students were still dissatisfied with the incapacity of many of their schools to provide adequate infrastructure for the increased time in school and the lack of non-traditional subjects taught, such as art, sexual education, and technology.⁴⁶

Once students had articulated these demands in the document they submitted to Minister Bitar, they worked to make their recommendations shorter and more coherent, especially once they realized they would be dealing with a new minister of education. They split their demands into an *agenda corta* (short-term agenda) and an *agenda larga* (long-term agenda), with the immediate needs involving the PSU, *pase escolar*, and infrastructure and the long-term goals being a dramatic change in the educational system through abolishing the LOCE, reforming the JEC, and overturning the municipally-funded system. To grow the movement, the students of ACAS merged with the *Asamblea Coordinadora de Estudiantes Secundarios* (ACES) and began to allow all students to attend meetings rather than only the presidents of schools' *centros de alumnos* (student councils). In the tradition of opposing hierarchical decision-making, the *asamblea* elected four *voceros* to speak for the movement and negotiate with the government. The *voceros* included Juan Carlos Herrera from *Colegio Valentín Letelier*, María Jesus Sanhueza from *Liceo Carmela Carvajal*, César Valenzuela from *Confederación Suiza*, and Karina Delfino

⁴⁵ Full text of law: <<http://www.bcn.cl/leyes/pdf/actualizado/232146.pdf>>

⁴⁶ Hall, 22.

from *Liceo Javiera Carrera*. Germán Westhoff from *Instituto Nacional* also received a lot of support in the election and remained close to - though not one of - the *voceros*, particularly since he represented the conservative sector of the student movement.⁴⁷ While the students submitted their list of demands to the new minister of education, Martín Zilic, and waited for a response, cultural acts were conducted in schools throughout March and April 2006 in order to increase awareness of educational issues. Throughout this time, Minister Zilic did not respond, confirming students' doubts about the new minister continuing where ex-Minister Bitar left off.

On April 25th, more than 2,000 students in Lota, one of Chile's poorest cities, left school to march in the streets in demand of better infrastructure for their schools.⁴⁸ The leaky roofs and nonfunctioning bathrooms of Lota's schools and the protest that followed sparked similar action among the *santiguinos*.⁴⁹ On April 26th, ACES called for a demonstration in front of the ministry of education. Still receiving no response from Zilic, the students organized a new protest for May 4th. More than 600 students were arrested and Zilic announced that he would meet with the student leaders the next day. By the end of the meeting, students decided that it was merely a political move. After not receiving any further words from the minister, the students called for a new demonstration, this time on a national scale. On May 10th, thousands of students in Santiago and in Chile's regions marched to give force to their demands. Over 1,000 were arrested and while condemning violence, Minister Zilic declared that scholarships would be provided to poor students for the PSU. On the 11th, students sat down at another *mesa de diálogo*, though the minister failed to attend, instead sending his deputies. At this meeting, the government conceded to an unlimited number of trips using the *pase escolar*. The students, upset that the minister was

⁴⁷ *Instituto Nacional* is generally considered the most prestigious public school in Chile, having graduated many of Chile's presidents including Salvador Allende. It is an all-boy's school.

⁴⁸ Lota is located in Chile's Region VIII, historically one of Chile's poorest regions.

⁴⁹ Name used to refer to those who live in the capital city of Santiago

only responding to the *pase* requests and not dealing with the other substantive issues, announced another national demonstration and a march on the center of Santiago for May 18th. In response, Minister Zilic announced some further scholarships for the PSU but suspended the *mesa de diálogo* until the students stopped demonstrating. Unhappy with this response, many students decided to march anyway, not only on the 18th, but also on the 17th. The May 17th demonstrations occurred without a permit. The *carabineros*⁵⁰ cracked down forcefully and students sought refuge in the law school of the *Universidad de Chile*. It was at this point that the overturn of the LOCE and the end of an *educación de mercado* (education by the market) became a widespread unifying force for the mobilizing students.

Media coverage of the students had mainly focused on the destructive aspects of the protests, portraying the students as anarchists seeking disorder. It is common for an anarchist element to attend demonstrations in Chile and throw rocks or even Molotov cocktails, but these marches in particular included greater numbers of students in school uniforms demonstrating peacefully.⁵¹ In a strategic move, ACES decided that a new strategy was necessary in order to gain public support and make sure that the students' demands were being taken seriously as a positive force for change. Students did not want to be seen as violently reacting to their education without proposing an alternative. The new strategy had been used before, but never on the scale that it reached in 2006. Instead of marching, the students would begin using *tomas*, or the takeover of their schools, to demand change, generate publicity for their petition, and demonstrate their ability to take charge of their schools.

On May 19th, students at the *Instituto Nacional*, *Liceo de Aplicación*, and *Confederación Suiza*, all traditionally politically active schools, took over their buildings to prevent classes from

⁵⁰ The *carabineros* are Chile's national police force.

⁵¹ As mentioned previously, these uniforms are the origin of the name "*Revolucion Pingüina*."

occurring. Students at *Confederación Suiza* were forced to end the *toma* after only a few hours due to several school workers who were in the building during the takeover that authorities claimed would be considered kidnapped by the students if the *toma* was not let down. At the other schools, teachers, parents, and principals supported the students, even leaving the students the building keys so that they could enter. Rather than ordering the dislodging of the *tomas*, Minister Zilic did nothing. The students decided to maintain the *tomas* until a response to their demands was heard during the May 21st annual presidential speech at the national congress in Valparaíso.⁵²

On May 21st, President Michelle Bachelet addressed the Chilean congress to summarize what had been accomplished in her first one hundred days of office and to announce her plans for the administration. Little mention was made of education and the student movement, rather than being addressed directly, was only alluded to with Bachelet's statement that democracy would not be threatened by violence in the streets or the covered faces of *encapuchados*⁵³ (hooded students). Bachelet, who is a torture victim of the Pinochet government, used this statement to subtly castigate the students for the chaos of some demonstrations. This convinced student leaders that *paros* and *tomas* would now be the *modus operandi* of the movement.

While the *Instituto Nacional*, generally a more independent school, lowered the *toma* in favor of a *paro indefinido* (indefinite strike), other schools began to institute *tomas* the day after the president's speech. *Liceo Carmela Carvajal*, *Liceo José Victorino Lastarria*, and other schools established themselves in *toma*, even when the mayors of some municipalities ordered the forceful removal of students from schools. While the minister of education called for students to stop the *tomas* and offered a new *mesa de diálogo* for the 29th, President Bachelet

⁵² This speech is similar to the annual state of the union address in the United States.

⁵³ Youth who commit violent acts are usually referred to as *encapuchados*, similar to the word "thug" in English.

announced “We are not going to accept dialogue under pressure,” which only emboldened the students who now viewed the government as disorganized and possibly becoming acquiescent to their demands. Trying to save face, Minister Zilic announced on the 24th that only student leaders whose schools were not in *toma* would be allowed at the meeting on the 29th. At the same time, students marched peacefully in Valparaíso, further discrediting the government and triggering maneuvers by various politicians who sought to use the conflict to make the administration look bad. On the 25th, *Internado Barros Arana*, *Liceo Valentin Letelier*, and twenty other schools were in *toma*, with fourteen other schools on strike. ConFech, the federation of university students, and the *Colegio de Profeseros*, Chile’s only teacher’s union, announced their support of the high school students. Bachelet and Zilic decided that they must respond together to the crisis. They announced that educational reform was necessary and that Zilic would meet with all of the student leaders. This did little to calm the students, however, and on the 26th more than one hundred educational institutions were in *paro* or *toma* across the country, including some elite private schools such as *Colegio Altamira*.

