

Social Movements and Processes of Political Change:

The Political Outcomes of the Chilean Student Movement, 2011-2015

Yelena M. Bidé



Research Puzzle & Research Question

- Comprehensive body of literature on social movement emergence but comparatively little research on their political outcomes
- **Research Question:** What are the political outcomes of social movements, and how are these outcomes achieved?
 - *What were the political outcomes of the Chilean student movement, and how were these outcomes achieved?*

Theoretical Context

- **Political Outcomes:**

- Disproportionate focus on *policy* outcomes
- Overlooks non-institutional outcomes

- **Mechanisms:**

- Theoretical understanding of *how* movements cause political change is underdeveloped
- Existing theories based primarily on movements in northern democracies
 - Disruption mechanism
 - Political access mechanism
 - Public opinion shift mechanism

My Argument

- Non-institutional outcomes are a key form of political change
- Social movements achieve their outcomes through *simultaneous activation* of various causal mechanisms

So What?

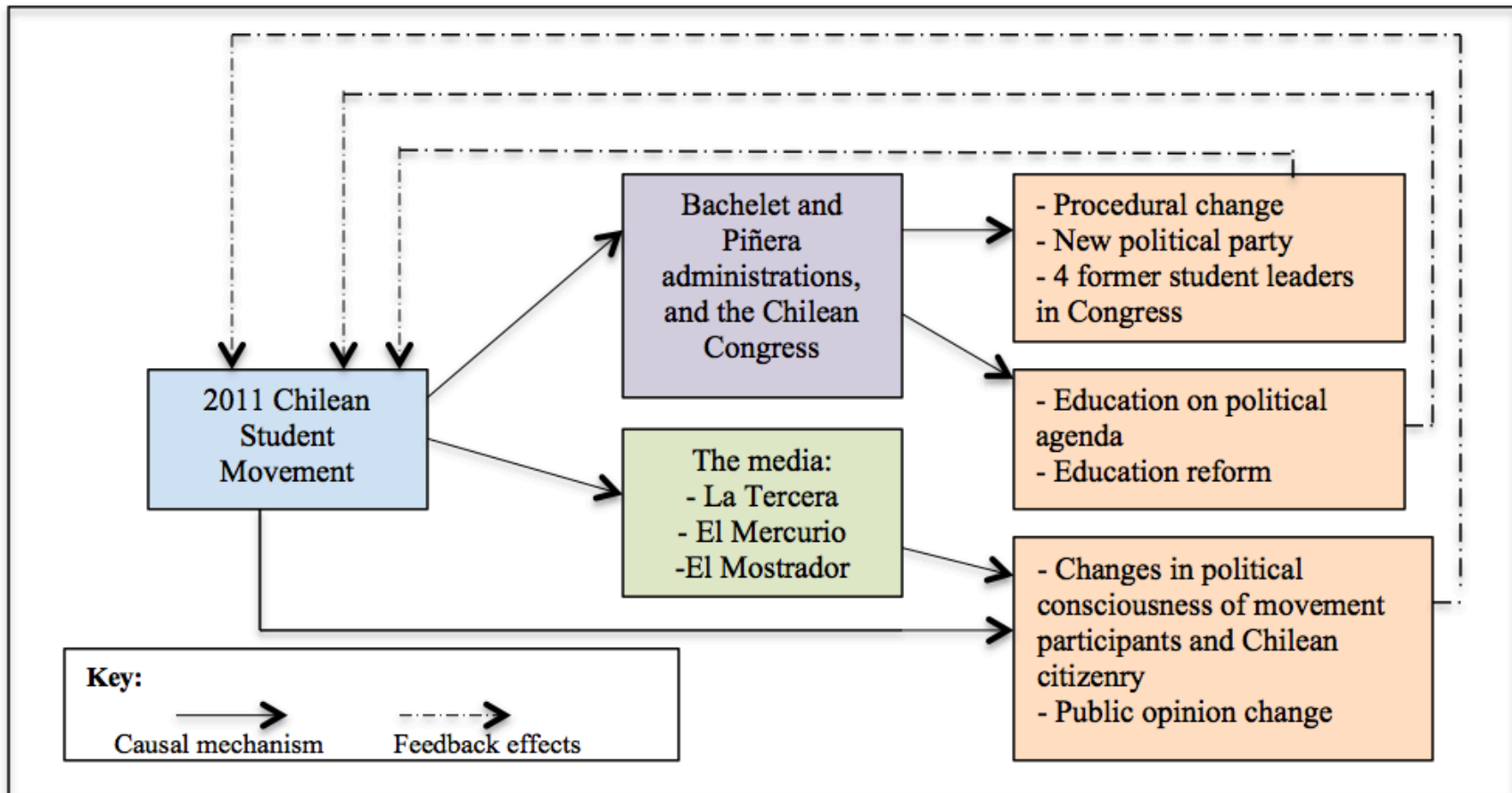
- Insights into scholarly debate about causes of political change
- **Theoretical Significance**
 - Develops an original framework that integrates various political outcomes
 - A multidimensional conceptualization of political change
 - Advances a theory of *how* social movements cause political change (causal mechanisms)
 - Adds a new case to political outcomes literature