On the 29th, 130 students arrived at the *Biblioteca Nacional* to meet with Zilic, though only 25 were allowed inside. Increasingly unable to make effective decisions due to the growing movement, the students had broken the *asamblea* into six zones based on geographic location within Santiago, but representation was still an issue. Like previous meetings, Zilic sent his deputies instead of attending himself. The students refused any dialogue without the minister, saying it was a sign of disrespect toward the students. Furthermore, students refused to agree to changes involving only the *agenda corta*. While the government admitted changes must be made, it was disorganized at the negotiating table and in its public relations strategy. On the second day of negotiations, Zilic attended the meeting with students but people outside the

Biblioteca Nacional were attacked by the *carabineros*, including many members of the press. Coverage of the *pingüino* movement shifted as the press showed the brutality of the police on national television and several sexual assault charges against *carabineros* were made public. The media estimated that almost a million students and their supporters mobilized on the 30th. In response, President Bachelet condemned police violence and fired the chief of the *fuerzas especiales* (special forces), which was the first time a president had ever publicly criticized the *carabineros*. Realizing that government concessions were the only way to deal with the political crisis the movement had caused, Bachelet appeared on national television on June 1st to reveal her educational reform plan. It included increased scholarships for the PSU, unlimited usage of the discounted rate for *pases escolares*, and a *Consejo Asesor Presidencial de Educación* (Presidential Advisory Council on Education or CAP) to assess the educational system and create a reform plan involving both the LOCE and the JEC. The students decided to convene an *asamblea* meeting to determine a response.

The meeting of ACES that convened the next day was enormous with approximately 2,000 students present. The *asamblea* was divided, with some students content to accept the president's offer and others who wanted to push on while students had the upper hand. César Valenzuela, who had worked for the coalition in control of the government (*Concertación*) through the *Partido Socialista*, declared that he would leave the movement. Karina Delfino, who the press revealed was dating César and who shared many political views with him, stayed on with the movement with the condition that the *asamblea* expand to include regions outside of Santiago. Schools in the regions had mobilized as well, but participation in the government negotiations mainly involved *santiguinos*, with the exception of some student leaders who were able to travel from their homes to the capital city. César's departure and disagreement over the

offer made by the president provoked rumors that the movement was falling apart and there was a general sense that divisions would not be resolved. Some students continued with demonstrations, though involvement by more extreme political groups resulted in violence and property destruction. Other sectors of civil society, including workers' unions, began to issue their own declarations in support of the students, a move that was applauded by some students who wanted to expand the movement and criticized by others who thought it would dilute the issue of educational reform. In response to the president's offer, leaders called for the CAP to include fifty percent students. As a result of the students' disagreement, centralized coordination lessened. This was demonstrated when a group of students from *Liceo de Aplicación* launched their own *toma* of Santiago's UNESCO building in an attempt to bring international attention to the movement.

With the students still divided on how to move forward, President Michelle Bachelet announced on June 7th the formation of the CAP, with only six seats out of over seventy going to high school students. Though some students sought to remobilize with other social sectors in response, the ACES met and decided to end the *tomas*, *paros*, and demonstrations. Though schools in the regions were unhappy with this and continued in *toma* and *paro* longer because they did not feel that the negotiations between ACES and the government represented regional concerns, most schools began to go back to classes. Some attempts were made by ACES to create a parallel educational committee to advise the president instead of the CAP, but the movement was unable to gain the same momentum it previously held. Ultimately, ACES conceded to CAP and placed student representatives on the council. In July, Bachelet removed Zilic from his post and some marches continued, but no further *tomas* were taken until CAP released its report on education in October. All school takeovers and protests in October met

stiff police resistance. Though students continued to demand more rapid changes, the movement failed to garner the level of support it had previously enjoyed. Currently, students continue to mobilize, though they are much more divided by region and ideological views than in 2006. Work in the CAP resulted in a new law, the *Ley General de Educación*, which has recently been passed in one of the two houses of the *Congreso Nacional*. Opinion of the movement is currently mixed. Some former members see it as a completed accomplishment while others view it as having done nothing. Among current members, some are calling for a movement that spans multiple social sectors rather than just students and some see the current movement as too ideological and divided.

Chapter Four: Research Methods

This project was undertaken with an American University Summer 2008 Research Grant awarded by the Office of General Education. The original research proposal included several example questions that were to be used in order to collect data on students' self-identifications and their reasons for participation in the student movement. In addition, research was to include a thorough gathering of student narratives through the Internet (blogs, fotolog, websites, etc.) and attendance at protests and meetings.

Upon arrival in Santiago, Chile in February 2008, I began classes at *Universidad Diego Portales* (UDP), a private university in the area of *Santiago Centro* commonly known for its many universities. In speaking with students from various universities about the movement of 2006, I was able to establish contact with people who had participated, some of whom had by then entered post-secondary education. I also met two students in the *Facultad de Comunicación*

at UDP who were writing their thesis on the movement. Through Carmen País and Daniela Orozco, I received my initial student contacts, including an ex-member of the *comisión política* (political commission), María Huerta.⁵⁴ Though much informal research was done during my first few months including discussions and gathering materials written about the movement, the formal interview process began in June 2008. A list of twenty-two questions was formulated in Spanish with the help of Professor Karen Gallegos at UDP in order to ensure uniformity in the interview process.

The first interview conducted was with María Huerta, who had been close with the *voceros* and played a large role in establishing the movement's discourse and holding it together. She not only showed me a favorite area in the center of Santiago for people to meet and discuss things; she also provided about twenty initial contacts of people involved in the movement of 2006. This included teachers, high school students, university students, government officials, and journalists, though, as previously noted, the movement during the first half of 2006 mainly involved high school students. Other contacts developed from friends I made at UDP or names given to me by the original interviewees. I also found throughout my two months of interviewing that many interviewees would cancel at the last minute or stop returning calls, which worked to increase randomness since only a few contacts from each person were actually able to meet with me. Though one might think that a social network developed from only a few principal people would be relatively closed, by mid-July many of my contacts did not know the original interviewees.

My formal interview sample included seventeen high school students, two students who were in universities during the 2006 mobilization, a journalist from television network TVN, a

⁵⁴ The *comisión política* was a strategic committee set up to do research for ACES and the *voceros* so that all public statements were accurate and consistent. Huerta also did much of the behind-the-scenes political work, mediating among students and working on the movement's messaging.

government official in MINEDUC, and a high school teacher from INSOCU. Among high school students, I interviewed twelve men and five women. Of these students, one was from a private school, three came from semi-private schools, five were from emblematic municipal schools, and ten attended non-emblematic municipal schools. The *Región Metropolitana* that forms Santiago is made up of various sectors and my sample consisted of students from all of these. The issue of socioeconomic class was more complicated, as students identified using their own varying definitions. This will be discussed further in the discourse analysis.

As previously noted, student mobilization also occurred outside of Chile's capital city of Santiago. Chile is a highly centralized country, meaning that the majority of people work, study, and live in the capital. This made for a more diverse sample in terms of geographic origin since some interviewees came from outside the capital. Just as Chile as a whole is generally capital-centric, however, the interviewee sample is mainly *santiguino*. I was able to contact some people outside the capital while I was in Chile, but these contacts had been in Santiago during the protests. This signifies that just as ACES was criticized for mainly representing the demands of students in Santiago, the sample primarily represents the viewpoints of those in the nation's capital during the mobilizations.

An additional concern with my sample is the number of leaders interviewed. I did not interview any of the *ex-voceros*, mainly because they no longer wish to speak about the movement due to bad feelings from June 2006 when students' anger was directed toward them. Furthermore, by the end of the first half of 2006, the *farandulización* of the movement's leaders meant that *voceros'* personal lives were constantly intruded upon. This made them wary of giving personal interviews. Many of my interviewees, however, were leaders of their high schools during the movement, which means that they were working within the inner circle of

ACES. These students attended *asambleas* in their high schools and *asambleas generales* (general assemblies) in order to communicate the demands of students at their schools to the rest of the students and to bring discussions in the *asamblea general* back to their schools. In serving as representatives in this way, these students were both conveyors and creators of a discourse used by the movement to generate and unify action. Furthermore, while most of the students that I interviewed had been leaders, they came from a variety of geographic and socioeconomic conditions, thus representing the various sectors within the movement. The attempt at large-scale democracy within ACES meant that the number of leaders in the movement was quite large. While my sample is biased toward active leaders of the movement, the movement was characterized by a large number of leaders from a wide demographic.

As part of the interview, all interviewees were asked about their religious and racial identities. Religious and racial categories are complex in Chile (as in most places). Chile is predominantly Roman Catholic, though the number of practicing Catholics, particularly in this generation, is much smaller than those professing to be Catholic. Public schools in Chile are referred to as *laico*, meaning that they officially do not support or oppose religion. Many public schools have optional religious classes, generally Catholic, as a result of this policy. Therefore, though some interviewees attended Catholic schools, the sample can generally be described as moderately to nonreligious. Where there is a religious background, it is predominantly Roman Catholic. Racially, most Chileans describe themselves as *mestizo* meaning that they have both European and indigenous blood. The amount of European and indigenous blood varies widely, however, and various waves of European immigration mean that these roots are diverse.

To supplement my interview data, I also gathered information on the student movement's discourse from the Internet. The social networking tool Facebook proved useful since it hosts

groups where former and current *pingüinos* meet to announce events or discuss mobilizations. Blogs were similarly used, including blogs specific to certain high schools or ideological groups. On these pages, schools would post information on the *tomas* and *paros*, as well as convey information from larger *asambleas* to individual schools. In 2006, the blog-like social networking site Fotolog was extremely popular among Chilean youth and so this site was also useful. It is unique in that each entry begins with a photo and in that it forms a network in which users become friends and comment on each other's entries. Entries from 2006 are still posted online, thus making it easy to see what sorts of posts were made during the climax of the movement. Listservs in which an email is sent out to an entire list of people interested in a particular group also provided some information on *asambleas*, protests, or events. Some of these events were showings of the documentary released about the *pingüino* movement entitled La Revolución de los Pingüinos. I attended this documentary both at the *Cine Arte Alameda*, the main independent movie theater in Santiago, and at a special showing with the director at *Balmaceda*, a venue for young people to perform shows, present art, and run workshops. The showing at *Balmaceda* was particularly interesting because many students were in attendance and the discussion that followed the documentary revealed divisions about what to do next and other criticisms from inside the movement. The old-fashioned method of flyering was also used to announce protests and increase public consciousness, though the author only had access to flyers from 2008. Together, these resources provided a plethora of material to examine student discourses in search of nodal points and fault lines.

A final point to consider about this research is my being from the United States, which meant that even when I was a friend, I was still a *gringo* from the *potencia mundial* (world

power).⁵⁵ The first issue in terms of doing research in Chile was that Spanish – and in particular Chilean Spanish – is not my native language, meaning I did not always have a complete grasp of the connotations and connections of words. This makes doing a discourse analysis slightly more difficult. Another issue was my attendance at events and protests, which was limited due to restrictions on my visa and issues of trust. Though I did experience some anti-*gringo* sentiments during research, I was able to openly converse about it with many of the students once trust was gained. While meeting current or former *pingüinos*, I always kept in mind that I come from the same country as the Chicago economists that encouraged the present educational system and that my study abroad program at an elite private university named after a conservative politician might be an issue. Being honest about these issues and being recommended to contacts was of great help with these concerns, though of course, they always remained present.

The concepts that I will use in my analysis come from the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Discourse* can refer to any social actions – including the messaging and tactics of a movement – since all actions are "articulatory" in that their meaning emerges out of the relations among events and social actors. *Discursive* refers to the imposition of meaning through discourse, which causes particular demands to change as they are partially unified in the "collective will." Social actors and their changing demands are referred to as *subject positions*. Rather than being a fixed, a social actor is altered through the relationship she has with other subject positions. Laclau and Mouffe call the empty space upon which difference among subject positions is collapsed a *nodal point*. The nodal point does not represent a characteristic common to all social demands, but instead becomes increasingly empty as it takes on an overflow of meaning from the increasing number of demands it comes to represent. For this reason, Laclau and Mouffe often refer to nodal points as *empty signifiers* in that they stand for a set of the

⁵⁵ Depending on the situation, these words can be used in a friendly manner as well as not-so-lovingly.

particular demands that cannot be represented by a universal. *Hegemony* refers to the instance when a “particular social force assumes the representation of a totality that is radically incommensurable with it,” meaning that the hegemonic move occurs when an empty signifier emerges.⁵⁶ Articulated antagonism toward something creates a *chain of equivalence* whereby each demand is not positively defined or sutured to a complete whole but instead made equivalent through a strategic discursive move. This is not an alliance of different subject positions based on common need, but a changing of all subject positions so that they can feel represented by the larger group. All demands are affected by each other through participation in the movement, thus changing while maintaining particularity. The chain of equivalence depends upon the *logic of difference*, which refers to the antagonism that groups share toward something exterior to their movement. This enables the collapse of disparate demands that are the particular subject positions interior to the movement. The creation of meaning through a differential logic creates a necessary *frontier* or *fault line* between the movement and its shared “enemy,” which is always unstable as discourse changes the logics of difference and equivalence. Because particularity is never completely absent, groups and social actors can always break away from the chain of equivalence. Therefore, a cohesive social movement is an example of how individual elements that are impossible to synthesize completely are made equivalent and collective identification is made possible across a hegemonic frontier that is formed through difference. Unification is not based on a common need, but instead the channeling of individual desires toward a collective vision through a discursive hegemonic movement. In 2006, the Chilean student movement was able to make this hegemonic move, generating wide-scale mobilization even while the thousands of students involved maintained some of their particularity.

⁵⁶ *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, x.

Chapter Five: Analyzing Equivalence and Difference in the Movement

As I began my research in February 2008 and started meeting former and current *pingüinos*, I came to realize that there was not a typical member of the student movement. At each interview, I was met in the metro by someone with a different style of dress coming from all sorts of activities including political meetings, class, and work. My relatively small sample included students from many of Santiago's *comunas* (*Santiago Centro, La Renca, Puente Alto, Providencia*, etc.), from families in a range of economic situations (lower through upper class), and with numerous political and ideological backgrounds (apolitical, *Comunista, Socialista, Unión Patriótica, Renovación Nacional/Union Demócrata Independiente*). This spread of identities was hailed by students and Chilean society as a whole as a symbol of renewed democratic participation by Chile's youth. This was not a traditional, class-based alliance but instead a movement with the power to mobilize people from all sectors of society. In order to

create equivalence among students from such varied backgrounds, a discursive strategy that articulated the collective will was needed.

The Role of Class

It is difficult to break down my survey in terms of class because each interviewee had her own description of her socioeconomic situation. Class is a *lived* experience, but identification with a discourse based on class occurs through an articulation of that experience, which is always prescriptive. Therefore, in order for there to have been a consistent description of various socioeconomic classes, the movement would have had to clearly demarcate class distinctions. Because the *pingüino* movement's discourse did not include rhetoric on class, the answers I received from such questions were far from cohesive. When asked about their socioeconomic status, interviewees generally answered with varying descriptions of the Chilean class structure. Furthermore, for some *pingüinos* such as María Huerta, socioeconomic status could be described in multiple ways. Huerta argued that class can be categorized according to the conventional political guidelines that correspond to five economist-determined levels of family income as well as more subjectively through self-identification (i.e. Huerta's description of herself as lower class).⁵⁷ Daniel Olivares described himself according to the governmental class system, remarking that his family income is less than \$150,000 pesos a month, or about \$300 U.S. dollars.⁵⁸ In terms of Olivares' socioeconomic situation, his background in a rural area of Chile, where quality of life varies significantly from an urban center such as Santiago, means that the material conditions of his class differ from those of someone of the same class living in an urban area. Sebastian Vielma also referenced the standards published by the government, identifying

⁵⁷ Huerta.