Research Design

- Why the 2011 Chilean student movement?
 - Typical case
 - Data rich
 - Social movement in developing world
- Multi-methods approach
 - Qualitative interviews with 10 student leaders
 - Analysis of public opinion data
 - Content analysis of presidential platforms and speeches
 - Process tracing


Empirical Findings

The political outcomes of the 2011 Chilean student movement



Empirical Findings: Key Political Outcomes

- Policy change: education reform passed in 2015
- Changes in political consciousness (non-institutional outcome)
 - Increased politicization of movement participants and Chilean citizenry



The fact that today politicians talk about education as a right is precisely because the people in the streets have said that it is a right... **The student movement is responsible for this, that today politicians dare to talk about citizen rights, about social rights.** This is, I think, the **paradigm shift** that the movement has caused. A paradigm shift, **an awakening**; there's no longer a fear of the streets, of protest but, instead, quite the contrary.

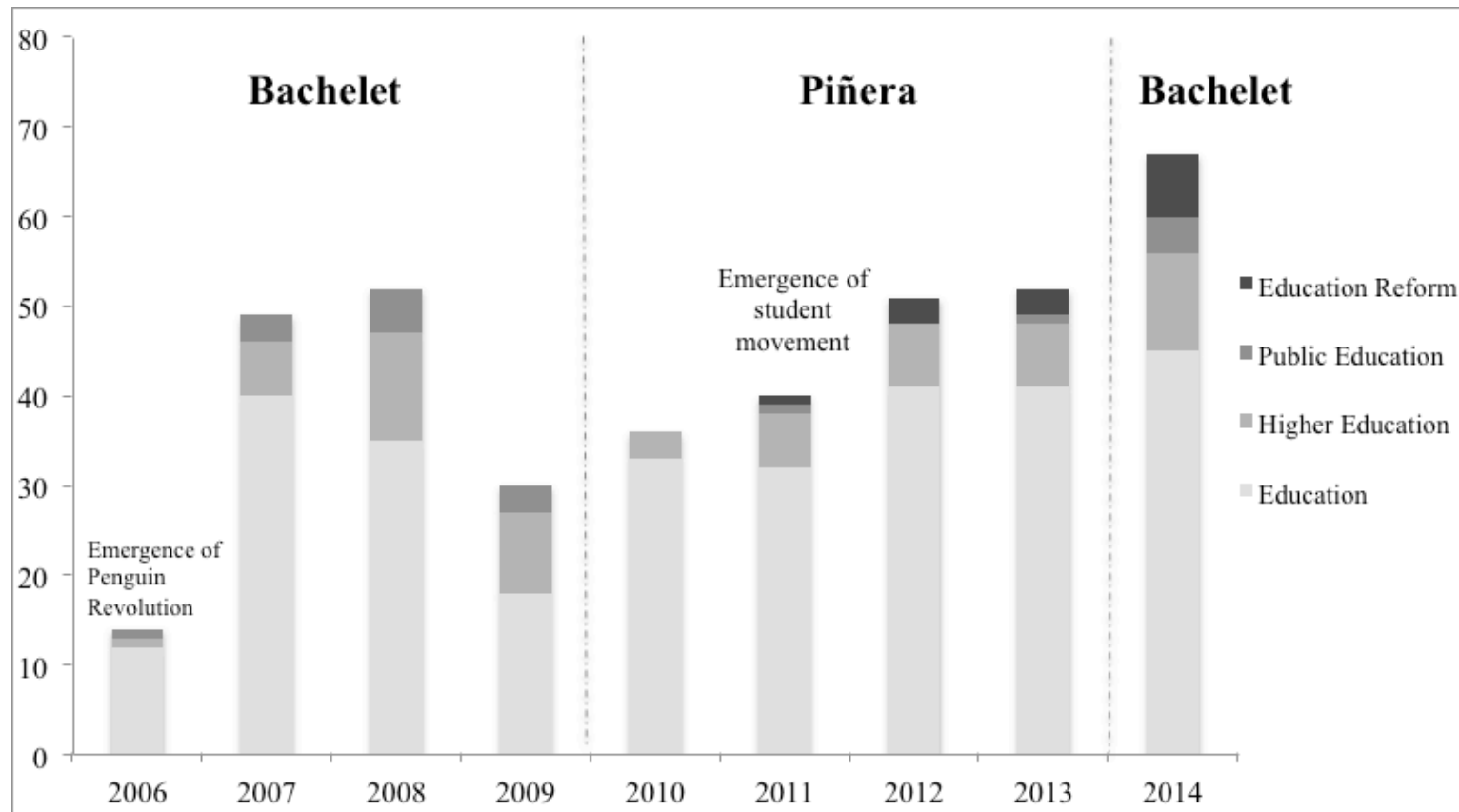
—*Grace Arcos, Federation President 2014, Bernardo O'Higgins University*