⁵⁸ Daniel Olivares. Internado Nacional Barros Aran (INBA). In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, July 8, 2008.

himself as part the “wealthiest ten percent of the country.” Vielma added “That’s to say, my parents are not owners of any means of production - as they would say in Marxist terms - but we’re members of the small group of bourgeois professionals who are well-off economically.”⁵⁹ Though Josefa Fica attended private school and Fernanado Gajardo a public school, each described herself as “upper-middle class” or “well-off economically.”⁶⁰ Other students such as Amador Sepulveda divided Chilean society strictly into two classes. “I am a member of the class that has been exploited, always understanding that there exist two classes in this country...the working class...that has to suffer the consequences of the injustice of this economic system.”⁶¹ Aymara Galvez spoke similarly of the economic system and described her class as “poor”⁶² while Hans Gonzalez said he would describe his family as “modest.”⁶³ Both Victor Díaz and Javiera Gonzalez described their class as “common to all Chileans” and Gonzalez stated that the Chilean middle class “clenches their teeth” to get by.⁶⁴ The student movement included members from a wide range of socioeconomic experiences and individual participants identified with class according to an assortment of definitions.

Generating equivalence through discourse

Despite these differences in how students’ viewed class, the *pingüinos* movement was still able to generate cohesion by articulating equivalence. Javiera Gonzalez’s comments on

⁵⁹ All interview quotes are translated by the author; Sebastian Vielma. Secretario Político of Liceo Aplicación. In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, July 11, 2008.

⁶⁰ Josefa Fica. Leader of Campus College. In discussion with the author; Fernanda Gajardo. Vocera of Zona Norte. In email to author. Santiago, Chile, July 22, 2008.

⁶¹ Amador Sepulveda. Vocero of Frederico García Lorca and Comisión Política of Zona Norte. In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, July 22, 2008.

⁶² Aymara Galvez. Vocera of the Unión Patriótica, Liceo Darío Salas and Liceo Tajamar. In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, July 23, 2008.

⁶³ Hans Gonzalez. President of Liceo Darío Salas and Comisión Política of the Asamblea Centro. In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, July 3, 2008.

⁶⁴ Victor Díaz. Leader of Instituto Nacional. In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, July 3, 2008; Javiera Gonzalez. Comisión Política of Santiago Centro and President of Liceo Tajamar. In discussion with the author. Santiago Chile, July 8, 2008.

class are representative of one of the three discursive strategies the student movement has taken in dealing with class. By speaking of the common difficulty that all Chileans experience in trying to get a good education and secure future opportunity, different economic situations are made equivalent. Though one member of the movement may be from the upper-middle class and thus of relatively high economic circumstances whereas another may be associated with the lower-middle class and thus has difficulty paying for basic necessities let alone an education, a common bond is forged if all are seen as struggling. Many students emphasized that even *colegios subvencionados* were lacking in terms of the quality of education, which unified students though their material realities were often very different. The strength of this discourse lay in its portrayal of opportunity as coming from the quality of the entire educational system as opposed to being about how much one could pay. Josefa Fica, who attended a private school in one of the wealthiest *comunas*, Providencia, commented how even at elite private schools students did not receive the education they deserved. By speaking of quality education and economic security as issues for all students, the *pingüino* movement was able to mobilize members of very different socioeconomic sectors.

The second discursive strategy used to generate equivalence was to speak in terms of solidarity. Rather than referring to the poor education received by all Chilean students, some members of the movement spoke of the need to support those who were receiving a lower quality education in public schools because they could not afford to pay for a semi-private school. Fernanda Gajardo is an example of a student identifying with the movement in terms of solidarity. Referring to her own situation, she said “We are a family of Spanish immigrants from Andalucía, from a well-off economic situation, who, for the most part, have been educated in

private and professional schools. Despite that, I decided to study in public schools and *laicos*.”⁶⁵

When asked whether she felt her personal demands were represented by the movement, she answered “I can’t say that they were my needs, they were social needs and they were transformed into mine.”⁶⁶ This transformation occurred through the *pingüino* discourse. Diego Calderon, who is currently studying law at *Universidad Católica*, described the importance of public service, adding “The ideas that moved me were so profound it seemed crazy to stay away from the movement.”⁶⁷ Calderon participated in the movement not based on personal need, but on an idea of a just society articulated in the movement’s message. Fica, who comes from a social class with many privileges in Chilean society, described part of her task as “opening the eyes of the people of my social stratum who have everything and are like ‘I have money and I couldn’t care less.’”⁶⁸ Javiera Gonzalez described the mentality of upper class *pingüinos* toward those with less money: “It doesn’t interest me that the PSU be free for me because I can pay the twenty or thirty *luca*,⁶⁹ it doesn’t affect my wallet, so it would be better to leave this money for you, this money that I can pay, this money you can use for something else.”⁷⁰ María Huerta was a member of the central *comisión política* of the movement and as such played a large role in shaping the message of the movement. She described this idea of solidarity as “in my house we always have enough food to eat and money to pay for public transportation but you have to think of the fact that for others this is really difficult - this bothered me a lot, I didn’t like it, it made me unhappy.”⁷¹ Speaking in terms of solidarity, mobilizing becomes an act of compassion for others instead of hope for personal gain. Such solidarity is a commonly used logic of equivalence in

⁶⁵ Fernanda Gajardo. Vocera of Asamblea Zona Norte. In email to author. Santiago, Chile, August 4, 2008.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Diego Calderon. Comisión Política of Instituto Nacional. In email to author. Santiago, Chile, July 7, 2008.

⁶⁸ Fica.

⁶⁹ A *luca* refers to 1,000 pesos, the equivalent of about two dollars.

⁷⁰ Javiera Gonzalez.

⁷¹ Huerta.

social movements, particularly in a generation with increased social consciousness due to a loosening of government repression of civil society. In speaking with many *pingüinos*, it was evident that they had successfully included a wide spectrum of economic backgrounds in the movement by relating change to the quality of education for everyone and by invoking solidarity with those who were at a disadvantage economically.

A third discursive strategy used less commonly in 2006 but frequently employed more recently is the creation of an antagonistic power opposed to students seeking social change. Sepulveda and Galvez's division of Chilean society into two sectors generates a frontier between those who are exploited and disadvantaged in Chilean society versus those profiting from for-profit social services such as education. Sepulveda remarked "You can't join the oligarchy and the people. You can't join the bourgeoisie with the people."⁷² Galvez spoke similarly of the two classes of students involved in the movement, saying it was only permissible for members of the upper class to be a part of the movement if they offered their support and did not try to direct things. She commented "The student became conscious that for someone from the lower class, the quality of education was bad and for the rich sectors of society, in the wealthy neighborhoods, the schools provided a better education than what we received, that in reality they [students in wealthier schools] could enter a university easily."⁷³ Students such as Galvez and Sepulveda were unhappy with the accomplishments of the 2006 movement and argued that it had been too accommodating and willing to give in without real structural change to the system of education. Both Galvez and Sepulveda worked in the student movement throughout 2008, trying to create an alliance of the various sectors of the working class on issues such as labor, health care, and other popular demands. I witnessed a debate about this at a showing of the

⁷² Sepulveda.

⁷³ Galvez.

documentary La Revolución de los Pingüinos during which students argued over the division of the student movement into various *asambleas*, some with ties to other social sectors and some consisting solely of students. This third discursive strategy of creating an antagonistic front based on class collapses difference among the social sectors of the working class, but it also excludes students who do not identify with or are not willing to accept the leadership of the working class.

The majority of *pingüino* discourse in 2006 was not related to organizing based on class and proved capable of collapsing differences pertaining to material conditions. A common thread running through the students' message was the importance of a quality education for Chilean society as a whole due to its role in the development of the country. This argument corresponds to the discursive strategy of solidarity but goes beyond it in that everyone stands to gain from country-wide development. Victor Diaz stated "For us to achieve the status of a developed country, we have to change these social politics of education."⁷⁴ Amador Sepulveda spoke of opportunity in more direct terms, saying that to be poor is "To know that next year you have to go directly to work because, sadly, in this country not everyone has the possibility to choose going to a university."⁷⁵ Aymara Galvez made a similar remark that "I had realized that what I was receiving was not a good education - that affected me - that in reality I would not be able to enter a university with the education I was receiving in a public school."⁷⁶ Evidence of this common problem is the proliferation of *preuniversitarios* in Chile, which are one or two-year programs designed to assist those who could not enter a university with their high school education or PSU score by improving their test results and providing additional classes. These comments on the Chilean education system connected personal lack of opportunity with an

⁷⁴ Diaz.

⁷⁵ Sepulveda.

⁷⁶ Galvez.

overall diminished possibility for Chilean development. Javiera Gonzalez described her greatest personal demand as “achieving a public education that was really state-run so that the boy who studies in La Pintana [poor *comuna* in Santiago] would have the same opportunity.”⁷⁷ Daniel Olivares put it in personal terms: “We the youth realized that we and our country need a good education in order to make the country better” and “the movement was a great leap that our country needed to arrive at development.”⁷⁸ This continual referencing of opportunity through the possibility of a college education and country-wide development represents the students’ strategic move aimed at showing how improved education would benefit the country as a whole rather than just one sector of society. By demonstrating that the educational system mattered for the future of all Chileans, the *pingüinos* made their demands universally urgent rather than applicable to only a few. As a consequence, opportunity for society-wide development became a nodal point collapsing different individual circumstances.

While the students’ discourse on solidarity and country-wide development helped produce cohesion among a wide variety of students and sectors of society, there was also a discursive opening in 2006 that helped provide the space in which the students could effectively convey their message of social justice. In her paper “The Penguins’ Revolution: An Analysis of Student Response to the Multi-Dimensional Chilean Educational Crisis,” Colby College graduate Abigail Hall points out that in the 2005 Chilean presidential election, “the official political discourse on inequality began to change, and for the first time, presidential candidates from both sides began to address the issue of inequality in their campaigns.”⁷⁹ This included not only Michelle Bachelet and other politicians from the Left, but also candidates from the Right who for the first time admitted that the economic system could play a role in dealing with inequality to

⁷⁷ Javiera Gonzalez.

⁷⁸ Olivares.

⁷⁹ Hall, 62.

prevent instability and promote economic growth.⁸⁰ This was important for the *pingüino* discourse, which argued that meeting student demands would benefit the entire Chilean society and emphasized the important role education plays in advancing economic equality. Hall's interview with *Instituto Nacional* student Alvaro Fuenzalida reveals that students began protesting with the idea that Bachelet would be more sympathetic to their demands due to her campaign promises concerning education and inequality.⁸¹ For this reason, student posters and graffiti often appealed directly to the newly elected president. Sebastian Vielma said "A government took office with big expectations for change - it had promised citizens' participation."⁸² Left-Right consensus that economic inequality must be addressed collapsed party differences about improving education. Diego Poblete explained "The extreme Right and the extreme Left always had the same discourse. The bases [of these parties] always had the same discourse. But there arrived a moment when you would ask any student from the base and the discourse was the same."⁸³ This discursive "moment" provided an opening for the argument that Chile's problems with inequality needed to be addressed at the root by changing the system of education.

At the same time as national presidential campaigns debated the issue of education and its role in addressing inequality, the student movement was making major changes to its discourse. Since the raising of student consciousness during the *Mochilazo* in 2001, students had been organizing regarding the *pase escolar* and PSU. In 2005 during student negotiations with education minister Sergio Bitar, students in the *asamblea* discussed what further changes needed to occur within education that went beyond students' immediate needs. The LOCE and JEC

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

⁸² Vielma.

⁸³ Diego Poblete.

were discussed and Minister Bitar remained sympathetic to the students, signaling that the government was both eager to push its own educational reform and to contain the student movement by involving it in the governmental bureaucracy. When a government is seen as generally accommodating to a social group's demands, it is more difficult to organize and create equivalence among different types of students or other social sectors because there is no common enemy and mobilization seems unimportant. This is why student leaders were slow to mobilize large numbers of students in early 2006. Furthermore, many students, including *vocero* César Valenzuela, were members of or sympathetic to President Bachelet's Socialist Party and were therefore willing to wait and see what moves the administration took toward educational reform before forcefully demanding that their concerns be heard. Sebastian Vielma described how he had hope for change in the Bachelet administration until after her May 21st address, which meant he was not as involved in the early movement. The May 21st address served as a turning point in that it made clear that the government was not interested in negotiating student demands. When students remained separated between those who believed the government would offer change and those who saw more direct action as necessary to move the government along, the students' requests remained disparate demands rather than becoming popular demands through equivalence. It would take strategic discursive moves by student leaders and the complete refusal by the incoming administration to sit down with students to produce the collapsing of difference.

The addition of the LOCE to the students' demands marked an important shift in student discourse. Discussing the constitutional law in place regarding education meant that students were demanding not only that their immediate everyday needs be met, but also that more foundational concerns relating to the overall quality of education be addressed. This began with

students' November 30th, 2005 petition to Minister Bitar, which opened a whole new range of possibilities for discourse. Demanding a free transportation pass did not provide space for students to talk about inequality in terms of why they needed this assistance. Debating laws, however, involves critiquing the system of education and the underlying economic structure that is its foundation. In order to bring educational laws into the discussion, however, students needed to effectively articulate why the system of education needed to be changed. As seen in the debates during the 2005 presidential campaigns in Chile, candidates differed over whether the LOCE should be left as it was, reformed, or overturned. Students strategically raised the issue of the law's connection to the Pinochet military regime, thereby linking the LOCE to an undemocratic time in Chilean history and the legacy of dictatorship. By doing so, the LOCE came to have negative connotations and was transformed into the figurative enemy of the movement.

Students received assistance in making this connection from the government itself. When the Bachelet administration took office with Martín Zilic as minister of education in March 2006, students arrived at the Ministry of Education with a revised petition that clearly laid out their eight demands, including overturning the LOCE, in order to continue the negotiations that began with ex-Minister Bitar. This move was effective because Zilic's initial failure to offer any response to this document and later refusal to negotiate with any students involved in the demonstrations allowed students to articulate a link between the LOCE, its dictatorial past, and the current government's unwillingness to offer the sort of democratic participation that the Bachelet campaign had promised. Maria Huerta linked the "waking up" of Chilean adults to the theme of the military dictatorship and in an interview described school directors as dictators, thus demonstrating how discursively linking political leadership with dictatorship evoked antagonism

toward government officials and created equivalence among students and adults.⁸⁴ Similarly, Amador Sepulveda described the LOCE, profit from education, and the “neoliberal logic” as “inheritances” of the dictator. He then went on to say “we delivered a strong blow and won not only an attack on the face of Chile’s education, but also directly against the essential problem.”⁸⁵ Josefa Fica, Hans Gonzalez, and most of the other students interviewed made some reference to the legacy of the dictatorship, a connection that could effectively be made by including the LOCE in student discourse and pointing out the repressive actions of the government. In terms of the scale of mobilizations, the clear inclusion of the LOCE and JEC during late-2005 and early-2006 corresponded to a huge increase in not only the number of students participating, but also in the backgrounds from which participants came and the form of protest taken.

Whereas social movements that have been in existence over time tend to have a committed central membership that participates throughout the years, it is how the movement mobilizes new members that generally determines how successful it is at a particular moment. This is important to understanding 2006 because whereas student mobilization has a long history in Chile, never in post-Pinochet Chile have demonstrations reached the scale that they did during the 2006 *pingüinos* movement. In late 2005, students in the *asamblea* came from the typical emblematic schools in the center of Santiago or other schools traditionally linked to student activism. A transition had to occur for the *asamblea* to grow from less than fifteen schools to over 1,000 at the climax of the movement. An important impact of linking the legacy of the Pinochet regime with the refusal by municipal leaders, Minister Zilic, and the Bachelet administration to negotiate in May 2006 was the production of a transversal movement. Furthermore, experiencing violent action by *carabineros* against fellow students, particularly in a

⁸⁴ Huerta.