Non-Institutional Outcomes

1. Agenda Setting
2. Paradigm shift in how education, and broader neoliberal model, are perceived
3. Re-legitimization of protest
4. Awakening of Chilean citizenry

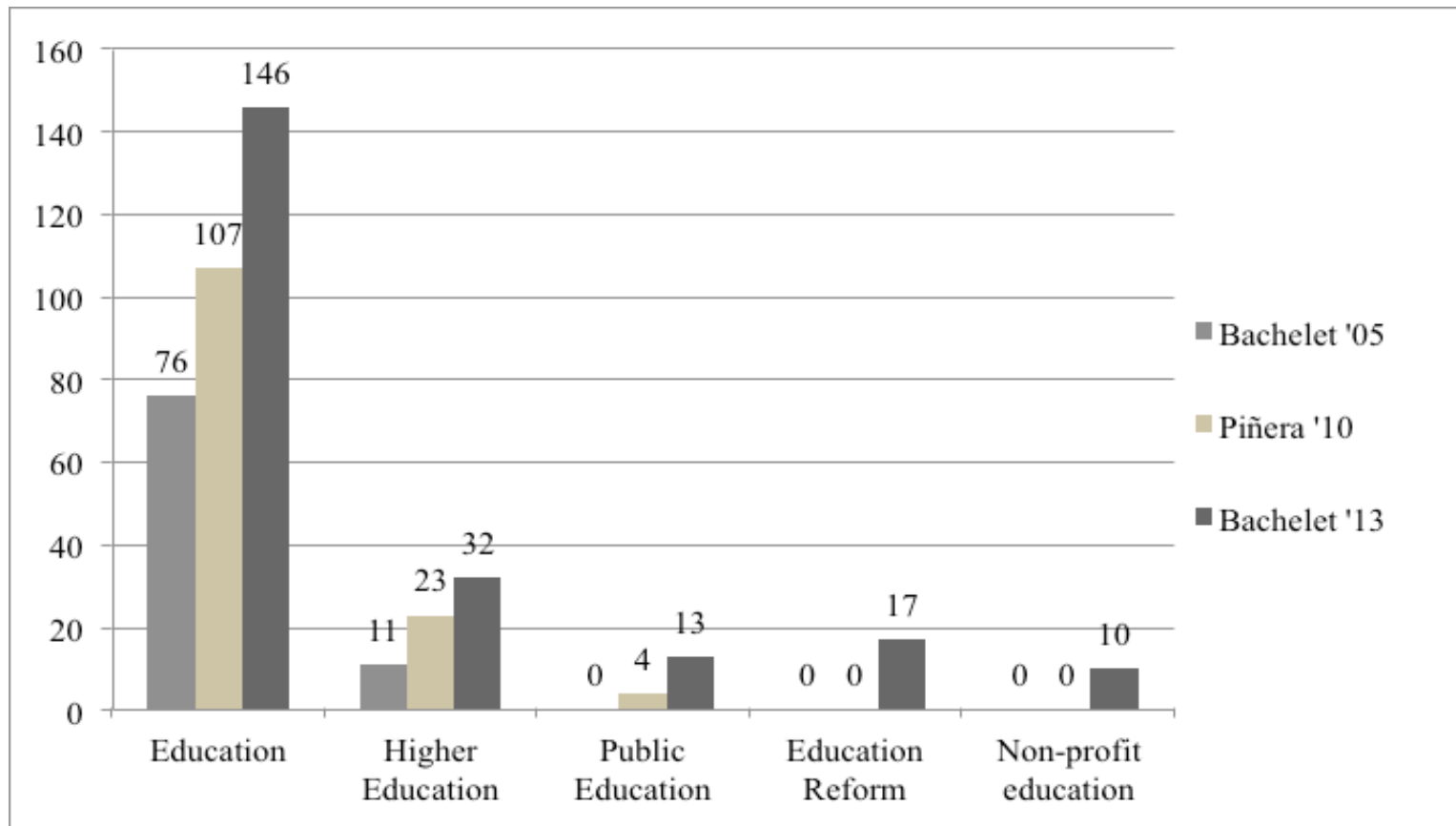
Changes in Political Agenda

Frequency of education-related words in presidential speeches, 2006-2014

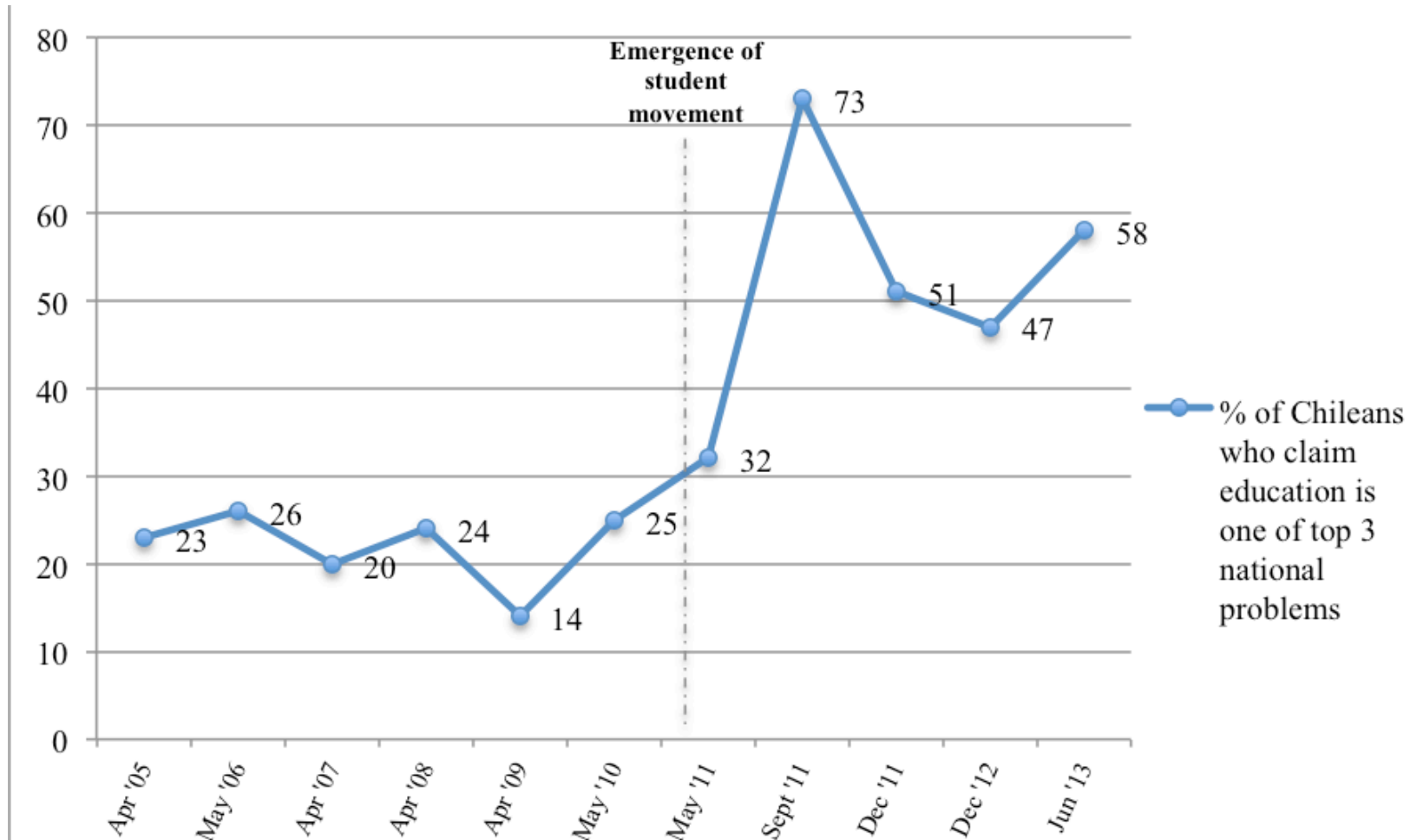


Changes in Political Agenda

Frequency of education-related words in presidential platforms, 2005-2013



Public Opinion Change



Causal Mechanisms

- How did student movement place and maintain education on public agenda and influence educational policies?
 - Informal channels: protest
 - Formal channels: meetings and correspondence with important political actors
- Disruption mechanism
- Political access mechanism
- Public opinion shift mechanism

Conclusions & Implications

- **Conclusions**

- Student movement's impacts on education
- Impacts beyond education system

- **Theoretical Implications:**

- Outcomes must be studied in both institutional and non-institutional arenas
- Overlooking non-institutional outcomes underestimates political impacts of social movements
- Importance of looking into “black box” of causal mechanisms
- Implications for theories of political culture and quality of democracy

Future Research

- More research on political outcomes of 2011 Chilean student movement
- Importance of a long-term approach to study of movement outcomes
- More cases
- Effects of social movements on political culture?