⁸⁵ Sepulveda.

Chile with an increasingly less sympathetic view of the *dictadura* period, evoked a spirit of camaraderie and a desire to participate in order to include one's own demands. When asked about the groups involved in the movement and any divisions the students had, almost all interviewees first responded that the movement was completely transversal and that all types of Chileans participated. This is consistent with sympathetic media reports later in the movement that hailed the movement as a symbol of new democratic values among Chilean youth. Characterizing the movement as transversal is warranted to the extent that students with right-wing sympathies also participated. For example, two of the movement's central leaders, Germán Westhoff and Julio Isamit, were involved in right-wing political parties. While the first schools that were in *toma* were *emblemáticos* (prestigious municipal schools) that are typically politically active, as the movement grew so did the diversity of the schools involved. By the movement's climax, *subvencionados* and even *particulares* were in *toma*. In addition to the movement's inclusion of systemic demands and government repression that allowed a link to dictatorship, other discursive strategies were necessary to produce a large-scale, transversal movement.

Many of the students interviewed described a need to push other concerns aside and focus on educational demands during the period of large-scale mobilizations in May and June 2006. Hans Gonzalez stated "There was one demand and it was education. If you had religion it was your religion and not mine. I respected your space and you respected mine," which essentially meant that though there are other societal issues in Chile, for the *pingüinos* education had to be paramount.⁸⁶ Similar responses were given to various questions about the interviewees' particular demands. For many students, other concerns had to be sacrificed in the interest of putting all of the students' power behind the eight demands of the petition. Some students mentioned that the Mapuche members of the movement had additional educational concerns

⁸⁶ Hans Gonzalez.

such as multicultural teaching and classes taught in Mapudung, the language of the Mapuche.⁸⁷ Such demands were not included in the *asamblea*'s petition to the government, presumably due to the general feeling that the students' demands should be succinct and focused. An argument could also be made that the exclusion of specific racial and gender demands, such as the improvement of sexual education in schools, was linked to forms of oppression. The overall impact of this general position, however, was to make the student movement appear unified behind a concrete set of goals.

Tactics as nodal points

A major rise in student legitimacy occurred as a result of a change in the movement's tactics. Following street demonstrations in early May 2006 in which certain sectors of students engaged in violence with the police or the destruction of property, students decided that in order to gain legitimacy, a new way to raise consciousness and organize students across Santiago and the country must be organized. Turning to a tradition in the history of Chilean protest, students decided that *tomas* would serve the dual task of portraying the movement's seriousness and keeping their image non-violent. On May 19th, 2006, three of Santiago's most prestigious schools were taken over: *Liceo Aplicación*, *Confederación Suiza*, and *Instituto Nacional*. Coverage by the media transmitted images to youth nationwide of students in charge of their schools. Whereas previously the word "*toma*" was linked to history and primarily the actions of university students, *toma* began to take on new meaning as high school students felt their own power to raise awareness and run their schools. After President Michelle Bachelet's annual address on May 21st, 2006 conveyed to students that she was not interested in listening to student demands and did not plan on significant changes to education, students who had previously not

⁸⁷ The Mapuche are Chile's largest indigenous group.

taken part in the movement began to realize its importance. Furthermore, as more and more schools were taken over, increasing numbers of students knew someone who was participating in a *toma* or saw a school they were familiar with now taken over by their peers. As May ended and reporters were allowed to portray activities inside schools in *toma*, a greater feeling of solidarity was achieved. News reports showed students engaging in cultural and artistic activities, educating themselves about the education system, cooking and guarding their schools together, and generally organizing themselves in ways that were not expected of teenagers. As the *tomas* continued, concerned families took action not only by requesting that their children come home, but often by encouraging and supporting youth by bringing them food and medicine. Many interviewees described the harsh conditions inside a school where students, who were not used to taking care of themselves, had to cook, clean, sleep, and live for days on end. This shared task, however, created a group synergy that afternoon marches and demonstrations had been unable to achieve. By not engaging in activities that could turn violent and instead showing their power to organize, students gained legitimacy in the eyes of the government and of the Chilean people.

Toma came to connote a feeling previously absent from calculated negotiations with the former Minister of Education. Many of the students interviewed tried to explain this sensation. Josefa Fica and Juan Carlos Herrera described the movement as an “effervescence.” It is important to note that though students did use blogs, fotologs, websites, and text messaging to get the word out about demonstrations, meetings, and *tomas* – and that the *voceros* did call for country-wide action - much of the students’ organizing was done informally. In seeing the power that their peers exercised and the increasing success of negotiations, students decided in their *centro de alumnos* to take over individual schools. This informal organizing was dependent

on a movement that effectively articulated itself through the use of unity-inspiring and consciousness-raising *tomas* that gave students the feeling that “we were all in it together.”⁸⁸ The result of this was a nearly indescribable feeling varying referred to as an “explosion,”⁸⁹ “spontaneous,”⁹⁰ and other terms conveying surprise. Diego Poblete said “We only had the feeling but not the technique,” meaning that the students were able to conjure feelings of unity even if they did not have experience with political negotiations.⁹¹ Javiera Gonzalez, Maria Huerta, Hans Gonzalez, and others talked with smiles and looks of awe on their faces while describing the memory of a feeling they felt while being part of the movement. Being a *pingüino* necessarily involved great sacrifice in order to take over and maintain a school, as well as to negotiate with adult politicians and government officials who made many demands on the movement in terms of deadlines and limits to the number of negotiators at the table. Only by feeling unity and strength with other students could these actions be taken. When asked for positive things accomplished by the *pingüinos*, more interviewees responded with descriptions such as these than with demands the movement had won. The feeling achieved by students through strategically appropriating and defining the use of *tomas* was indispensable to the scale and transversal nature of the 2006 mobilization. *Toma*, as not just a word but also a shared experience, became a nodal point collapsing many differences among students.

In addition to the *tomas*, students raised consciousness through what they called *charlas*, which are chats or discussions. Antonio Zerega, a university student at *Universidad Diego Portales*, described how *pingüinos* would visit to inform the *universitarios* about the LOCE and the other demands of the movement. “There was a group that came from *Liceo 1* and *Liceo*

⁸⁸ Huerta.

⁸⁹ Gajardo.

⁹⁰ Javiera Gonzalez.

⁹¹ Poblete.

Carmela Carvejal [all-girl's schools] that was charged with going to different institutions so that universities could know the movement better...to explain the LOCE and why women were trying to change things.”⁹² This reversed the traditional dynamic of student movements being exclusively led by university students. Daniel Olivares, who came to Santiago from a rural region on a scholarship to study at INBA, described how in 2006 he had gone to other regions of Chile in order to discuss student demands and in particular the importance of creating *centros de alumnos* so that the students could organize. Victor Diaz and Aymara Galvez described the major achievement of the 2006 movement as raising consciousness. Javiera Gonzalez, who was one of the *pingüinos* who gave *charlas* on the movement, described the 2006 movement's accomplishment more poetically, saying “it permitted us to dream.”⁹³ Many interviewees described Chilean society as *dormida*, or asleep, prior to the 2006 mobilization and *despertado*, or awake, afterward. Diego Poblete described the entire movement as “a wakeup call”⁹⁴ and Diego Calderon said it produced a “revolution in culture.”⁹⁵ This consciousness-raising occurred mainly through the *pingüinos* tactics of *tomas* and *charlas*, which demonstrated the maturity and capacity of these students to advocate on behalf of themselves. Furthermore, the discourse used at *charlas* and in online announcements of the *tomas* unified the vision of the student movement.

Divisions

Despite the feeling of unity engendered by the movement, it was not a completely cohesive organization. Besides the fact that much organizing occurred informally so that schools both within and outside Santiago were not always directly coordinated, there were also divisions

⁹² Antonio Zerega and Pedro Acuña. Vice president and president of the Centro de Estudiantes de Historia. In discussion with the author. Santiago, Chile, July 10, 2008.

⁹³ Javiera Gonzalez.

⁹⁴ Poblete.

⁹⁵ Calderon.

among students. One of the most talked about issues was the involvement of national political parties. A movement that had begun claiming its detachment from normal politics was increasingly accused of being manipulated by the parties. Some leaders had always been open about their political affiliations but denied any influence from party leaders. For example, César Valenzuela had been a Socialist Party member since an early age, which was evident in his attempts to give the Bachelet administration more time before students escalated their actions. María Jesus Sanhueza, another of the *voceras*, openly participated in the Communist Party at the start of the 2006 demonstrations but later dropped out of the party. Right-wing political parties were also represented by Germán Westhoff, Julio Isamit, and others. The majority of students at the opening of the movement, however, were not involved in national political parties.

Complications with traditional politics mostly occurred after the movement had gathered strength and the parties looked to capitalize on the crisis. Members of the Socialist Party attempted damage control for the Bachelet administration while most of the other parties, particularly the Right, attempted to embarrass the current government by encouraging additional protests. In the documentary La Revolución de los Pingüinos, a meeting between members of right-wing party leaders and some of the *pingüinos* shows how politicians traditionally in favor of for-profit education and the LOCE shifted their message to support the students, though clearly skirting the issue of profit in their words of solidarity. One student leader in particular is depicted as not buying into promises that a LOCE-alternative would garner support from the Right, instead arguing that new legislation would be more of the same if brought forth by the Renovación Nacional or Union Demócrata Independiente. Despite claims of political neutrality by the students, traditional parties worked to insert themselves into the political hurricane that occurred in May 2006.

The students interviewed were generally critical of political parties and politicization was a fault line between political versus apolitical students, as well as between the allegedly apolitical student movement and traditional political parties. Amador Sepulveda stated “It was a huge error to accept the instructions of youth arms of the political parties.”⁹⁶ Sepulveda also argued that the *Concertación*⁹⁷ and other mainstream sectors of Chilean politics were not “in any way tied to the Left of this country.”⁹⁸ Javiera Gonzalez was similarly disappointed by the way in which the parties became involved, saying “To see the innocence of the students from the base saying ‘Let’s go!’ and then to see something so ugly: the leaders of the base being led by their own political interests.”⁹⁹ Gonzalez had originally been interested in going into politics and was even thinking about studying political science later at a university, but she said that what she saw happen to the *pingüinos* movement turned her off from entering politics. This narrative of student leaders being manipulated by the parties was common in interviews and in the general media. Sebastian Vielma remarked “We weren’t capable of having healthy relations with the political parties and we ended with many friends working for the interests of the political parties and not coordinating with the movement.”¹⁰⁰ Politicians saw the power held by student leaders through the feeling of solidarity generated by their discourse and wanted to use it to their advantage. In addition to embarrassing the Bachelet administration, they could benefit from student leaders participating in their parties and so they did what *Universidad Diego Portales* student Pedro Acuña described as choosing their favorite “picks.”¹⁰¹ With all of the media attention on student leaders at the climax of the movement, having a leader as a representative of

⁹⁶ Sepulveda.

⁹⁷ Coalition of left-wing political parties led by President Michelle Bachelet and her *Partido Socialista* in 2006.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Javiera Gonzalez.

¹⁰⁰ Vielma.

¹⁰¹ Acuña.

a traditional party would be like having a celebrity doing a concert to support and raise money for a politician. Some leaders - such as Victor Diaz - denied party manipulation of the students during our interviews, though Diaz and some other leaders were accused of taking bribes in 2006. It was alleged that some national political parties offered university scholarships to leaders who joined. Whether or not these stories are true, they represent a clear divide in the discourse and organization of the students. In June 2006 when the full power of the movement had begun to dissipate, the bases gave political manipulation as one of their main reasons for no longer uniting behind previous leaders or ACES. Nodal points that formed based on solidarity, development, and opposition to the LOCE and Bachelet government broke down as fault lines emerged due to party politics.

A second major issue involving a feeling of disconnectedness between the *pingüino* leadership and the student base was the divide between the *emblemáticos* and other schools, including those in Chile's regions. The *emblemáticos* and a few other historic schools in the center of Santiago had traditionally been the most politically active and involved in ACES. As the movement grew, however, leaders from these schools became outnumbered by other Santiago schools and leadership was often decentralized, especially after central *asambleas* were established in each of Santiago's four geographic sectors and students in rural areas and other cities such as Concepción organized themselves. Allan Alvarez, a student at *Instituto Nacional* which is Chile's most prestigious municipal high school, described the prejudice saying "They look at the insignia [of the school uniform] and see if they will accept you or not."¹⁰² He also noted that among the *emblemáticos*, men's schools are valued above those for women. Javiera Gonzalez was also critical of the way in which students from the *emblemáticos* acted toward other students, saying "Certain emblematic schools could not stop pointing out that they were

¹⁰² Alvarez.

emblematic schools. They left the assembly and created the LGE and the AGE.”¹⁰³ At the time of my interviews in 2008, the *emblemáticos* were still organizing in their own *asamblea*. I witnessed a debate about this firsthand at the *Balmaceda*, where students attributed the division of the *asambleas* as a major cause of the downsizing of the student movement in 2008. Hans Gonzalez identified the difference between students at *municipales*, *subvencionados*, *particulares*, and technical schools as one of the greatest divisions among students. Josefa Fica also described these divisions, saying that she was personally stereotyped for being a student from a private school. She said “We were always very rejected for being part of a different social stratum.”¹⁰⁴ In Chile, wealthier students are pejoratively referred to as *cuicos* while poorer students are negatively called *flaites*. Fica referenced meetings where she was referred to as *cuica*. At the same time as divisions emerged between students from Santiago’s schools, school’s in Chile’s regions complained that they were not represented in government negotiations. While the LOCE fragmented the educational system but served to collapse difference in the student movement’s discourse, the differences among students from various schools remained as fault lines.

Another division emerged between student leaders and the rest of the movement. The documentary La Revolución de los Pingüinos includes footage of the final major *asamblea nacional* meeting in June 2006 during which over 1,000 schools were in attendance. The *voceros* are shown trying to control the debate about what the movement should do next. After only a small group of students was permitted to negotiate with government officials, there were concerns that the *voceros* and a few other select leaders were running the movement without enough representation from the base. Part of the problem was the sheer size of the movement,

¹⁰³ The LGE and AGE were formed by the rupture of the student movement, because of which emblematic schools organized separately from other institutions of education; Gonzalez.

¹⁰⁴ Fica.

which made it difficult to communicate with all schools before making a decision. Furthermore, in “Los 192 Días de la Revolución Pingüina,” Karina Delfino explains how toward the end of her role as *vocera* she refused to continue to participate unless Chile’s regions were included in the *asamblea*, signaling criticisms that the bases in the regions were being left out of negotiations.¹⁰⁵ Later when six students were invited to be part of the *Consejo Asesor Presidencial* (Presidential Advisory Council on Education or CAP), Germán Westhoff relinquished his original position as a student representative so that a student from the regions could take part. Despite these attempts at greater participation from the bases, the sheer size of the movement and negative attitudes toward members of other types of schools led to division among the students and the eventual breakdown of cohesion in the movement. As the chain of equivalence stretched to include many different types of students, the nodal points generating cohesion lost some of their equivalential meaning and parts of the movement broke down into particularity once more.

In addition to the leadership-base debate at ACES’ final major *asamblea nacional* in June 2006, divisions in student discourse about the system of education began to overwhelm the unity of the movement. As noted previously, not all students were in agreement about whether for-profit education should continue. While a strong narrative that all students deserved a quality education pervaded the movement, some thought this was best served by a completely free, public system of education while others supported continuing the current system of some privatized and some public schools as long as the quality of public schools was improved. The word “*lucro*,” which means “profit,” was often used on websites, blogs, banners, and in student discussions. This term was not as clear-cut as the LOCE. Whereas there was almost universal consensus that the LOCE was the problem and should be replaced, discussing *lucro* meant deciding whether a new law should continue educational privatization or put responsibility for

¹⁰⁵ Orozco and Pais.

education in the hands of the state. The theme of *lucro* was often discussed as part of the conversation about the neoliberal concept of *libertad de enseñanza*, which argued for the right of parents to send their children to for-profit schools while ignoring the impact this has on the freedom of opportunity for students in underfunded non-profit schools. Allan Alvarez described the situation as:

“Many people say: Yes to a moderate profit. Others say: definitely no to profit. And this generates controversy because to say no to profit kills all these types of schools [*particulares* and *subvencionados*] that represent 46 percent of our schools nationally.”¹⁰⁶

Amador Sepulveda spoke strongly against for-profit education saying “The Right obviously supported it, privatizing education, whereas the state is the manner in which education should be funded.”¹⁰⁷ Aymara Galvez pointed out the duplicity of the *Concertación* government, which “had said they were in reality against profit blah blah blah and afterwards appeared on television signing the LGE.”¹⁰⁸ After describing this debate, Victor Diaz admitted that because no one could agree on what sort of schools should make up the Chilean educational system, the leaders had to make a decision of what should be the student position. In a positive sense, this controversy meant that students had educated themselves about the educational system and formed opinions about how schools should be organized, but the inability to come to consensus and final decision-making by the movement’s leaders led to the sort of breakdown discussed previously. Whereas the LOCE was a nodal point for students, fault lines emerged in student discourse when discussion turned to *lucro*.

¹⁰⁶ Alvarez.

¹⁰⁷ Sepulveda.

¹⁰⁸ Galvez.

This debate was closely linked to another discussion about whether the movement should only consist of students or if other social sectors should be involved. The final *paro nacional* (national strike) on June 5th included workers and other civil society groups acting in solidarity with the students. In the scene mentioned previously from a documentary on the movement, adults from other sectors of society are shown at the *asamblea*. Students who supported the involvement of other groups belonged to the sector of students that saw the fight as systemic, thus requiring change in all sectors of society. These students often referred to the neoliberal or capitalist system as the essential problem. Amador Sepulveda, whose mother passed away from cancer due to inadequate treatment from the public healthcare system, emphasized the importance of a social bloc that could fight for improvement in all areas of government social services. He and Aymara Galvez, who both continue to participate in the student movement, talked of the student movement more in terms of class battle than many of the other interviewees. This sector of the student movement has gained prominence more recently; in 2008 when my interviews were conducted, much of the student discourse had taken a more ideological tone. This move served to collapse difference among various sectors of society such as education, healthcare, and labor, but it did so by creating a class-based frontier. This move, which created antagonism toward the neoliberal system and the class that dominates it, changed the group identity of students while creating new inclusions and exclusions.

New Discourse, New Frontiers

By June 2006, the chain of equivalence generated by the *pingüino* movement included a wide variety of students and demands. Nodal points such as solidarity, Chile's development, the LOCE, and antagonism toward the government were increasingly destabilized by frontiers along

the lines of political parties, types of schools, debates over profit in education, and the stance toward neoliberalism in society. Diego Calderon stated “the dream ended and many withdrew from the movement for political or personal reasons. The debates were made ideological and each person wanted to insert his own ideas.”¹⁰⁹ A movement that previously hailed its transversal nature was divided by its own diversity, which had always remained present even while collapsed on common nodal points. Though all students wished to change the system of education, they lacked a clear vision of how to construct a quality education for all because various sectors of students maintained highly divergent opinions and could only form a movement by focusing on other issues. Once the government offered the students the promise of change, those who held more reformist views lost interest while those with the desire for structural transformation refused to acquiesce. In a strategic political move, the Bachelet administration established the CAP and instituted some reforms to break the students’ equivalential chain. This created a new fault line between reformist students and those seeking more radical change. To continue the movement on a grand-scale, students needed to coalesce behind a unified vision for a new system of education. Differences in student desires for a LOCE-replacement combined with divisions between leaders and the base to ultimately dissolve the chain of equivalence that had been the massive student movement of 2006.

¹⁰⁹ Calderon.

Conclusion

By June of 2006, Chilean students could use their discounted *pases escolares* an unlimited number of times a day and apply for the fee to be waived on their PSUs. Increased funding for schools was promised by the Bachelet administration, though such budget reforms were far more modest than most students would have liked. Some bureaucratic restructuring also occurred as a direct result of student protest. The 2006 mobilization ended with the departure of the commander of the *carabineros* special forces division, the minister of the interior (who deals with public transportation), and minister of education Zilic. The government absorbed conflict over the system of education represented by municipalization through the LOCE and other laws on education by announcing a presidential advisory council, which was tasked with investigating whether the existing system was working and reporting its recommendations for Chilean education in October. Only six of its seventy-two members were students and the October report triggered another wave of protests, though these were quickly squashed by the *carabineros*. Opinions at the end of 2006 remain mixed, with some students happy that their voices were heard and some changes made while others wished more had been

done when the student movement was a powerful force that the government had no choice but with which to negotiate.

In the years that have followed, the Bachelet administration continues to make gradual changes to the education system generally related to increased funding for special projects, such as an effort to provide every Chilean student with a computer. Often, the discourse surrounding such initiatives makes reference to the 2006 student movement. This is a reminder of the students' power that year, which has forced the government to acknowledge the 2006 *pingüinos* as more than just a group of hooded thugs. It is also a discursive move that later years' students have had to deal with as they seek to continue pushing for real changes even while the government claims to already be making changes per student demands. Most recently, Bachelet's *Concertación* coalition introduced a new law to replace the LOCE, the *Ley General de Educación*. Due to the necessary 4/7 vote in Congress to overturn a constitutional law, significant concessions were made in order for it to pass on March 20, 2009, with slight revisions based on a committee representing both houses of congress forthcoming. The neoliberal tenet of *libertad de enseñanza* remains untouched and fragmentation among the types and quality of schools will continue, even if some low-resourced schools are given additional funding. There is much controversy over the LGE, since generating consensus among the wide spectrum of Chilean politics left no one truly happy with the final product. As students return to school in March 2009 and debate continues, this year's student movement promises a renewed mobilization on the premise that the LGE does not make any fundamental changes to the LOCE.

As Laclau and Mouffe argue, division is the possibility for politics and new developments to allow for the creation of innovative chains of equivalence.¹¹⁰ The debate over whether the students' fight should be about free public education for all or increased funding for

¹¹⁰ *Hegemony and Social Strategy*, xiv.

public schools – systemic change or reform – will continue. Furthermore, divisions between students who support a struggle that includes other social sectors versus those who believe the movement should remain in the hands of students are now starker than ever. During my time in Chile in 2008, the movement’s messaging was highly ideological, but it remains to be seen if passage of the LGE will provide a similar nodal point for varying perspectives and political positions as antagonism toward the LOCE did in 2006. A poster at one recent protest read “LGE = LOCE, Bachelet = Pinochet,” demonstrating an attempt to bring the debate back to messaging that might generate a chain of equivalence among different groups of students. Chilean students demonstrated their capacity to organize wide-scale social protest and negotiate with their government, even if divisions and mistakes occurred along the way. At the end of one of my final interviews, I asked Sebastian Vielma if he had any suggestions for my project. He answered “don’t just say the good things.”¹¹¹ This project shows ways in which the students were divided and unable to move effectively, but also demonstrates the potential for high school students who are generally seen as immature and apathetic to mobilize more effectively than an experienced government. Mistakes were made in 2006 and student wins were less than what many wanted, but the legacy of the movement continues in political debates, the media, and in the ongoing student struggle for increased opportunity through a more equitable education system. The year 2009 represents a new opportunity for Chilean students to learn from past actions and formulate a new strategy for social change.

¹¹¹ Vielma.

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